Volume Two

A collection of Professional Practice Reports

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Introduction

As of 2006, all professionals seeking to qualify as an Educational Psychologist are required to complete a three-year professional doctorate. Within this course, students spend Year 1 based at University for taught input, whist undertaking two part-time professional placements within Local Authorities. In Years 2 and 3, Trainee Educational Psychologists (TEPs) find their own employment with a Local Authority to complete the professional practice requirements of the doctorate.

This volume of work forms the second of two distinct volumes that combine to meet the assessed written requirements of the Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology. As part of this course, TEPs are asked to carry out four small-scale research projects within the professional practice in the Local Authority in which they work. Each project offers an account of an element of work of both interest and relevance to my day-to-day role and my developing professional practice over the last three years.

The following volume of work consists of two main parts:

1. An introduction to the context in which the small scale projects were undertaken and a brief discussion of my role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist; and
2. A synopsis of the four projects (called Professional Practice Reports in this Volume), to include an introduction to the topic area and structural overview of the paper.

PART ONE

Service context

With the exception of PPR 4, all PPRs were carried out in Overdale City*, during my 2nd/3rd Year employment. PPR4 reports on a study undertaken within my Year 1 placement in Montrose Borough*.

- Overdale City

The Unitary Local Authority of Overdale City sits in the East Midlands region of England. As of 2004, the city had the 22nd largest population (285,100), the largest in the East Midlands, for local authority areas in England and Wales.

At present, in Overdale City there are a combined 74 Primary, Infants and Junior Schools, 17 Secondary Schools, 8 Special Schools, 2 Primary Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), 3 Secondary Federated Pupil Referral Service settings (PRUs) and 1 Academy School.

- Montrose Borough

The Metropolitan Borough of Montrose makes up part of the county of West Midlands. Located in the southeast of Birmingham City Centre, it has a population of 200,400. Montrose Borough has a diverse population, with pockets of affluence all around the borough, especially in the south, and pockets of socio-economic deprivation in the North.

At present, in Montrose Borough there are a combined 61 Primary, Infant and Junior Schools, 8 Secondary Schools, 5 Special Schools, 4 Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), 13 Special Units and 7 Academy Schools.

* Pseudonyms have been used to preserve the anonymity of the Local Authorities

My role as a TEP

Over the last 2 years with Overdale City Psychology Service, I have carried out a link Educational Psychologist role with a number of schools, carrying out a wide range of activities on a day-to-day basis, in accordance with the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs. Working alongside colleagues from various services (e.g. health, social care, early years), this role has included working at an advisory/consultative level for schools (Primary, Secondary and Special) with pupils at the School Action level, and using consultation and/or individual assessment and intervention approaches for a diverse range of significant, complex and enduring school-age (4-19) needs at both the School Action Plus and Statutory Assessment levels.

As part of my core role within the Psychology Service and in the wider multi-agency context, I have undertaken a large number of Early Years cases; meeting the needs of pre-school age children (0-5) and supporting the families of children with complex and significant needs. Where possible, I have also taken the opportunity to develop and deliver various training in a range of settings.

During the second year of my employment with Overdale City, I have also been part of a multi-agency behaviour initiative and the service's Vulnerable Children's Team (VCT). My role with the VCT has allowed me to focus on the most vulnerable populations in a number of priority areas:

- 'Looked After' Children (LAC);
- Critical Incidents;
- Children and young people at risk of exclusion.

PART TWO

Professional Practice Reports

The small-scale research projects reported within the Professional Practice Reports (PPRs) cover a broad and diverse number of areas. Table 1 gives an overview of PPR titles and their location within the whole volume. I will now give a brief synopsis of each PPR.

Table 1: A brief synopsis of each PPR

PPR Title	Location	Page
1. 'The what, the why and the how': raising the achievement of looked after children.	Overdale City	p10
2. 'The therapeutic influence of friendships': A small-scale evaluation of a Circle of Friends Intervention	Overdale City	p45
3. 'The impact of Primary to Secondary School transition on social, emotional and behavioural adjustment': A small-scale evaluation of a focussed Transition intervention.	Overdale City	p95
4. 'The potential of pupil voice in schools': gathering pupil views on effective teaching and learning in a large secondary school.	Montrose Borough	p140

<u>PPR One</u> - 'The what, the why and the how': raising the achievement of looked after children.

According to the British Psychological Society (2006), Looked After Children are potentially the most vulnerable population in the school system. It appears that their unique set of experiences and circumstances, often place them at odds of with the education system, which too frequently leads to under achievement and academic failure, and potentially to wider long-term disadvantage, when compared to children who are not in care.

In this PPR I consider what previous research tells us about why this group of young people experience such educational disadvantage. More specifically, how the impact of pre-care experience, the impact of the care system and the role of the school system affects the outcomes for looked after children.

Following this, I look at efforts toraise the achievement of looked after children in a local context. The PPR reports on a semi-structured interview with the head of service for the Raising Achievement in Looked After Children Team (RALAC) in Overdale City. The focus of the interview attempts to unpick the factors that facilitate and inhibit the achievement of looked after children in education.

In doing so, I hope to draw attention to the educational experiences and highlight the complex interaction of risk and resilience factors for looked after children. Subsequently, I offer some suggestions of how Educational Psychologists may play a role in championing the needs, and enhancing the educational outcomes, of this vulnerable subset of the school population.

PPR Two - 'The therapeutic influence of friendships': A small-scale evaluation of a Circle of Friends Intervention

The social element of school forms an important part of the whole school experience. Research suggests that friendships form an important moderating factor against wider potential risk factors (Bagwell et al 1998). However, when friendships fail, causing children to become isolated, this can lead to challenging behaviours in the classroom (Shotton, 1998) and can negatively influence long-term academic, social, emotional and behavioural outcomes (e.g. Wentzel and Asher, 1995).

As part of a piece of casework, this PPR reports on a 5-week Circle of Friends (CoF) intervention, which was chosen because of it's potential to change social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Departing from traditional social skills interventions, the focus of CoF interventions recognises the importance of social cognition, that is it focuses on children's perceptions, understanding and attributions in what is a dynamic and frequently changing process. The process of a CoF intervention targets a focus child and places them within a peer support network; in order to collaboratively problem solve difficult behaviour. Importantly, this approach allows the opportunity to not only reform problem behaviours, but also challenge/reform the reactions of other children, helping them to reattribute

their perceptions of the presenting challenging behaviour and thus allow an opportunity for future friendships.

Primarily, the PPR evaluates the effectiveness of the CoF intervention using a number of measures, and then discuses the potential of this particular intervention for schools and Educational Psychologists working with children who present with challenging behaviour.

PPR Three - 'The impact of Primary to Secondary School transition on social, emotional and behavioural adjustment': A small-scale evaluation of a focussed Transition intervention.

Students experience numerous developmental and systemic transitions as they move throughout the education system (Anderson et al, 2000). The focus of this study relates to one such transition: the transfer between primary and secondary school.

Primary-secondary transition, has been the focus of a wealth of research over the past 40 years and remains of interest to educationalists, researchers and policy makers alike. Interest in the effects of 'institutional discontinuity' (Anderson et al, 2000) has primarily focused on two main areas: the impact of transitions on pupil academic progress; the affects of transition on children's social, emotional and behavioural adjustment; and subsequently the interaction between the two.

During an initial review of literature, I present what literature tells us about the impact of primary-secondary transition on these two areas, and subsequently discuss what research suggests as potential causal hypotheses. I then address how schools responses have acted in response to the affects of this transition against a complex backdrop of competing internal and external pressures.

Having discussed historic and contemporary research, I then report on my involvement in a small-scale intervention delivered in Overdale City Psychology Service. As part of my role within the multi-agency behaviour

initiative, I delivered one of several 5-week 'Transitions' interventions, which aimed to target and address the emotional needs of a number of 'vulnerable' Year 6 children, who were making the transition from primary to secondary school. Following a detailed discussion of the findings of the Transitions interventions, I address the implications and limitations of the findings, against a mounting pressure for the use of evidence-based practice amongst Educational Psychologists.

PPR Four - 'The potential of pupil voice in schools': gathering pupil views on effective teaching and learning in a large secondary school.

According to Lodge (2005) 'student involvement is an idea whose time appears to have come' (p125). Since the release of the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child in 1989, emphasis on 'Pupil Voice' has gathered significant momentum, which has resulted in increasing recognition in policy/legislation and guidance to schools. Whereas traditionally, some schools may have used simplistic (and often tokenistic) activities to consult pupils, with varying degrees of effectiveness, the true potential of 'Pupil Voice' is now being considered.

In the current study, I report on a collaborative project carried out during a first year placement in Montrose Borough. After negotiating the focus and parameters of a piece of action research in a host secondary school, myself (and a colleague) were asked to gather pupil views about effective teaching and learning in a large secondary school as part of an ethos aimed at school improvement.

After a review of what previous research tells us about the effectiveness, and limitations, of consulting with pupils, I present the small-scale research project that was carried out. Following several activities to familiarise ourselves with teaching and learning in the host school, the research culminates in a questionnaire-based survey, which gathers the views of 43 pupils in Year 8. After presenting the detailed results of this project, I then discuss the

effectiveness and limitations of the study, and reflect on the implications and the wider potential of 'Pupil Voice' in education.

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PPR1

'The what, the why and the how': raising the achievement of looked after children

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Introduction

> *'If we are serious about building a prosperous, fair and strong society, then every child, whatever their background, must have the chance to make the most of their talents and potential. That's true of a child in care as much as any other'.*
>
> (Tony Blair- A better education for children in care; 2003;p1)

The profile of a group of children known as 'looked after' has received much attention in the past twenty years (Goddard, 2000), developing since the term's conception in the 1989 Children Act. Of particular interest in this paper, is that over recent years we have become increasingly aware that educational success (or lack of it) is a critical component in the lives of looked after children and their families (Comfort, 2007; 28), especially as for most people 'entry tickets to life are gained at school' (Fletcher-Campbell, 1998; 4). This increase in interest is largely due to increased evidence of significant differences in experiences and outcomes for children in the care system, when compared to other children. In this paper, I will seek to explore the nature of those differences and present evidence of national governmental policies and initiatives and international research that attempt to investigate and reduce such disparity. In addition, I will look at how these initiatives have translated into practice at a local level for Overdale[1] City. Finally, I will briefly discuss the role of Educational Psychologists within raising achievement initiatives, with particular reference to looked after children (LAC).

To avoid ambiguity, for the purpose of this paper 'achievement' will refer to educational achievement, although as it will become apparent, this term is itself, complex and multi-faceted.

Defining the 'looked after' population

'Looked after children' is the legislative term introduced by the 1989 Children Act for children and young people in public care, and refers to children who are subject to care orders and those who are provided with accommodation

[1] To preserve anonymity, the location of the local study will be referred to as Overdale City

by a Local Authority (Children Act, 1989; S.22.1a). The 1989 Children Act legislated that it is the duty of a local authority looking after a child to safeguard and promote their welfare. This was subsequently amended in the 2004 Children Act, so that the requirement to 'promote his welfare' should be extended so that 'to safeguard and promote the welfare of children looked after by them includes in particular a duty to promote the child's educational achievement' (Children Act, 2004; S.22.3a).

What do we know?

Some have argued that looked after children are the most vulnerable group of children in education (BPS, 2006). The reasons for this become more apparent when we look at the outcomes they achieve as exemplified by recent statistics:

The following statistics cover all children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months, albeit excluding those children who have been adopted and those who are now care leavers.

- At 30 September 2007 there were 44,200 children who had been looked after continuously for at least twelve months by English local authorities. 33,600 of these children were of school age and of these 28% had SEN statements, 13% missed at least 25 days of school, and 1% received a permanent exclusion. This compares with 3% of children with SEN statements and 0.1% who received permanent exclusion in the general population.

- On average 56% of those looked after children in the appropriate age group achieved level 2 at Key Stage 1, 49% achieved level 4 at Key Stage 2 and 30% achieved level 5 at Key Stage 3. The comparable percentages for all children were 85%, 82% and 74% respectively.

- In school year 11, 64% of children looked after obtained at least one GCSE or GNVQ compared with 99% of all school children.

- 13% obtained at least 5 GCSEs (or equivalent) at grades A*- C, the level increasingly seen as the basic threshold for employability (DCSF, 2009), compared with 62% of all children.

(DCSF, SFR 08/2008)

As can be seen from the above statistics, looked after children achieve significantly less well academically than their peers within the 'normal' school population. Although some children do well in the face of the adversity they encounter in their lives, looked after children as a group have poor experiences and an 'unacceptably low' level of educational attainment (DFES, 2005; p4). Their educational outcomes, in terms of the proportion who reach the average levels of attainment expected for their age, remain significantly lower than for all children (DFES, 2005; p6). Looked after children are also over-represented in terms of levels of those not in education or employment (NEET) post age 16, criminality, health (including mental health) outcomes, teenage pregnancy and substance misuse (DFES, 2006).

However, Goddard (2000) argues that a note of caution should be taken when evaluating the outcomes faced by this group, emphasising that the looked after population is a 'dynamic group' (p80), in that many young people will only spend a short time in the direct care of the state. Consequently, their educational experiences and outcomes are subject to a variety of influences, in particular a child's experiences before entering care, so that care itself cannot solely be blamed for poor outcomes.

Why do looked after children underachieve?

We can take effective action to remedy a social problem only once it is fully understood (Berridge, 2007; p3). Consequently, it is as important to ascertain why looked after children might underachieve, as to report and evaluate what is being done to improve the situation. Importantly, not all children who grow up in care are unsuccessful at school. Some children, despite numerous adversities, find routes to satisfying jobs and lives (Jackson, 2001a; p 36). However, as the above figures suggest, although those who have been

adopted or in care for short periods may be better off, the outcomes experienced by the vast majority of children in care are bleak.

The recent document 'Improving the educational attainment of children in care' (DCSF, 2009) usefully constructs the nature of difficulties faced by this vulnerable population into three key factors, which will be discussed in turn:

- The impact of pre-care experience
- The impact of the care system; and
- The role of the school system.

1) The impact of pre-care experience

Children in care often encounter difficult experiences and adversities before being taken into care. Whether through family breakdown, bereavement, inadequate care or other factors, the impact of these differences can create substantial barriers to learning and suggest an explanation as to why looked after children present greater emotional and behavioural problems than their peers in the general population (Weyts, 2004). Pre-care experience can be looked at from a wider perspective of risk/resilience. Looked after children may be particularly vulnerable to experiencing a number of adversities. Recognition of the multiplicative impact of a large range of risk factors is now well established due to researchers such as Garmezy (1991) and Olsson (2003). Garmezy (1991) draws on an ecological approach to the study of risk/resilience, informed by Systems Theory, and provides a widely accepted framework for understanding resilience. Such an ecological approach emphasizes predictable relationships between risk and resilience factors, circular causality and transactional processes that foster resilience. These factors can be further categorised as compensatory, challenging or protective (Ungar, 2004).

The risk/resilience factors identified to date include the effects of personal characteristics (e.g. temperament and attitude), family-related influences (e.g. parenting style and family breakdown) and external support systems outside the family (e.g. poverty, poor housing and serious life events) (Garmezy, 1991). The nature and impact of these factors might be mediated by early

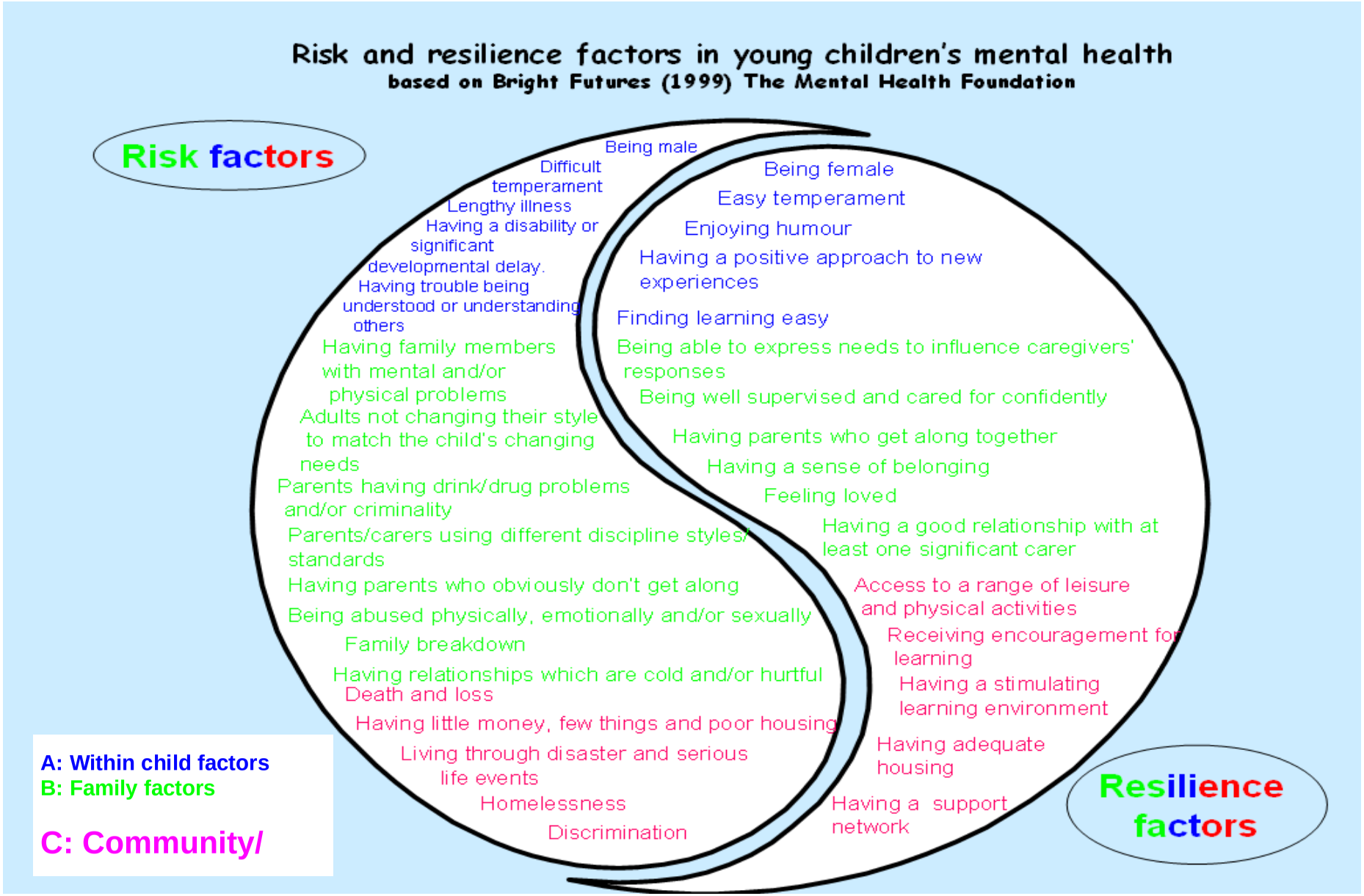
childhood experiences and factors outside of a child's control (see Figure 1 overleaf for more detail). Berridge (2006) argues that a lack of a broader sociological explanation of low achievement in looked after pupils has lead to insufficient and over-simplistic explanations from researchers and policy makers.

Berridge also highlights how socio-economic risk factors, such as social class and poverty which are often linked with family breakdown and admission to care also predict low educational achievement (Berridge, 2006; p1). Whilst these findings are obviously important, it should be noted that they should be seen as in no way symptomatic or absolute. It does, however, seem apparent that looked after children are particularly vulnerable to a wide range of factors that place them at risk of poor mental health, emotional well-being, and educational opportunity and outcomes.

Children enter care for many reasons and many have experienced serious problems not of their own making. According to recent figures, 63% of these children enter care because they have suffered one of many forms of abuse (DCSF, 2009), such as physical, emotional and sexual abuse and/or neglect, and many suffer mental health problems as a direct result. Berridge (2007) suggests that the main current intellectual influence on empirical child welfare research stems implicitly or explicitly from psychology, and in particular, attachment theory (p2).

Security of attachment is considered central to a child's social competence and confidence, providing the child with the resilience, trust, ability to regulate emotion, and self-reflective capacities that may be crucial when encountering adverse life events and hazards (Target and Fonaghy, 2000). The significance of attachment relationships has been offered as an explanation for the high levels of maladjustment and delinquency experienced disproportionately by children in care (e.g. McParlin, 1996; DFES, 2005). Whereas adult relationships and attachments rely on mutuality or reciprocity, an infant or child's attachment to a caregiver is based on safety, security and protection. For most children, early experiences result in a 'good enough' attachment, which provides the child with a relatively stable view of the self

Figure 1: Risk and resilience factors in young children's mental health



and a reliable and non-threatening view of the world (Geddes, 2006). This can lead to success in school, as with greater independence, the child draws on a range of cognitive and emotional information to approach new tasks, enjoy achievements and manage mistakes, whilst relying on support from the teacher when needed (Goldberg, 2000). For some children however, insecure attachment patterns produce a different organisation of behaviour, which in turn may affect a child's ability to adapt in the school setting and inhibit cognitive learning (see Ainsworth and Bell, 1970; Main and Solomon, 1986).

The crucial importance of different attachment patterns is further emphasised by the growing body of research which implicates defective early care patterns with detrimental synaptic development of the brain ('affective neuroscience', e.g. Schore, 2001; Siegel, 1999/2001). Such research findings offer plausible illumination of the mechanisms through which early life experiences that precipitate entry to the public care system may have enduring consequences, compromising later development and learning. Nevertheless, it is important to note that not all children entering care will experience attachment difficulties. However, many of these children encounter early care experiences which may potentiate such difficulties.

In summary, it seems apparent that many children who enter the care system have had a life of uncertainty, inconsistency, and sometimes abuse. As such, it hardly seems surprising that looked after children encounter difficulties in many areas of life. Jackson (2001a), however, suggests a note of caution when associating pre-care experiences with the attainment of children in the care system. Jackson hypothesises that it is very possible, especially with older children, that school difficulties and disruptive behaviours are a major contributing factor to these children entering care in the first place, and at very least for breakdowns in care placement. Hence, more complex, multi-dimensional, multi-directional influences on developmental progress and outcomes for LAC need to be considered.

2) The impact of the care system

Systemic difficulties encountered within the experience of care may make it difficult for looked after children to have stability in their schooling. Interruptions in education, such as discontinuity in placements and difficulties

in care resulting in change of schools (Biehal et al, 1992), may have a cumulative detrimental affect on educational progress (Jackson, 2001a). For a minority of LAC, this carries greater significance: figures reported by the DCSF (2003) suggest that whereas most children only enter care once and have one care placement, one in seven have three or more placements. Furthermore, over a third of children in care have changed school at least twice. Stein (1994) has found an association between movement in care and poor educational attainment levels. Stein found that that those children who had experienced four or more moves in care achieved lower attainment levels than their looked after peers who had had one stable care placement. This could present evidence in support of criticisms made by Fitzherbert (1977) who argued more than two decades ago that there was not enough emphasis on stability of school placement and/or school attendance of children in care by social services.

Instability can also be seen in terms of continuity of staff in contact with LAC. Jackson (2001a) suggests that a lack of continuity of care staff, and professional movement (of social workers and residential staff) prevent these vulnerable children from having a consistent figure in the background. In some cases, this may reinforce any previously learned thoughts that there is no-one who cares. As can be seen in Figure 2, a secure relationship with at least one significant caregiver is one of the mediating variables that emerges as a superordinate protective factor for LAC. Linked with attachment theory, securely attached children appear to be more curious about the world, and therefore keener to learn (Fletcher-Campbell, 2000).

Additionally, carers are often neither expected nor equipped to provide sufficient support and encouragement at home for learning and development (DFES, 2003). This implicitly places a responsibility on individual carers as well as on local authorities to promote educational achievement. Even after a decade of guidance, there is wide variety in the amount and quality of support provided for children's education, even within the same Local Authority. Although some carers provide excellent support, others do not- either because they do not know how best to help the child or do not see it is their responsibility (DFES, 2003; p7). Perhaps historically too much emphasis has

been placed on the role of the care system to nurture the emotional development of looked after children (although it obviously plays a part), to the detriment of exploring its capacity to promote educational achievement. Jackson (2001a) questions the effectiveness of social workers and carers in compensating for the emotional impact of a child's knowledge that no-one in their family cared enough about them to provide them with a home, instead pointing out that an opportunity exists within social care to identify and support difficulties in a child's physical and intellectual development, and to rectify/strengthen them where possible. Hazel (1981) points out that carers are, in essence, paid workers whom it should be anticipated will play a very active role in promoting educational achievements.

However, St. Claire and Osborne (2001) suggest a note of caution, stressing that it is disingenuous to implicate solely 'in-care' experience in LAC's poorer cognitive and behavioural development. Just as pre-care experiences may contribute to disadvantage and poor outcomes but do not offer a sufficient account, neither does the impact of the care system, although this too potentially risks compounding rather than compensating for earlier risks and vulnerability in many cases.

3) The role of the school system

Through school, children can theoretically earn passports to different kinds of futures and be helped to prevent the intergenerational patterns that may have, in part, caused their initial care entry (Jackson, 2001a). In addition to the care-related factors listed above, Olsson et al (2003) raise awareness of the importance of school experience and school value systems in fostering resilience in children. The integrity of this argument is given more support when we reflect that children spend in excess of 13,000 hours at school between the ages of five and sixteen. If anything, school can provide periods of relative stability for looked after children, in what is often an unstable, inconsistent and frightening world (Jackson, 2001a).

However, the DCSF (2009) note that paradoxically, factors within the school system itself may inadvertently cause looked after children to underachieve.

More specifically, DCSF suggests that the school system does not do enough to help looked after children to catch up and keep up- either because schools do not know that children are in care or because they do not know what can be done to accelerate their learning. The National Children's Charity publication- 'Bridging the gap for children in care' (2005), suggests that unidentified or unsupported learning difficulties and insufficient training for teachers can form additional inhibiting factors for LAC's achievement. The first of these factors receives greater significance given that 28% of looked after children have a statement of special educational need, compared to 3% of the general population (DCSF, 2009). This may, of course, in part reflect other issues, such as behaviour that is itself a reaction to the child's adverse life experiences and amount of time spent out of school. The question of insufficient teacher training is picked up on by Comfort (2007) who comments that many teachers have little idea of what many looked after children have gone through in their early years and what impact this may have in the classroom. Comfort argues that the needs of LAC receive unacceptably little interest in initial teacher training. Improved understanding, knowing that physical abuse, neglect, violence, separation and trauma can result in emotional and neurological barriers, may help teachers to approach these children with improved sensitivity (Cairns, 2002).

As previously commented, many LAC spend too long out of school as a result of instability of their care placements. However, in relation to the impact of the school, a significant number of children suffer greater disruptions through exclusions. Jackson (2001b) argues that looked after children are as much as eighty times more likely to be excluded, compared to a child living within their own family. This may offer an example of the conflict between the 1989 Children Act (which places Local Authorities as responsible for promoting the well-being of children in care) and Education Act 1993 (which deflects power from Local Authorities to individual schools) (Jackson, 2001b). More specifically, pressures on schools' academic attainments, behaviour and attendance (due, for example, to Governmental targets, league tables and OFSTED inspections) have increased the risk that some schools may be reluctant to accept and keep these children in schools, due to their potentially complex presentation and often poor academic performance. These factors

combine to help to explain why 13% of looked after children missed more than 25 days of schooling in 2007 (DCSF, SFR 08/2008).

A supplementary factor that has been linked with underachievement in looked after children is the impact of teacher expectations (Elliot, 2002). Weyts (2004) argues that such expectations for educational achievement are typically given limited attention in care plans. A lack of knowledge by teachers about this vulnerable population may lead some to underestimate the potential of children in care with low expectations in turn becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy (Pygmalion Effect: Elliot, 2002). In her study of teacher expectations of looked after children, Elliot found two significant results: that teachers expected that LAC would not meet homework deadlines as consistently as children who are not looked after, and that teachers expected LAC to be the victim of bullying more that children who were not in the care of the local authority (p66). Elliot (2002) concluded that the cycle of expectation and performance cannot be broken without greater awareness and intervention amongst school staff.

In summary**,** it seems clear that children in care encounter difficulties at different points in their care experiences and at a number of different organisational levels: national, local, institutional and individual (Fletcher-Campbell, 1998). Jackson (2001a) summarises that, although concrete evidence of the links between these influences and the characteristically poor attainments of LAC is thin and at a stage of relative infancy:

> *'Everything points to the conclusion that a child who comes into care, at any age, for whatever reason, and (though the ground here is less certain) for whatever length of time, is at high risk of educational failure. The probability that he or she will have difficulties at school and fall behind academically is greater than for other children, even those of similar social background, who do not come into care' (p46).*

Growing away from problem-deficit explanations of the difficulties facing looked after children, a contemporary research agenda addresses *how* those professionals (and I include in this carers) working with LAC can help to bridge the gaps in achievement between this vulnerable group of children and the general population. This is the focus of the next section of this paper.

The evolution of national guidance to improve the educational achievement of looked after children.

From the outset, it must be highlighted that guidance on interventions in this area is characterised by a distinct absence of any reliable evidence base, and furthermore a lack of evaluation. As is the case with much social research, outcomes can be hard to evaluate, mainly because of the difficulty of isolating why and how a particular outcome has been achieved. Jackson (2001a) hypothesises that 'it is not too hard to think of simple, low cost measures to improve the situation (of LAC) significantly' (p44). In reality, the vast majority of interventions relating to raising the achievements of looked after children come from Government advice and third (Voluntary) sector reports, with effectiveness primarily being measured in terms of attainment levels from official statistics. Furthermore, these statistics are themselves subject to challenge concerning their reliability.

Prior to the 1980s, there was almost nothing written on the subject of looked after children (Goddard, 1980). Over the next 20 years, children in care received increased interest, albeit with educational achievement deemed to low a priority for targeted research. It appeared that far more attention had been paid to the social and emotional development of LAC, than to their cognitive development (Essen et al., 1976). Fletcher-Campbell (2000) argued that at the beginning of the 1990s, early research was characterised by a focus on the delineation of the causes of problems facing LAC. In the middle of the decade, a number of initiatives to address identified problems were implemented and described, which led to an increased knowledge about processes and outcomes in direct casework. Around the turn of the century, researchers and practitioners had begun to gain a deeper understanding of the necessary and sufficient elements of 'corporate parenting' and the

processes required to promote positive educational experience (Fletcher-Campbell, 2000; 145). However, despite the swell in interest, this rapid development had seen only patchy changes on an applied level.

We can trace the growth of governmental interest on the subject of looked after children, particularly after New Labour came to power in 1997 and around the turn of the century, through the increasingly high profile it developed in government publications. Table 1 offers an overview of the most significant pieces of national guidance.

On reflection, it seems that although the need to take more effective action to ensure improved outcomes for LAC has received a great deal of attention over the last decade, the problems that face looked after children have persisted. Evidence for this comes from the reported further widening of the gap between the educational outcomes of this population and other children. However, as alluded to in the Table 1, Hibbert (2001) suggests that guidance can only be as effective as its implementation. As such, it appears that implementation of a wide range of statutory and recommended strategies has not been universal, and that where implemented, these strategies have not achieved their intended effects for a majority of LAC.

Table 1: The evolution of national guidance		
Title, date and Publisher	**Main points**	**Application of guidance**
Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public care (DoH/DfEE, 2000)	• Aimed to remedy the 'unacceptable levels of failure' (p1) for looked after children. • Presented a duty for Local Authorities (LAs) on 'good corporate parenting': to behave towards the children in their care in the way any 'good parent' would towards their own child (Hibbert, 2001). • Promoting inclusion through challenging attitudes; achieving continuity, stability and early intervention, through priority action; and listening to children. • Highlighted statutory requirements for LAs (Local Authority Circular (DoH, 2000): - every LAC should have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) - each school should designate a senior teacher to oversee and advocate for each LAC • Additional guidance related to flexibility within the curriculum, identifying special educational needs, and a protocol regarding exclusions.	- Greater recognition of the problems did not translate into changed practice. E.g. Lack of data regarding educational circumstances and achievements of LAC remained.
'A better education for children in care' (SEU, 2003)	• A significant piece of guidance, which examined the barriers that prevent many children in care from achieving their education potential and suggested specific areas of action to improve their life chances. • Report cited: greater stability; less time out of school; help with schoolwork; more help from home to support schoolwork; and improved health and well being as vital to achieve the goal of raised achievement. **National recommendations:** - **Improved accountability**- *through the creation of the director of Children's Service and Lead Council Members Posts. Also, the introduction of a 'duty' for LAs to promote educational achievement of looked after children.* - **Supporting frontline delivery**- *through the clarification of roles and responsibilities for social workers and improved training for foster carers.* - **Enhanced resources**- *through increased funding.* - **Improved understanding of care**- *through raising awareness* - **Improving the legal framework surrounding care placements** - **Prioritising children in care**- *to aid early intervention* **Local:** - **Improved planning**- *though better information sharing and management and by creating targets for each child;* - **Putting a priority on children in care**- *by raising awareness of local services to carers and by possibly implementing a bursary scheme for children to facilitate admission* - **Greater support**- *through increased funding and resources*	- As already signalled, the effective implementation of these actions proved difficult. - Many of the above strategies were not new conceptions but were rather re-wordings and reiterations of previous strategies that had failed to be implemented.

	- **Listening and responding to children in care**- *through the creation of an advisory centre and for social workers and by engaging with the 'voice' of the child.* - **Increased training for carers and professionals working with children in care.** - **Improved data handling and tracking**	
Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004 (DFES- 2005).	• Replaced previous Local Authority Circular: (LAC :2000-13) for Local Authorities to promote educational achievement. • Aligned with Every Child Matters (2003): As 'corporate parents', LAs have a duty ('the duty') to seek to achieve the outcomes expected for all children, namely: to be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic well-being. • Schools should cooperate with LAs to play a proactive role in discharging this duty. At a strategic level, the guidance aimed to increase the accountability and transparency of LA practice through a process of monitoring data, review and inspections.	- Worryingly, the large part of this guidance sets out how to implement Personal Education Plans for all looked after children: an initiative that should have been implemented since guidance in 2000.
Care Matters (DFES- 2006)	• Response to the 'significant and widening gap' (p1) between outcomes for children in the care of the LA when compared to those who are not. • Included guidance on how to deal with children not yet in care but 'on the edge of care' and also addressed the holistic experience of a child in care, for example, the impact of a positive life outside school.	
Improving the Educational Attainment of Children in Care (Looked After Children). (DCSF- 2009).	Most recent piece of guidance relating to LAC achievement. LAs are given two clear obligations: *1.* Implement a Virtual School Head: *this position, at a senior management level in every Local Authority, is designed to be accountable and to take a strategic lead in improving educational outcomes for looked after children, promoting stability of placement, improved behaviour and attendance and helping to ensure every child is individually prioritised, supported and monitored (e.g. through Personal Education Plans).* 2. All schools to have a designated teacher: *responsible for coordinating support and creating opportunities to access additional resources for looked after children on a school level (including access to one-to-one tuition where possible).* Virtual School Heads and schools should not work in isolation: key to success is the combination of stable schooling, a Virtual School Head (to track progress and intervene where necessary), and personalised support. Development of the Higher Education Bursary Regulations: LAs to make payments to young people undertaking courses of higher education. This, it was hoped, would encourage these children to stay in education post-16 and thus further aid their transition to paid work and financial stability in the future.	Although some new initiatives were suggested here, there is some repetition of recommendations made in previous guidance. Perhaps this represents a practical sign that initiatives/ recommendations have not been universally implemented. Thus far, implementation seems to be based on how much priority individual LAs place on this and how well established systems are.

Raising the Achievement of looked after children on a local level: Overdale City

The Unitary Local Authority of Overdale City sits in the East Midlands region of England. As of 2004, the city had the 22nd largest population (285,100), the largest in the East Midlands, for local authority areas in England and Wales. According to the 2001 Census, Overdale City has an estimated population of children and young people (birth -19 years of age) of approximately 79,000. For more information relating to the demography of Overdale City- see Appendix 1.

Overdale City has had a designated service (RALAC- Raising the Achievement of looked after children) since 1999; its establishment coincides with growing interest in and political priority afforded to this area at the turn of the century. According to service information, the purpose of the service is:

- to work closely with schools, Social Care, Health and other agencies to ensure that that the specific needs of looked after children are accurately identified;
- to assist in raising the educational standards achieved by these children; and
- to promote an improved understanding of the issues that affect looked after children by continuing with the training of teachers, social workers and foster carers.

As a 2nd Year Trainee Educational Psychologist, newly appointed to a local authority in this capacity, there was value in complementing the preceding review of literature with an exploration of policy, practice and their subsequent outcomes on a local level, both in order:

- to further develop my own knowledge and understanding so that I might better attune my own practice to the specific characteristics and needs within a local context; and
- to harness my knowledge and understanding in the area of LAC's achievement to investigate the match between policy directives, local implementation and subsequent outcomes in order to provide formative feedback to colleagues within RALAC and the Psychology Service.

To meet these purposes, I carried out a semi-structured interview (See Appendix 2) with the Head of Service for (RALAC). This person was selected for interview as they represented the best source of information about previous, current and future initiatives in the City. Patton (1980, as cited in Cohen et al, 2007) calls the semi-structured interview an 'Interview guide approach' in which topics and issues are specified in advance (p353). This approach was chosen because it represented a flexible and adaptable method of uncovering a comprehensive amount of in-depth qualitative data and allows a systematic approach to data collection (Robson, 2002). Questions within the semi-structured interview schedule were created based on issues that had arisen from my review of background literature. The structure of the interview schedule was divided into three broad areas: identification, support and monitoring; as this appeared to be a useful way of unpicking the process of raising achievement from start to finish. Given the limited time span for data gathering, open-ended questions were used to uncover authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty and candour (Cohen et al, 2007; 330). It was understood from the outset, that the information collected represented a unique perspective on the potential facilitators and barriers to raising the achievement of looked after children. Data gathered during the interview was recorded via a pen and paper approach. During discussion of ethics, several points needed to be clarified according to the British Psychological Society (BPS) code of ethics and conduct – See Table 2 for more detail. Information gathered is described below.

Table 2: Ethical considerations

Ethical Principle (according to the BPS, 2009)	**Context within this paper**	**How solved**
Multiple relationships – where the psychologist owes an allegiance to several different stakeholders;	*My clients consisted of the University and Local Authority (including RALAC and the Psychology Service).*	*Explained the background, rationale, method and planned dissemination of the paper at the outset. A copy of the paper will be sent to each service involved.*
Personal relationships – where the psychologist infringes or violates the trust of a client or clients;	*Not all of the points made in discussion were to be reported in this paper. This was because they may*	*Certain points were omitted accordingly.*

	have conflicted with the position of the Local Authority.	
Unclear or inadequate standards of practice – where the psychologist is unaware of or disregards the current systems in use by peers or others in similar work;	*In part, the purpose of this paper was to reflect upon and critique practice at a local level.*	*The reporting of findings needed to be approached sensitively.*
Breaches of confidentiality – where rules and constraints were broken or not clarified in advance with stakeholders;	*Anonymity of both the professional being interviewed and the Local Authority.*	*Names of the Local Authority and professional involved were anonymised. Discussion notes will be destroyed after the final write-up.*
Research issues including falsifying data, failing to obtain consent, plagiarism or failing to acknowledge another's work or contribution.	*Having used interviews, informed consent needed to be gained.*	*Consent was gained. Contributions were reported according to source, albeit whilst preserving anonymity.*
Bringing the profession or the Society into disrepute.	*Honesty and transparency throughout contacts with individuals involved.*	*Accomplishing the above.*

According to the interviewee, achievement, for the service, is addressed and measured in two ways: against Government targets (e.g. SAT and GCSE attainments, attendance etc); and by measuring progress in a broader sense by the holistic experiences of these children. However, besides concrete evidence collected from summative assessments and by ongoing formative teacher assessment, it is difficult to see how such 'holistic experiences' are measured. This is a point echoed in social research in general: that it is difficult and often impossible to measure the subjective changes that are brought about from a particular intervention, as it is impossible to isolate these variables from a multitude of other complex and interconnected factors.

Information gathered from the interview indicated that the service approaches the task of supporting LAC and raising achievement using both a bottom-up approach (e.g. work with individual children and families) and using a top-down approach (e.g. working strategically with schools etc). At present, due to limited capacity, RALAC is able to work directly with 293 looked after children in years 1-11 of school age. There are 51 children at Foundation Stage with whom the service is unable to work directly. As a result, strategic

approaches, such as working with schools and care providers, are considered more effective at present as they allow the service to support and affect change for a greater number of children. The full range of support offered by RALAC to raise the achievement of looked after children is shown in Box 1 overleaf. This has been arranged into the areas of identification, delivery of support and monitoring to demonstrate this complex process.

Box 1: Range of support offered by RALAC

- **Identification**:
  - Weekly basis via the 'Care First' database
- **Delivery of support**
  - Statutory:
    - Virtual Headteacher- The head of service assumes this responsibility.
    - Implementation and support of designated teachers via link workers. More specifically this may entail support for schools with Personal Educational Plans (PEPs), exclusions and behaviour and absences.
    - Delivering higher education bursaries.
  - Training;
    - Working with Family Support Workers before children enter care and for children on the edge of care.
    - Children's Centre Teacher training
    - Training for foster carers
    - Training teachers where necessary through the Link Worker role.
  - Support:
    - Target-25 group: a multi-agency team whose responsibility it is to target and those children who are absent from school for prolonged periods.
    - Supporting the design and implementation of Personal Education Plans,
    - Supporting inclusion and reducing exclusions
    - Home visits
    - Signposting to appropriate services
    - Gain access to the right resources and interventions
    - Way Ahead Project- developing work for higher education, e.g. through Connexions.
  - Individual work with children
    - Academic coaching for children at key points in schooling. At present, this is delivered to children in years 5/6 (SATs), year 7 (supporting transition) and in Years 10/11 (GCSEs).
    - 1:1 tuition where possible through Mentors and Teaching Assistants
    - Workshops in years 10/11 in collaboration with the Psychology Service which targets school stressors, exams etc during this difficult period.
- **Monitoring**
  - Academic performance is managed by the Virtual Head Teacher and held accountable to national targets
  - Individual children are monitored through PEP reviews on at least a six monthly cycle, as is the statutory obligation. Reviews take place as regularly as is deemed necessary on a case-by-case basis.

As discussed earlier, the problems facing looked after children are persistent. Most children enter care as a consequence of early adversity. Consequently, Support services such as RALAC are effectively responsive by nature and find it difficult to affect change prior to care entry. As a result, support services attempt to facilitate resilience factors and promote positive outcomes following care-entry by targeting school and in-care experiences. With the exception of training given to other professionals and carers, this temporal restriction is demonstrated by the way RALAC almost exclusively targets children at a time when they are already in the care system.

Furthermore, persistent problems exist with the implementation of strategies (Hibbert, 2001). This factor may be significant in explaining why poor educational outcomes experienced by looked after children have remained relatively stable over time, despite our increased knowledge base. From the interview, three main barriers were cited which make service delivery problematic:

- Firstly, many children entered care with little or no information regarding their prior academic attainments. Consequently, it is difficult to establish a baseline for of a child's underlying ability for RALAC to be primed at the outset re: where to target support. This loss of data may occur for a number of reasons within the areas of care and school experience, such as social workers not placing enough emphasis on academic attainment levels, disrupted attendance causing inaccurate teacher assessments, and difficulties in keeping up-to-date information on such a transient population.

- Secondly, much of the funding for service initiatives is drawn from different sources which are not 'ring-fenced'. This means that funding is unstable, thus impacting on the service's ability to offer consistent individual needs-led support. Given that outcomes of interventions are difficult to measure, a failure to provide evidence of effectiveness of resources/provision may present a difficulty for Local Authorities to justify spending whilst maintaining a 'best value' approach.

- Finally, schools lack an understanding of where their responsibility to promote inclusion of looked after children ends and RALAC responsibility starts. If external support is not provided, these children can inadvertently be socially excluded; conversely, if support is offered, schools can allow RALAC to take on responsibility for their inclusion. This 'Catch-22' dilemma creates uncertainty re: how best to facilitate inclusion and to what extent and when support should be offered.

These factors, according to the head of RALAC, inhibit the service's ability to carry out its statutory obligations, and/or to facilitate the delivery of new and innovative initiatives across the city, within a consistent, evidence-informed, responsive approach.

In summary, Overdale City is unique to have a designated service of this size. Practice such as that described is by no means universal across Local Authorities and depends on the importance placed on LAC by each authority. Progress within Overdale City is evidenced in improvements in attainment levels collected from 2007/09 to 2008/09, where data show an advance in the attainment levels achieved at Key Stages 1 and 2, and in GCSEs (see Table 3 for more detail). However, it is important to emphasise that whilst support given by RALAC might promote positive change, the significance of this is inextricable from a range of other factors, unique to each child. Therefore improvements from 2007 to 2009 may arise from a variety of factors, such as ability differences between cohorts. In future practice it is hoped that, as schools practices become embedded, RALAC will be able to deliver direct interventions at a much earlier age (e.g. pre-school) and at an earlier stage in care (e.g. children on the edge of care). However, it does seem clear that even with such a wealth of Governmental guidance, there remain many problems to be solved at a 'grass-roots' delivery level. These will need to be addressed to allow for successful implementation of current and future interventions.

Table 3: Local Figures for the achievement of looked after children in Overdale City

	2007-2008		2008-2009	
	No.	**%**	**No.**	**%**
Missed 25 days	25	10%	32	14%
Statement	63	26%		26%
KS1				
TOTAL	**7**		**12**	
L2 Reading	4	57%	8	67%
L2 Writing	3	43%	6	50%
L2 Maths	4	57%	8	67%
KS2				
TOTAL	**17**		**19**	
L4 English	8	47%	11	58%
L4 Maths	7	41%	7	37%
L4 Science	8	47%	14	74%
KS3				
TOTAL	**36**		**NA***	**NA***
L5 English	11	30%		
L5 Maths	5	13%		
L5 Science	11	30%		
GCSEs				
TOTAL	**42**		**23**	
1 A* - G	36	86%	22	95%
5 A* - G	19	45%	10	44%
5 A* - C	4	9%	3	13%

NA* - Not available at the point of writing this paper

The concept of corporate parenting applies to multiple services (Felicity-Campbell, 2000). As the first service aim sets out above (i.e. to work closely with schools, Social Care, Health and other agencies to ensure that that the specific needs of looked after children are accurately identified), the effectiveness of RALAC depends in large part upon foundations of interagency collaboration. Within Overdale City, Educational Psychologists play a key role in supporting looked after children.

The role of Educational Psychologists in raising achievement of looked after children

Over recent years, much thought has focused on how educational psychology services can promote the life chances of looked after children (e.g. Farrell et al, 2006). The role of Educational Psychologists working with looked after children has over the years shifted from individual practice developed at a local level towards contribution within multi-agency integrated services (BPS,

2006; 3). Greater recognition of the needs of looked after children has highlighted that Educational Psychologists are in a key position to be able to coordinate and promote collaborative working to support children in the care of Local Authorities (BPS, 2006). As a result, great emphasis has been placed on raising awareness of, and provision for these children.

In the many facets of their work, Educational Psychologists come into direct contact with children in the care system, and those children on the edge of care, on a frequent basis. Often this is due to concerns being raised about the behaviour or learning of a particular child. The role of the locality psychologist is emphasised by the BPS (2006):

> *'Educational Psychologists have training in child development, they are aware of factors which enhance confidence, emotional well-being and allow children to flourish. They have a knowledge of how children learn and why they sometimes fail, managing behaviour and knowledge of childhood difficulties through applied psychology they have a contribution to make to understanding the dilemmas of looked after children, such as the feelings of rejection and alienation can have on their functioning and their sense of belonging'. (BPS, 2006:p9).*

Psychologists can coordinate and support change in one of the most influential aspects of a child's life: school experience. By applying informed perspectives, drawn form the knowledge base of psychological research and theory, Educational Psychologists promote a deeper understanding of personal and social development, behaviour and learning for other professionals (Dent and Cameron, 2003). On a practical level, Dent and Cameron highlight that Educational Psychologists are able to draw upon the knowledge base of psychological research to:

- treat vulnerable children as a priority group;
- improve curriculum access;
- make classrooms more supportive;
- incorporate psychology in Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) and in Pastoral Support Plans (PSPs);

- recognise the potential of schools to promote positive change. E.g. to understand that traditional behaviour strategies might not be effective for these children; and
- promote positive school culture.

Dent and Cameron (2003; p13-15).

On a theoretical level, Fletcher-Campbell (2000) argues that Educational Psychologists' unique position within both research and applied psychology, allows them the opportunity to facilitate future progress on two levels: by playing a role in increasing the evidence base for initiatives; and uncovering facilitators/barriers to the implementation of practice within services and local authorities. Educational Psychologists can play a central role in the process of helping teachers, parents and carers, and peers to support individual children in the face of adversity by identifying and enhancing the resilience factors in their lives (Dent and Cameron, 2003), such as by helping parents/carers to understand the importance of early childhood attachments.

The link between theory and application in the educational psychology role is demonstrated by practice within Overdale City. Overdale Psychology Service works closely with RALAC, both through links with the service's Vulnerable Children's Team (VCT) and through the general Educational Psychologist role. The 3-tiered approach employed by Overdale City encompasses findings relating to the within child, family/care placement, school and Local Authority dimensions discussed earlier in this paper. More specifically:

1. Assessment of needs – it is essential that a full assessment of the child's needs is carried out. This may involve a number of agencies including the Psychology Service, Special Needs Teaching Service, RALAC & Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Schools have a critical role in this process, both in gathering data and referral to relevant professionals.

2. Once a child's needs have been assessed it is vital that they are placed in an appropriate educational setting. Once again this will involve a number of agencies including the school.

3. Having been placed in an appropriate educational setting priority should be given to ensuring maximum attendance, positive engagement and the removal of the threat of short term or permanent exclusion.

Only when these 'platforms' are in place can the issue of attainment be addressed (Stewart, *unpublished*).

Within the assessment of need tier, an important and perhaps distinctive contribution of educational psychology may include assessments of looked after children's educational/cognitive ability. For a variety of reasons, children often enter care with little record of educational achievement, leaving educators and support services without information on a child's level of ability or attainment. In their day-to-day role Educational Psychologists use a variety of approaches to assessment to develop a baseline of children and young people's capacity to learn. At the point of care entry, Educational Psychologists may therefore have a role to play in assessing each child, which should help to highlight which areas my need specific focus and particular interventions. On a strategic level, this would help Virtual Head Teachers accurately track the academic progress of this vulnerable group of children, thus increasing the level of accountability in each authority.

Conclusion

> *'Education changes people- all people- and the challenge is to bring young people who are looked after in touch with the education that is their entitlement'.* (Fletcher-Campbell, 2000; p146).

The poor educational participation and performance of looked after children and young people has now become a standard, and usually significant, item of discussion in official publications in the area of education (Goddard, 2000; 79). However, despite our increased knowledge base concerning the experiences of children in care and associated risk factors, not much has changed in terms of outcomes. Future endeavours to raise the achievement of looked after children should be approached in two key areas:

Firstly, every child's experience is unique. There is not one factor (e.g. pre-care, in-care or school experience) which jeopardizes children's educational chances. Rather, a complex interaction and accumulation of a range of factors, combine to influence each child in unique ways. The traditional focus of much research has been on vulnerability: that is, those children who are most likely to succumb to negative outcomes in life. In response to the lack of progress over time, it has been suggested that it is now time for a redirection of research, away from the strong problem-deficit approach (Goddard, 2000) which has characterised research over the last twenty years. Dent and Cameron (2003) argue that we should instead take an optimistic perspective, focusing on those resilient children who achieve success despite often multiple adversities; that is, exploring the 'qualities which might cushion a vulnerable child from the worst effects of adversity in whatever form it takes and which may help a child or young person to cope, survive and even thrive in the face of great hurt and disadvantage' (Gilligan, 1997; 12). The weight of evidence suggests that incorporating resilience-promoting strategies in services to children and young people is an effective approach (Roosa, 2000). Dent and Cameron (2003) argue that resilient children often seem to be able to understand what has happened to them (insight), develop an understanding of what has happened to others (empathy) and experience a quality of life that is often denied to others (achievement). An improvement in this area may help to provide an evidence base for proactive interventions for children in care and thus protect children against potential risk factors. However, the complex interaction between variables can make the phenomenon of resilience difficult to operationalise, work towards and measure.

Secondly, the range of services and professionals involved with looked after children need to look inwards as well as outwards in order to promote educational success. As the wealth of guidance about how to enhance the academic achievement of looked after children continues to grow, more thought needs to be given to the facilitators and barriers to its successful implementation. Fletcher-Campbell (2000) argues that key tasks for improvement should include improvements in record keeping; sharing school information; inter-agency collaboration; and valuing the learner's perspective.

As is the case with the inclusion of other minority groups, part of logical future reform requires the systematic and appropriate dissemination of evidence and information (p146).

In response to the enduring needs of this vulnerable group, educational psychology seems, potentially at least, to offer a pivotal and distinctive role in raising achievement. The flexibility of educational psychology is unique and distinctive. Educational Psychologists work across professional, service and institutional boundaries, encompassing learning, behaviour and emotion. They are able to take a primary prevention, risk-reduction, early intervention and tertiary prevention approach and work on within child, school, family and the community levels. As such they may play a key role in supporting many aspects of a looked after child's life at both a pro-active and responsive level. As the Educational Psychology profession debates its role and undergoes wider changes in structure and methods of delivery, now might be a time to act upon the recommendations of the BPS Working Party Report and more fully embed practice that supports the identification, intervention and monitoring of this complex and vulnerable group of children.

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Appendix 1: The Diversity of Overdale City
A Summary of Key Demographic Facts: 2008

Overdale City is a modern 21st century global city. It is home to many people of British origin and those from many other parts of the world.

Understanding the diversity of Overdale City is crucial to all public authorities in the city and the information below gives just a glimpse of the many significant facts and figures that all decision-makers and service providers should know.

1. **Ethnicity**
   - approximately 40% of Overdale City's population has an ethnic minority background and the city is projected to have a non-white majority population sometime after 2011
   - most, 28%, of Overdale City's minority ethnic population are Gujarati Indians, originally either from East Africa, especially Uganda and Kenya, or from Gujarat, India
   - other smaller communities in the city include the African Caribbean and Somali communities, both at around 3% each, as well as Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, other African and a Chinese community
   - 54% of Overdale City's school pupils have an ethnic minority background.

2. **Age and Gender profiles**
   - Overdale City has a relatively young population as 45% of residents are under 29 years old
   - 52% of Overdale City population is female, 48% is male
   - the number of people over 60 in Overdale City is declining as older residents move to the neighbouring areas in the county
   - nearly a quarter of older people in Overdale City are from Black and ethnic minority communities.
   - there are substantially greater proportions of women aged 20 - 35 and over 65.

3. **New Arrivals**
   - the city is home to nearly 1000 asylum seekers and refugees, many of whom are single young men
   - it is estimated there may be up to 5000 failed asylum seekers, or 'hidden migrants', living in the city
   - it is estimated that since 2005 significant numbers of economic migrants from the new European Union states now live in the city. Numbers may be between 3,000 – 5,000; most are from Poland.

4. **Population Projections**
   - Overdale City has a population of 295,200 (2008 revised ONS estimate)
   - it is believed this figure still represents a significant 'population undercount'.

5. **Disability and Sexual Orientation**

- there is a lack of data, both nationally and locally, on disabled people and lesbian, gay and bisexual people
- it is estimated that 1 in 5 local people are disabled, based on national treads
- it is estimated that 6 - 8% of local people are lesbian, gay or bisexual, based on national estimates.

6. Faiths

- in Overdale City there are approximately 240 faith groups across 14 different faiths
- there are 123 places of Christian worship, 29 mosques, 22 Hindu temples, 7 Sikh Gurdwaras, 2 Jewish synagogues and one Jain temple
- over recent years the Muslim population has significantly increased.
- it is estimated that about 80% - 90% of Muslim school pupils attend madrassas after school

7. Languages

- 16% of people in Overdale City prefer to speak Gujarati, 3% Punjabi, and 2% Urdu. Other smaller language groups include Hindi, Somali, Bengali, Arabic and Polish
- for 45% of primary school children, their first language is known, or believed to be, other than English
- English is commonly spoken by 81% of residents.

8. Educational Attainment

- although the rate of increase is above average, educational attainment rates in the city are low
- the percentage of children achieving 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C has increased over the last five years. The GCSE results for Indian young people are higher than the national average for all children
- there is educational under-achievement amongst Black male students. The average levels of under-achievement within this group in Overdale City are higher than the national average.

9. Skills and Literacy Levels

- Overdale City has high levels of poor literacy – reading and writing in English – 68% compared to the national average of 56%. This means that approximately two-thirds of residents cannot read or write English easily.
- 19% of Overdale City's workforce has no recognised qualifications which is almost twice as high as the national figure
- 33% of local businesses report that skills shortages are having an impact on business performance.

10. Economic Development and Employment

- the employment rate for Overdale City is low at 65.3% compared to 74% nationally
- people with an ethnic minority background are more likely to be unemployed than white people

- within the ethnic minority population – Indian people are more likely to be employed; African Caribbean, Somali, Pakistani and Bangladeshi people are more likely to be unemployed
- 16% of employees in Overdale City are in manufacturing and 80% are in the service sector
- the largest employers and the greatest number of employees are now concentrated in public administration, education and health sectors. These account for 32% of all employment in the city
- Overdale City has a large number of small businesses.

11. Poverty and Deprivation

- Overdale City is ranked as the 20th most deprived local authority in the country (2007 IMD)
- areas of the city fall within the most deprived 5% of all areas in England. They are mostly in the centre and west of the city
- the map of poverty and deprivation across the city differs from the map of ethnicity.

12. Health

- Overdale City has poor rates of health. Within Overdale City there are significant differences in the patterns of disease - between both ethnic groups and those groups of differing socio-economic status
- perceptions of 'poor' health are particularly prevalent amongst the Irish, Black Caribbean and white populations of the city.

13. Community Safety

- Black and ethnic minority residents in the city are significantly more worried about crime than white residents. This covers domestic burglary, vehicle crime, deliberate damage to property, people using or dealing in drugs and teenagers hanging around.
- Asian residents are more worried about being mugged or robbed, and more worried about domestic violence, than are white or black residents.

14. Community Cohesion

- Overdale City has a reputation for welcoming and celebrating diversity
- the residents of Overdale City recognise that the city is both multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-faith
- the major location for cross-cultural mixing in Overdale City is local shops, followed by places of work.

15. Participation

- in the 2007 local elections, electoral turnout was higher in wards with higher ethnic minority populations
- in the 2007-2011 Council, 31% of members have an ethnic minority background.
- in the 2007-2011 Council, 20% of members are women.

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule- Meeting with Service Head of RALAC

General:

- When did RALAC start?
- What professionals make up the team?
- How does the service define 'achievement'? Multi-faceted term.
- Current situation? Recent achievement statistics?

Identification

- How do you identify LAC? Given the amount of transience amongst the population- how do you identify those children? (process)
- What information are you given?
- What information do you collect? (E.g. baseline achievements, reasons for entry into the care system)
- What information would you like to be given/collect?

Support

- Based on three areas indentified in most recent DCSF guidance (Improving educational attainment of children in care), how do you support:
  - Impact of pre-care experience
  - Impact of the care system (instability, time out of school, carers not being quipped to support learning/development)
  - The role of the school system.

How have national initiatives (statutory obligations) been implemented?

- Virtual school head? (raising the profile of LAC, positively influencing professionals)
- Designated teacher regulations
- Higher education bursary regulations?

- What have the barriers been?
- What has facilitated there implementation?
- Are there any additional local initiatives:

Monitoring/reviewing

- How do you monitor the educational achievements of LAC? (Regularity of contact, reviews etc)
- What are the long-term outcomes experienced by these children?
- What happens locally to LAC locally post-16?

PPR2

'The therapeutic influence of friendships': a small-scale evaluation of a Circle of Friends intervention

By Daniel Rouse



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Abstract

The continuous making and breaking of friendships represents an important part of growing up. The relative merits of friendships are well documented (e.g. Olsson et al, 2003), however more recently, interest has focussed on what happens when friendships do not develop as expected and/or fail (Barrett and Randall, 2004). In response to a complex piece of casework, the current study evaluates a small-scale Circle of Friends (CoF) intervention. Having evolved over the past 20 years, this approach has developed to support children experiencing social difficulties by nurturing the development of 'social competence' for a focus child, with the help of a close peer group. In this study participants in the CoF consisted of a target child ('J', a Year 4 child experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties) and six other children. Potential changes in social competence were evaluated either side of a five-week intervention period using two approaches: the Emotional Literacy Checklist, (El-AI: Faupel, 2003), and using a peer nomination sociometric tool (Banerjee, *Unpublished*). Although caution is needed to evaluate the findings of the present study, several positive trends were found using the EL-AI checklist. However, it appears that any changes in the EL-AI data did not translate into changes in the classroom, and predicted improvement in the social inclusion of the focus child was not found from sociogram data. Having discussed findings against a backdrop of related research, the study concludes with a brief discussion of the value of such peer support approaches in the context of evidence-based practice.

Introduction

Friendship makes prosperity more shining and lessens adversity by dividing and sharing it.

Cicero (106BC – 43BC), *On Friendship, 44BC*

But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restored and sorrows end.

William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616)

Implicit in both quotes is a message that friendships offer not only shared experience, but also some kind of restorative and life-enhancing value. Positive relationships appear essential to the overall quality of our lives and our ability to cope with inevitable losses, frustrations, disappointments and failures (Faupel, 1998; p4). J is an 8 year-old boy in need of such nurture and support of friendships. The following paper sets out to explore the effectiveness of a Circle of Friends intervention in building the social cognition skills needed to develop, maintain and repair reciprocal and mutually satisfying relationships. The paper begins with a pen portrait of 'J', an 8-year-old boy who has experienced a great deal of adversity in his short life and whose challenging behaviours place him at risk of both social and school exclusion.

As Barrett and Randall (2004) suggest, a crucial element of the role of an Educational Psychologist is to investigate the hypotheses underpinning a perceived problem, part of which is to explore the social status of a child. Consequently, I will suggest my working hypotheses of how the adversities faced by J may be manifest in subsequent difficulties within the school and home environment. Following this, I will discuss the Circle of Friends approach, and will investigate the background literature into the theory and application and outcomes for this intervention. The paper will culminate in a description of the implementation, and evaluation of the effectiveness, of the Circle of Friends intervention in the case of J.

The case of J

Information has been gathered through meetings with adults in J's school, J's mother and assessment with J himself (including observations and individual work). To structure my hypothesis formulation and to guide my thinking, the Monson et al (1998) framework for problem analysis was used- See Figure 1.

Figure 1: The case of J, using the Monson et al (1998) problem analysis model. Please refer to Appendix 1 for a more detailed assessment, comprising a summary, conclusions and recommendations from a Local Authority report.

Background information, role and expectations

- J is an 8 year old boy who attends a small junior school in an inner-city local authority.
- Recent bereavements
- Inconsistency of care at home.
- Main difficulties:

- Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (e.g. aggressive outbursts, controlling and inconsequential behaviour)
- Deteriorating behaviour placing J at risk of exclusion

I became involved with J and his family following an Educational Psychology Service referral. At this point, my role was primarily to support the inclusion of J within day-to-day lessons and activities, and to present recommendations and strategies to reduce further risk of exclusion.

Initial Guiding Hypotheses- See Appendix 1 for more detailed discussion and subsequent information gathering/lines of enquiry

My *Initial Guiding Hypothesis* (Monson et al, 1998) leads me to believe that J has some underlying emotional difficulties and faulty cognitions that are impacting on his social, behavioural and educational development. *See Figure 2 for Interactive Factors Framework (IFF) regarding J. This framework highlights all of the difficulties either observed or discussed in relation to J's case.*

Identified Problem Dimensions- See Figure 2 (IFF) for more detail

J has a range of quite complex individual needs. It is my opinion that J's emotional difficulties and faulty cognitions are affecting his behaviour, which seems to be restricting his academic success, detrimentally affecting his self-esteem, causing significant behavioural difficulties and contingent peer rejection.

Integrated Conceptualisation

J seems to be entrenched in a negative behaviour cycle. I believe that J may beleive that the attention he desires can only be gained by performing unacceptable behaviours. These behaviours, in turn, socially isolate him from his peer group and make his limited social interactions difficult and he finds himself increasingly excluded by his peers during the school day. This further impacts on J's self esteem, which adds to his sense of helplessness and makes him more prone to 'act out' to get the attention he wants/needs. All these factors combine to make J a particularly complex and vulnerable character, who will need a multi-faceted and long-term approach to bring about significant and sustained changes. Figure 2 highlights currently problematic areas and the hypothesised causes of each difficulty. As can be seen, there are several currently problematic areas. The following intervention should not be seen in isolation and, as such, each significant area of difficulty is being targeted in some way:

- Regulation of emotion: via Targeted Mental Health in School (TAMHS- e.g. DCSF, 2008) involvement and though Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) assessment.
- Loss: though bereavement counselling
- Inconsistencies of care at home: Via Child Behaviour Intervention Initiative* (CBII) and TAMHS support
- Learning/behaviour support at home: thorough EP involvement.

* The CBII is a multi-agency team which offers early intervention for children (aged 0-11) and their families where there are emerging difficulties in behaviour and emotional well-being.

Figure 2: Interactive Factors Framework (Monson et al, 1998) for child J, aged 8 years, involved with EP service due to 'social, emotional and behavioural difficulties'

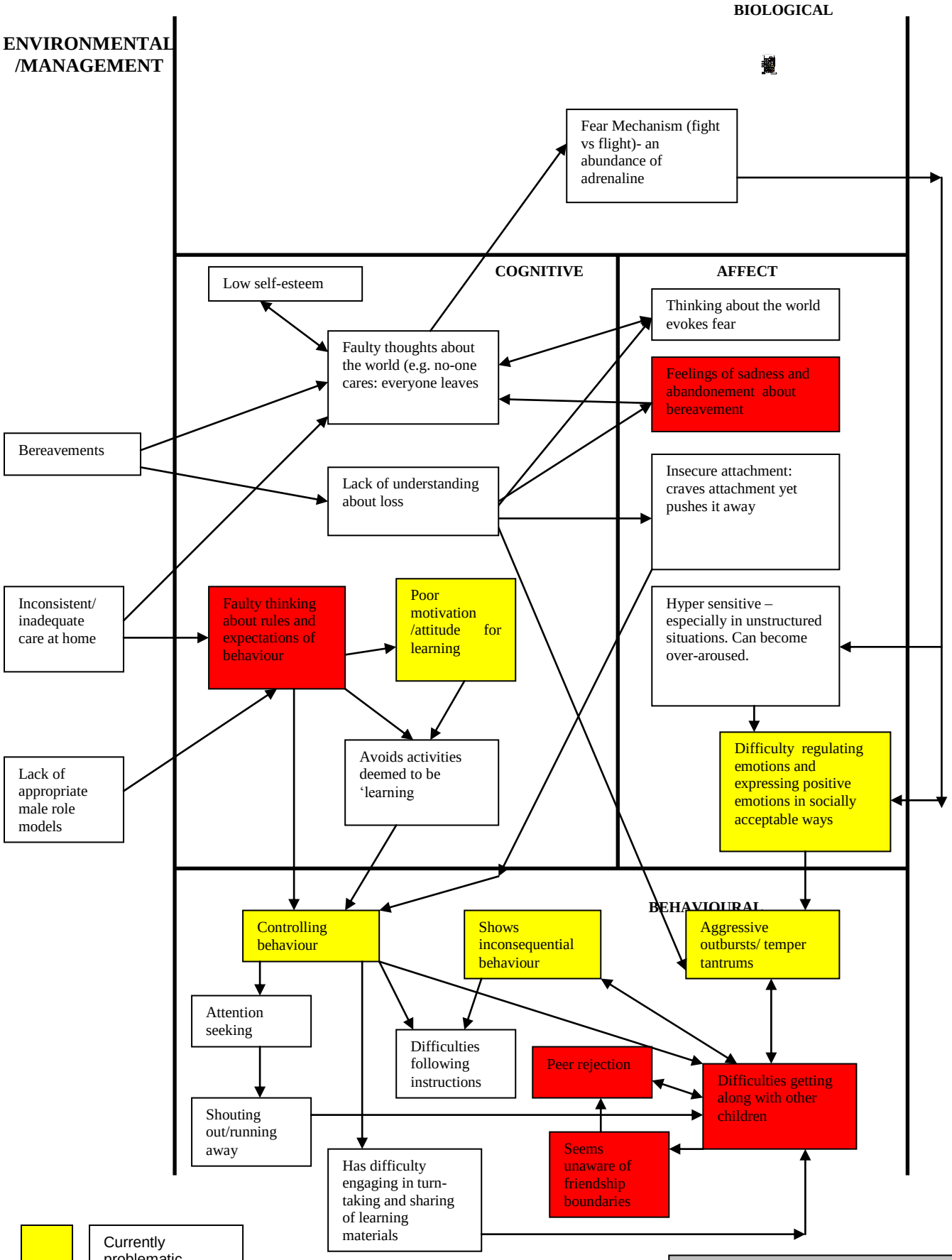


Figure 2: Interactive Factors Framework diagram for J, aged 8 years, involved with EP service due to 'social, emotional and behavioural difficulties'.

In summary, my main working hypotheses are:

- J is experiencing difficulties understanding his recent bereavements
- J has developed inappropriate learned behaviour patterns
- J's behaviour is causing difficulties with initiating and sustaining peer relationships, which are further compounding behavioural difficulties.

Literature review

The value of friendships

As inherently social beings, our continuous 'making and breaking' of relationships represents a significant part of our lives, which affects and influences our internalised and externalised thoughts, feelings and behaviours. The value of friendships has been considered by those interested in resilience. Olsson et al (2003) suggests sociability and the ability to build relationships as a significant resilience factor: the dynamic process involving interaction between risk and protective processes, internal and external to the individual, that act to modify the effects of an adverse life event (Rutter, 1999). Bagwell et al (1998) suggests:

> *Children's experience with peers moderates the relation between risk variables and maladjustment. Positive experiences with peers and friends provide some degree of resiliency for a child who is at risk of poor outcomes, due to early socialisation experiences, genetic vulnerabilities, or ecological factors. Conversely, the additional stress of rejection by peers and failing to establish a mutual friendship can interact synergistically with the existing difficulties of the vulnerable child and thus exacerbate the potential for negative outcomes (p151).*

The weight of evidence suggests that incorporating resilience-promoting strategies in services to children and young people is an effective approach (Roosa, 2000). Dent and Dent and Cameron (2003) argue that resilient children often seem to be able to understand what has happened to them (insight), develop an understanding of what has happened to others

(empathy) and experience a quality of life that is often denied to others (achievement) (p5). Ballard (1983) argues that as one component of efforts to increase children's resilience, there is value in intervening to increase the number of peer interactions, as long as the characteristics that result in their peer status are first identified (p122).

The complexities of friendship

Friendship groups change throughout our whole life and, as such, represent a dynamic process that sees the gathering of individuals of shared interests, shared beliefs and/or shared situation. As Barrett and Randall (2004) suggest, 'peer acceptance and friendships in early life provide opportunities to practise social skills, promote a sense of inclusion in social groups and institutions such as schools, and develop a sense of identity through social comparison' (p354). Most take the development of these friendships for granted and as parents, we might expect our children to build mutually satisfying relationships naturally, at and away from school (Shotton, 1998). However, for a multitude of complex and interacting reasons, this is sometimes not the case: some children experience feelings of isolation and loneliness. Shotton (1998) suggests that certain types of behaviour often accompany such social isolation, with some children responding with attention seeking behaviours, which may manifest in classroom disruptions and other 'acting out' behaviour. Furthermore, Coie and Kupersmidt (1983) found unprovoked aggression to be a strong correlate of rejected status. Alternatively, some children may 'emotionally retreat' and isolate themselves further.

Although often unnoticed, socially isolated children are a particularly vulnerable group in schools (Roffey et al, 1994). The consequences of social isolation are wide ranging and provide a key indicator of subsequent adjustment problems at school and in later life (Wentzel and Asher, 1995). In the short term, children who experience isolation may achieve poorly in secondary school and may present with higher then expected levels of truancy and delinquency (Fredrickson, 1991), while in the long-term, these children are more likely to experience mental health problems later in life (Cowen et al, 1973; Mental Health Foundation, 1999). However, interpretation

of these findings should be drawn cautiously, as correlation does not demonstrate causality.

Coie et al (1983) developed a way of determining children's social status within classrooms based on quantifiable measures obtained from peer nomination data. As a result, Coie et al suggest five distinct sociometric status profiles: popular, rejected, neglected, controversial, and average, which are linked to the reciprocal relationship between the child's presenting behaviour and their responses to social isolation. Coie et al suggested that children's social status, developmentally across time, remains quite stable, especially for children who are not accepted by their peers.

Most recently, focus has been targeted on the 'rejected' and 'neglected' groups of children (Barrett and Randall, 2004) as the most 'at risk' groups of children. It may be that a child has a high rate of peer interactions, but that these are unsuccessful and thus the child is 'rejected' by peers. Alternatively, a child may have few interactions and be 'neglected' by others (Barrett and Randall, 2004; p354). Hence, one group is overtly disliked and the other group largely ignored. Asher and Dodge (1986) argue that this distinction is important for a number of reasons: rejected children are most likely to exhibit overtly aggressive and disruptive behaviour; are most likely to remain socially rejected when moving to a new setting; report higher levels of loneliness; and finally rejected children are most likely to experience adjustment problems later in life (p444). Furthermore, Weiner (1986) proposed a model of motivation which suggests that how peers make attributions about behaviour directly influences their reactions towards a child. This suggests that if children make negative attributions towards a peer, they will behave negatively toward him/her. Hence, the complex picture of recursive difficulties facing these children suggests rejected children require early and targeted intervention.

Social Competence

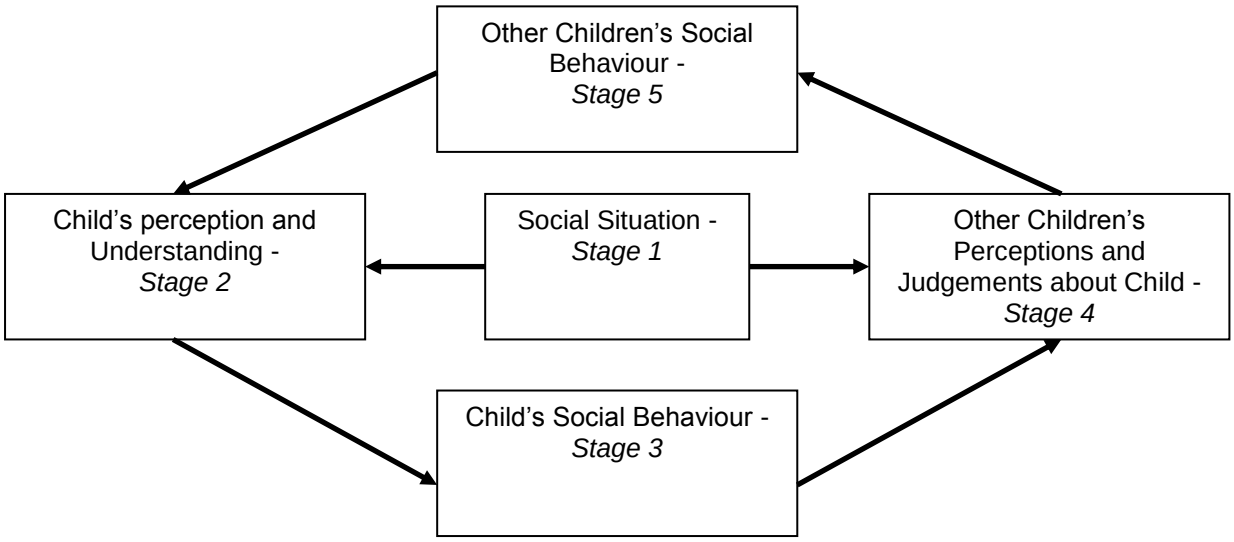
Dodge et al (1986) present an interactive model of social competence, which highlights the complexity of social relationships and incorporates both behavioural and cognitive approaches (See Figure 3). This model contains

circular chains of causality and takes account of interactions between individual, relational and environmental influences (Fredrickson et al 2005; p198).

According to Fredrickson et al (2005), the approach incorporates:

- within-child factors, such as the ways in which the child thinks and feels, as well as their friendships and social skills levels;
- situational factors, such as aspects of the physical environments, as well as the framework of rules and management practices adopted by adults; and
- other children's responses, which include their perceptions and interpretations of a child's behaviour, as well as what they say and do in response

Figure 3: A model of social competence in children by Dodge et al (1986; p51)

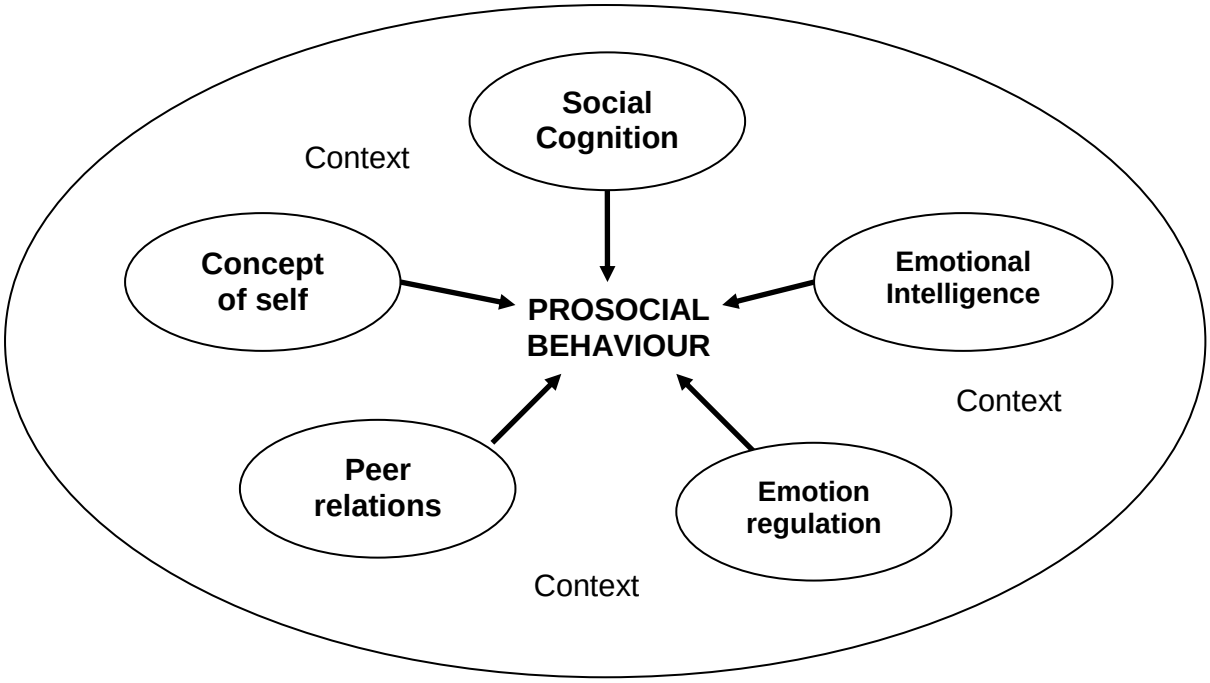


Fredrickson and Turner (2003) argue that the outcomes obtained from social skills programs appear stage-specific to Dodge et al's (1986) model. Traditionally, most interventions to repair social isolation have focussed on *Stage 3* ('child's social behaviour') of the model; targeting social and problem solving skills in a behavioural 'stimulus-response' approach. However, Fredrickson (1991) argues that we should move away from a 'within child' approach in which peer rejection is understood purely in terms of a deficit in the rejected child's individual characteristics, and should instead focus on the context of children's ongoing relationships. This model is unique because it incorporates reciprocal elements of 'social cognition', where the focus child

and other children's perceptions, understandings and attributions of a situation and behaviour are taken into account in a continuously dynamic process. A child's 'social cognition' interacts to produce behaviours (which may not be the same each time the same situation is encountered) that are based on previous experience (e.g. previous success, knowledge of others' personalities and previous reactions) and perceptions of current social situations. Thus the child is actively constructing: making judgements and attributions about each situation *(Stage 2*: Dodge et; 1986), which may, in turn, need specific input and training. To achieve effective generalisation and maintenance of changes in social behaviour, it is important to target currently established social networks (*Stage 4:* Dodge et al; 1986). Failure to do so may produce limited short-term improvements for the isolated child.

Consistent with the social cognition element emphasised by Dodge et al (1986), Booker and Faupel (2009) extend the cognitive-behavioural concept of social competence. Booker and Faupel suggest a constructivist approach to social competence in which complex mental structures are actively assembled or built in the mind, rather than being passively acquired: 'prosocial behaviour relies on the ability to modulate behavioural and emotional responses to what is regarded as socially appropriate by the group or culture' (p1).

Figure 4: Factors influencing prosocial behaviour (Booker and Faupel, 2009)



As can be seen in Figure 4, Booker and Faupel posit that at any particular moment, a child or young person's prosocial behaviour will be mediated by:

1. the layers of context within which the social situation is contained, e.g. organisation and wider culture, expectations and norms;
2. the child's understanding of the situation;
3. his/her level of emotional intelligence (see Goleman 1998 for more detail);
4. the skills s/he has developed to regulate his/her feelings and behaviour;
5. the quality of relationships in the group in which the child is currently part of, and;
6. the idea s/he has of his/her self and his/her ability to function in the specific setting. (2009; p1).

The key distinction between this approach and the Dodge et al (1986) model is the emphasis given to the influence of context, which relies on an individual's social evaluation before, during and after, context-appropriate behaviour is chosen. This suggests a need for perception and attribution training specific to cultural and situation specific norms and expectations.

Given the complex and multi-dimensional concept of social competence discussed above, as a departure from the more traditional concept of social skills, it appears that interventions should reflect a wider understanding of how relationships are initiated and sustained. This report focuses on an intervention which addresses on both the dynamic socially constructed and reciprocal nature of social networks suggested by Dodge et al (1986) and the numerous interacting elements of pro-social behaviour posited by Booker and Faupel (2009). The Circle of Friends approach utilizes existing social networks to support the development of social competence (in it's widest sense) within peer groups and within a focus child: in this instance for J.

Circles of Friends

The 'Circle of Friends' approach (CoF) originated in North America as a way of including children with disabilities in mainstream schools (Pearpoint, Forest and Snow, 1992). CoF is an intervention that involves peers in helping a child

to change their behaviour and, at the same time, has the potential to change peers' behaviour and attitude towards a child experiencing difficulties. It offers a practical method for working towards the values associated with inclusion: 'a means of including vulnerable and marginalised youngsters into the school community by harnessing its creativity and commitment' (Whitaker et al, 1998; p60). From the outset, the CoF approach has been applied in the United Kingdom with children of varying ages, with a wider range of difficulties (such as with Autistic children: e.g. Whitaker, et al. 1998) and in a variety of settings (e.g. Barrett and Randall, 2004; p356). Of particular relevance to the present study, this approach has subsequently been developed to support the inclusion of pupils experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) in schools (Newton et al, 1996). CoF involves enlisting the support of peers to set up a friendship circle around a focus child who is experiencing difficulties. Enabling schools to meet the need of troubled young pupils was at that time, as today, often experienced as particularly challenging (Taylor, 2004).

Fredrickson et al (2005) suggest CoF quickly became influential in the UK, appearing as an example of good practice in DfEE Circular 10/99 *Social Inclusion: pupil support*. James and Leyden (2008) argue that this is now a widely promoted approach, endorsed in the UK by the then Department of Children, Schools and Families (e.g. OFSTED, 2003). The CoF approach is consistent with current developments in pedagogy and the curriculum, and according to Taylor (2004), fits succinctly with developments that encourage pupil participation, as promoted in the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989; Article 12), such as:

- the National Curriculum PSHE and Citizenship frameworks (DCSF, 2005);

- the OFSTED Framework (OFSTED, 2009), which focuses on pupil participation and the contribution of the wider school;

- the five outcomes emphasised in the 'Every Child Matters- Changes for Children' (DFES, 2004) – staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being; and

- recent government guidance 'Working Together: giving children and young people a say' (DFES, 2004).

According to the original UK model suggested by Newton et al (1996), a friendship circle is established around an isolated child ('the focus child'), and meets regularly to carry out activities, to problem solve and discuss the difficulties the focus child has with peer relationships (Barrett and Randall, 2004; p355) The 'special group' helps to set, monitor, and review weekly targets in a meeting facilitated by an adult (Fredrickson et al, 2005). Based on the qualitative observations of adults involved in a variety of circles of friends, Barrett and Randall (2004) claimed the benefits of this approach for the focus child and other class members include: increased empathy, increased problem solving, enhanced listening skills, increased ability to identify and express feelings, improved understanding of the links between feelings and behaviour, and heightened awareness of an individual's power to change (p356). Wider multi-layered benefits of this approach have been reported by Shotton (1998) who, through the use of individual case studies, found increased feelings of support from teachers, development of empathy and understanding amongst the remainder of children inside and others outside of the class, and with parents.

Since its original conception, several adaptations of the approach have been developed, differing most significantly in the number of focus children in a circle, whether the focus child is present and named during the preliminary whole class discussion, and the overall focus of the CoF (see Table 1, for more detail). Further detail regarding the method adopted in the current study is given in the Methodology section.

Table 1: Models for establishing a CoF.

Research source	How many target children??	Focus child present during whole class discussion?	Whose need is the circle primarily intended to address?
Newton et al, (1996)	1	No	Focus child
Shotton (1998)	1	Yes	All circle members
Barrett and Randall (2004)	2 or more	Yes	All circle members

Newton and Wilson (1996; as cited by Barrett and Randall, 2004) recognised the different starting place adopted in this approach from that of a social skills deficit approach:

> *Too often (peer) acceptance of individual students is conditional on their behaviour changing before they are deemed to belong. When attempting to include by building a circle, what changes first is the behaviour of those around the focus person- the child who is at the centre of the circle' (p13).*

One of the major benefits of the intervention is that it focuses upon the impact peer groups have on behaviour and does not predominantly focus on attributes of the target child, as do many behaviourist interventions (Fredrickson, Miller and Cline, 2008). Over the last 5-10 years there has been growing awareness of the powerful impact that the peer group can have in a range of ways (Fredrickson et al, 2005), such as with cooperative learning (Sapon-Shevin et al, 2002), peer mentoring (Smith et al, 2002) and various approaches to bullying (Maine and Robinson, 1993; Bukowski and Sippola, 2001). It is now realised that the classroom social network can be readily utilized and that the CoF approach can add to the available range of social interventions. Such a support network approach is commonly used in other domains, such as the treatment of addictions. This approach therefore represents a departure from a 'behavioural' person-focused social skills approach, to a peer group-focused social cognition approach. However, it must be noted that the decision to use the Circle of Friends approach largely depends on the cognitive capacity (and thus age) of the recipient peer group. From a developmental perspective, the effectiveness of such an approach depends on individual variations in cognitive maturity, such as receptive and expressive language and exposure to social experiences.

A significant criticism of the CoF intervention is that few evaluations have been conducted and, as such, it has failed to establish a convincing evidence base. Fredrickson et al (2005) posited that the few evaluations of the CoF intervention had found encouraging results, but that the research base consisted mostly of small case study methodologies (e.g. Shotton 1998; Barrett and Randall, 2004) and/or qualitative analysis of participant

perspectives and impressions (e.g. Taylor and Burden, 2000; and more recently James and Leyden, 2008). Although these approaches have proved useful in illustrating the intervention, highlighting themes and developing hypotheses in relation to CoF, they have not provided objective measures of the impact of this approach (Fredrickson et al, 2005; p200).

An example of a positivist empirical study is reported by Fredrickson and Turner (2003), who identified 20 primary aged pupils for intervention in a CoF intervention study. These 20 pupils, identified as having SEBD by an Educational Psychologist, were then split into two groups (a comparison group and a CoF intervention group). The design of the study made it possible to use pre-post, between group analysis to compare changes (Fredrickson et al, 2005; p201). Evaluation measures were selected to target the different elements of the interactive model of social competence (Dodge et al, 1986). Using a sociometric measure, findings showed an increased willingness of other children to play with the focus child. Furthermore, within group analysis showed teacher ratings of peer acceptance increased significantly during the intervention period. Very few other changes were found to have occurred (Fredrickson and Turner, 2003; p201). However, the Fredrickson and Turner (2003) study did not incorporate a design capable of differentiating between the contribution of the set-up meeting cf. circle meetings in contributing to change (James and Leydon, 2008; p49). Consequently, a further study by Fredrickson et al (2005) measured peer acceptance before and after the set-up meeting. The findings of this study showed that the peer group were more accepting and less rejecting of the target child following the initial meeting. Results supported the hypotheses informed by the earlier research by Fredrickson and Turner (2003) that CoF interventions impact on the attitudes of the peer group rather than the behaviour of the focus child. Fredrickson and Turner (2003) found parallels with a study by Whitaker et al (1998) which suggested ‘recognition of positive attributes, greater understanding of difficulties and a much reduced tendency to blame the child’ might provide explanatory psychological mechanisms for this (p64).

As an approach, CoF is still in a stage of relative infancy and literature concerning its efficacy is limited. Barrett and Randall (2004) highlight the weaknesses in paradigms used in CoF evaluation, suggesting that ‘literature

is (was) fairly sparse, largely descriptive and attempts at evaluation are (were) predominantly focused on the experiences of all those involved in the interventions' (357). Now, several years on, the approach seems to have progressed and its applications widened. However, still few detailed evaluations have been conducted. To date, issues raised within previous research relate to a need to evaluate the effectiveness of CoF interventions across the classroom environment (including children outside of the circle), using more objective means of analysis, such as pre/post comparison measures and/or sociometric questionnaires (Barrett and Randall, 2004). I would, however, question the generalisability of such findings even were such designs and measures used, in that it is not possible to isolate variables and identify factors in the long term that can reliably be attributed to the CoF intervention. Analysis of the present study will reflect both the need for more objective measures of outcome and qualitative measures.

Reasons for intervention

The Circle of Friends approach in the current case aimed to repair the social aspect of J's school experience. It is hoped that by increasing J's social cognition and enhancing peer acceptance and understanding, J would begin to enjoy the social dimension of school and thus begin to make different, more positive choices when interacting with his peers. Recursively, the intervention aimed to strengthen peer empathy, understanding and tolerance of J, creating a more supportive social context within which J would be able to 'experiment' with these more 'positive choices' with reduced risk of rebuff as a result of reputational bias. This intervention should not be seen in isolation, but rather as a focused strategy to encourage positive relationships, alongside other interventions from a wide range of professionals, including:

- support for J's family to provide emotional containment, reciprocity and behaviour management of J;
- further assessment of J's mental health and emotional well-being (via the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS); and
- systemic change within the school to provide understanding and developed ways of working, which further provide for J's complex needs

Methodology

Setting

As a Trainee Educational Psychologist Working within the Local Authority of Overdale City[2] in the East Midlands region of England, I link to a number of schools for core school-based work. The setting in which the CoF intervention took place was one of my link schools, where staff agreed to run the intervention outside of the hours allocated by the Psychology Service due to ongoing concerns about J. The setting is a mixed Junior School with 364 pupils aged between 7-11 years. See Box 1 for a description of the school given by the most recent OFSTED Report in April 2009.

Box 1: Descriptive detail given by OFSTED about the setting (April, 2009)

This large Junior School serves a diverse community. About half of the children come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Although many of these children are learning English as an additional language, few are in the early stages of doing so. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties.

Participants

- Focus child:

As described in the earlier pen-portrait, the focus child, J, was referred to the Psychology Service due to his experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The social aspect of these difficulties was identified as a significant factor within an interactive factors framework. I made a decision to carry out the CoF intervention based on my appraisal of J's identified needs, and on the aims and outcomes reported in previous research.

- Other CoF members:

Following an initial whole class meeting, children were asked to volunteer for a CoF group. Members of the group were selected from the volunteers using a non-probability purposive sampling method. The criteria for this purposive sample were to include:

[2] The name of the Local Authority has been changed to ensure confidentiality.

- a cross section of the classroom peer group, including boys and girls;
- a number of children with whom J wished to be friends, identified using a sociogram (see measures); and
- any other children who were experiencing difficulties due to social isolation, either through being rejected or neglected.

The initial whole class session consisted of 29 Year 4 children (18 boys and 11 girls). The final CoF group consisted of 6 children (4 boys and 2 girls).

Ethical considerations

According to the British Psychological Society Code of Practice (BPS, 2009), research should adhere to four ethical principles, which constitute the main domains of responsibility within which ethical requirements are considered. These are respect, competence, responsibility and integrity. Table 2 sets out how these principles have been applied in the context of the current study.

Table 2: Application of ethical principles to the current study.

Ethical Principle *	**Standards**	**Application in current study**
RESPECT	GENERAL RESPECT	- Respect the knowledge, insight, experience and expertise of clients: ground rules negotiated in the sessions - Explain selection method during initial visit. Everyone to have opportunity to participate, although finally selected by purposive sampling
	PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY	- Pre/post-testing anonymous (apart from focus child) - Data kept in accordance with LA protocol - LA protocol: Make it clear to children at outset that information will be shared if a risk to themselves or others is considered likely
	INFORMED CONSENT	- Visit parent of focus child to explain rationale and process. Seek parent's written consent - Written consent of child following a meeting to discuss intervention. - The study will use an initial parents/carer consent ('opt-out') letter prior to initial whole-class session - Following this, a written consent letter ('Opt in') will go to parents/carers of selected children before inclusion in the final CoF group

	SELF-DETERMINATION	- Include right to withdraw within consent letters - Explain right to withdraw to children during initial visit and subsequent CoF meetings
COMPETENCE	AWARENESS OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS	- Maintain familiarity with BPS Ethical Code of Practice
	ETHICAL DECISION MAKING	- Identify ethical requirements for research before research commences - Recognise and record any ethical dilemmas during the intervention process, and address these within professional supervision
	LIIMITS OF COMPETENCE	- Practise within my competence level - be able to justify reasons for decision-making within research
	RECOGNISING IMPAIRMENTS	Identify and address any impairments to personal practice and to the participation of staff and children involved with the research
REPONSIBILITY	GENREAL RESPONSIBILITY	- Be mindful of any potential risks to researchers and participants
	TERMINATION AND CONTINUITY OF CARE	- Make clear within consent letters and initial visit with children the conditions under which the intervention may be terminated - Terminate the intervention if I become aware that the intervention is off no benefit to the participants
	PROTECTION OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS	- Make due consideration for any individual differences within the class/group, and differentiate methods accordingly - Follow up any issues that arise that may require further assistance by school, parents/carers or other professionals
	DEBRIEFING	- Methods of debriefing clients (school, parents/carers, children) explained during initial contact - Debrief to all parties involved in the research though appropriate medium
INTEGRITY	HONESTY AND ACCURACY	- Maintain high standards of honesty and transparency about research decisions, and avoid bias in the evaluation
	AVOIDING EXPLOITATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST	-Clarify the parameters of my professional role within the context of the research and following the end of research - Recognise conflicts of interest and inequity of power relationships
	MAINTAINING PERSONAL BOUNDARIES	- Maintain professional relationships at all times
	ETHICAL MISCONDUCT	- Challenge colleagues/clients/participants who may act against strict ethical guidelines adhered to in this study

* BPS (2009)

CoF Procedure

For the project to be successful, it was considered necessary to have the support and understanding of all parties involved. The first step in setting up the CoF intervention was to gain the freely given, informed consent of J and his mother, and also to gain the commitment of key stakeholders within the school, specifically the Headteacher and the Inclusion Manager. To do this, meetings were arranged with each of the above, in which I explained the rationale, process and anticipated outcomes of a CoF intervention. Following this, written consent was gained from J's mother (For a copy of the parental consent letter- see Appendix 2) and oral agreement was gained from the Headteacher.

As noted in the Introduction, there are several approaches to the setting up of a Circle of Friends (See Barrett and Randall, 2004). The present study employs the methodology initially set out by Newton et al (1996). Fredrickson et al (2005) summarise the key components needed for setting up a CoF, according to Newton et al (1996; Taylor, 1997) - see Box 2 overleaf. However, as will be considered in the discussion, there are inevitable differences in the way each CoF is delivered and therefore several caveats must be taken into account.

Prior to the initial meeting with the class, a consent letter was sent out to the parents/carers of the other children in the class. This letter was designed to allow parents to 'opt out' of involvement (see Appendix 3). This was considered acceptable as children already participate in Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons in school through the SEAL programme (DFES, 2005), of which, friendships is a theme. No parent declined to give permission for their child to participate.

Consistent with the process identified by Fredrickson et al (2005), the initial whole class session was then delivered by myself (See Appendix 5 for a copy of the whole class plan), accompanied by an Assistant Educational Psychologist and also by a Teaching Assistant from the school. At the end of the whole-class session, children were asked to volunteer to be part of the actual Circle of Friends.

Box 2: Original structure of the CoF approach

The Circle of Friends approach for assisting children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties was initially set out by Newton et al (1996) and Taylor (1997). Fredrickson et al (2005; p199-200) summarise the key components of this approach. (For more detailed guidance, see Taylor, 2004). The following method was adopted in the current study:

Establishment of prerequisites: *The commitment of the school management is secured to provide staff time and other resources needed. Arrangements are made to obtain permission from the focus child, his parents and carers and the parents/carers of the other children in the class, especially the intended members of the circle.*

Whole class discussion to set up the CoF: *This is facilitated by someone who is familiar with CoF from an external agency, such as educational psychology or behaviour support service, with the class teacher present. The focus child consents to be absent from the initial discussion, to enable the class members to speak freely. Ground rules for the discussion, similar to those for circle time, are established, such as listening, speaking in turn, confidentiality. The class is asked about the focus child's strengths, before being asked to identify difficulties. The facilitator talks with the class about friendships and the feelings and behaviours that may be engendered by a lack of friendship and support. Links with the focus child's behaviour are drawn and suggestions generated for assisting him/her and improving the situation. Finally, volunteers are sought to be part of a support group, (CoF), for the focus child. Six to eight pupils are selected to form the CoF and the other pupils are thanked for their contribution and reminded that they also can continue to help the focus child in the ways that have been discussed.*

Initial meeting of the CoF: *Generally, this takes place immediately after the class discussion and is led by the external facilitator with the class teacher contributing. The focus child joins the group, the class discussion is summarised for him/her and s/he is centrally involved in naming the group, identifying targets to be worked on and strategies to be implemented by the focus child and other members of the group in the coming week. Ground rules for the group are established, including confidentiality, listening to each other and seeking an adult if worried.*

Weekly meeting of the CoF: *These are held over a period of 6-10 weeks, facilitated by an adult, usually from the school but an external facilitator can also fulfil this role, resources permitting, with support from the school. The meetings are carefully managed to be a positive and supportive experience for all the children in the group. Each meeting begins with a warm up game and a reminder of the ground rules. The group reviews the targets and strategies agreed the previous week and discusses what went well, what did not go so well, and what should be done next week. Successes are celebrated, problem solving strategies considered, and action for the coming week agreed. Role play may be used in practising particular behaviours for trying out plans.*

Prior to the beginning of the first CoF meeting, consent was gathered from those children selected to form part of the final circle. A consent letter was designed to allow parents to 'opt-in' to their child's involvement in the circle (see Appendix 4). No parents declined to give permission for their child to participate.

The subsequent weekly CoF meetings took place for 5 weeks and adhered to the process set out by Fredrickson et al (2005; see Box 1 for more detail). An

example of an individual circle plan, activities and discussions can be found in Appendix 6.

Measures

Measures chosen to evaluate the CoF intervention aimed to elicit quantitative and quantifiable data. Specific measures were selected that are consistent with Dodge et al's (1986) model of social competence, and Booker and Faupel's (2009) multi-factorial approach to prosocial behaviour. Measures chosen for the present study were the Emotional Literacy- Assessment and Intervention Checklist (EL-AI- Faupel, 2003: see Box 3) and Sociogram (see Box 4).

Box 3: Emotional Literacy- Assessment and Intervention (EL-AI- Faupel, 2003)

Emotional Literacy-Assessment and Intervention (EL-AI) provides a practical tool to discover pupils' strengths and weaknesses in five areas of emotional literacy (See Appendix 7 for a copy of the checklist). Consistent with Goleman's (1998) model of emotional literacy which focuses on personal competence and social competence, the checklist provides measures in the domains of self-awareness, self-regulation; motivation, empathy and social skills. Targeted at ages 7-11, the three standardised checklists enable the user to assess the perceptions of adults in schools (teachers, teaching assistants etc), parents and carers at home, and the young people themselves. The current study uses both the pupil checklist (consisting of 25 items) and the teacher checklist (20 items). Respondents are asked to answer the questions on a 4-point Likert scale with the descriptors 'very true', 'somewhat true', 'not really true' or 'not at all true'. Low scores equate to low levels in the particular domain, and conversely, high scores equate to high levels in a particular domain. For a copy of the test- see Appendix 7.

The EL-AI fits with Booker and Faupel's (2009) theoretical approach to prosocial behaviour and also addresses stages 2 and 4 of the Dodge et al (1986) model of social competence.

As a means of measuring 'children's social behaviour' at Stage 3 of Dodge et al's (1986) model, I planned to use an additional measure (the Social Competence Inventory- SCI; Rydell et al, 1997) to gather information on children's social behaviour via a class teacher perspective. However, due to difficulties at the setting school to implement this, this was excluded (see discussion for more detail).

Box 4: Sociogram

According to Banjeree (*http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/robinb/socio.html, accessed 08.04.10*), a Sociogram is a visual representation of interpersonal relationships within a group that helps to establish patterns of peer acceptance and rejection. Sociograms are often a starting point to identify pupils who may be socially isolated amongst their peer group. Sociometry involves asking pupils to identify up to three positive 'most liked' (ML) and up to three negative 'least liked' (LL) members of their class, using standard instructions and proforma (see Appendix 8). The subsequent findings can be entered into an online sociometric tool (available at the above website) that visually presents information , based on original social status categories identified by Coie et al (2003), about 'popular', 'rejected', 'controversial' and 'neglected' pupils in diagrammatic form. Information below explains these categories in more detail. This method of evaluation helps to establish any changes in peer relationships, consistent with Stage 4 of the Dodge et al (1986) model of social competence.

Abridged from Banjeree (Unpublished)

Popular: Receive high numbers of ML nominations and low levels of LL nominations. The majority of pupils with this classification tend to be prosocial, showing socially competent behaviour.

Rejected: Receive low numbers of ML nominations and high levels of LL nominations. This is considered to be the most 'at risk' peer status classification, as it is often associated with externalising and/or internalising behaviour. Banjeree posits that further assessment of these pupils, measuring their feelings and patterns of thinking is important to support them in targeted group work.

Controversial: Received high numbers of ML nominations and high levels of LL nominations. They are often dominant characters who are perceived to be highly popular, yet they may be aggressive, disruptive and often intimidating.

Results

- Emotional Literacy Checklist results:

Tables 3 and 4 present from both pre-test and post-test data for all the children in the sample, including the focus child (F). It should be noted at the outset that child F exercised his right not to participate in the post-testing element of this part of the evaluation (this will be considered more in the following discussion section): there are fewer post-test scores (n=5).

Overall, the total mean scores for the pre-test and post-test were 75.33 (SD = 10.82) and 83 (SD = 9.41) respectively. This equated to 10.18% increase in the aggregate emotional literacy score following the intervention.

Individually, four out of five children (A, B C and E) who participated in the CoF intervention increased their overall emotional literacy score. The mean increase per child equated to 5.29%. Child D, who did not make a positive movement, stayed within the average descriptor for the checklist.

Table 3: Emotional Literacy Checklist pre-test results.

PUPIL	F/M	Overall EL	Description	Empathy	Motivation	Self-Awareness	Self-Regulation	Social Skills
		PRE TEST						
A	F	67	Below Average	13	13	14	12	15
B	F	81	Above Average	18	15	12	17	19
C	M	87	Above Average	18	18	16	18	17
D	M	82	Above Average	16	17	12	19	18
E	M	77	Average	18	17	15	14	13
F	M	58	Well below average	12	7	16	10	13
	Mean	75.33		15.83	14.50	14.17	15.00	15.83
	SD	10.82		2.71	4.09	1.83	3.58	2.56

Table 4: Emotional Literacy Checklist post-test results.

PUPIL	Overall EL	Description	Empathy	Motivation	Self-Awareness	Self-Regulation	Social Skills
		POST TEST					
A	70	Average	15	13	13	13	16
B	88	Well above average	20	15	17	19	17
C	95	Well above average	19	19	17	20	20
D	79	Average	19	15	14	16	15
E	83	Above average	20	17	13	17	16
F	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	83.00	Mean	18.60	15.80	14.80	17.00	16.80
	9.41	SD	2.07	2.28	2.05	2.74	1.92
		% increase of total sample	17.47%	8.97%	4.47%	13.33%	6.11%

For the purpose of the present study, the empathy, self-awareness, self-regulation and social skills domains of the Emotional Literacy Checklist were particularly important as they fit with Booker and Faupel's (2009) model of factors influencing pro-social behaviour and Dodge et al's (1986) model of social competence. Results (see Table 5 for more detail) indicate that:

- all 5 children improved their level of empathy by a mean of 12.38%;

- 3 out of 5 children improved their level of self-awareness (child B by 41%). The mean improvement over the sample was 8.82%, although this was largely due to large improvements by child B and D (41% and 13% respectively);
- 4 out of 5 children increased their level of self-regulation. The mean increase across the whole sample was 7.37%. Child E increased his level of self-regulation by 21%; and
- 3 out of 5 children increased their level of social skills. This equated to a mean increase across the whole sample of 4%.This increase was largely due to two scores: child C and E increased their score by 17% and 23% respectively.

Table 5: Average percentage movement per child

PUPIL	Overall EL	Empathy	Motivation	Self-Awareness	Self-Regulation	Social Skills
% movement per child						
A	4.48%	15.38%	0.00%	-7.14%	8.33%	6.67%
B	8.64%	11.11%	0.00%	41.67%	11.76%	-10.53%
C	9.20%	5.56%	5.56%	6.25%	11.11%	17.65%
D	-3.66%	18.75%	-11.76%	16.67%	-15.79%	-16.67%
E	7.79%	11.11%	0.00%	-13.33%	21.43%	23.08%
F						
Mean	5.29%	12.38%	-1.24%	8.82%	7.37%	4.04%

- Sociogram results

Table 6 sets out the matrix data from the Sociogram. Here Child F (the focus child) chose not to participate in the pre-test sociometric activity. Therefore, the pre-test information can only indicate other children's responses to him.

Sociometric data gathered from the focus child's class show specific relationships at work within the classroom dynamic, although it must be stated that these relationships reveal only a 'snaphot' in time' and are influenced by a wide number of variables. Figures 5 and 6 present visual representations of the sociometric data

The sociometric data did not generally indicate any significant changes in relationships and classroom dynamics. On an individual level, child E moved from the rejected status (with 9 'least liked' nominations) to the no category

descriptor (with 4 ‘least liked’ nominations and 1 ‘most liked’ nomination). All other children did not change by more than 2 nominations in the ‘most liked’ or ‘least liked’ ratings.

Table 6: Matrix data from the sociogram

Child	Sociogram number	Pre-intervention data		Post-intervention data	
		ML/LL* ratings	Category	ML/LL* ratings	Category
A	17	4ML	Popular	4ML & 2LL	No category
B	13	7ML & 2LL	Popular	6ML & 1LL	Popular
C	14	7ML & 1LL	Popular	7ML & 1LL	Popular
D	25	4ML & 5LL	Controversial	3ML & 3LL	No category
E	26	9LL	Rejected	1ML & 4LL	No category
F (focus child)	11	3LL	No category	2LL	Neglected

* ML=Most like to play with; LL= Least like to play with

- Method of analysis

Given the small numbers of participants taking part in the intervention, a statistical test was not used to analyse data. This decision was taken due to the potentially adverse effect of outliers, individual variations and high standard deviations within the evaluation data. Additionally, data gathered from the sample could not be said to represent a normal distribution of the population as a whole. I therefore decided to report the descriptive data from the study to highlight changes/trends.

Figure 5: A sociogram of the focus child's class <u>prior</u> to the CoF intervention

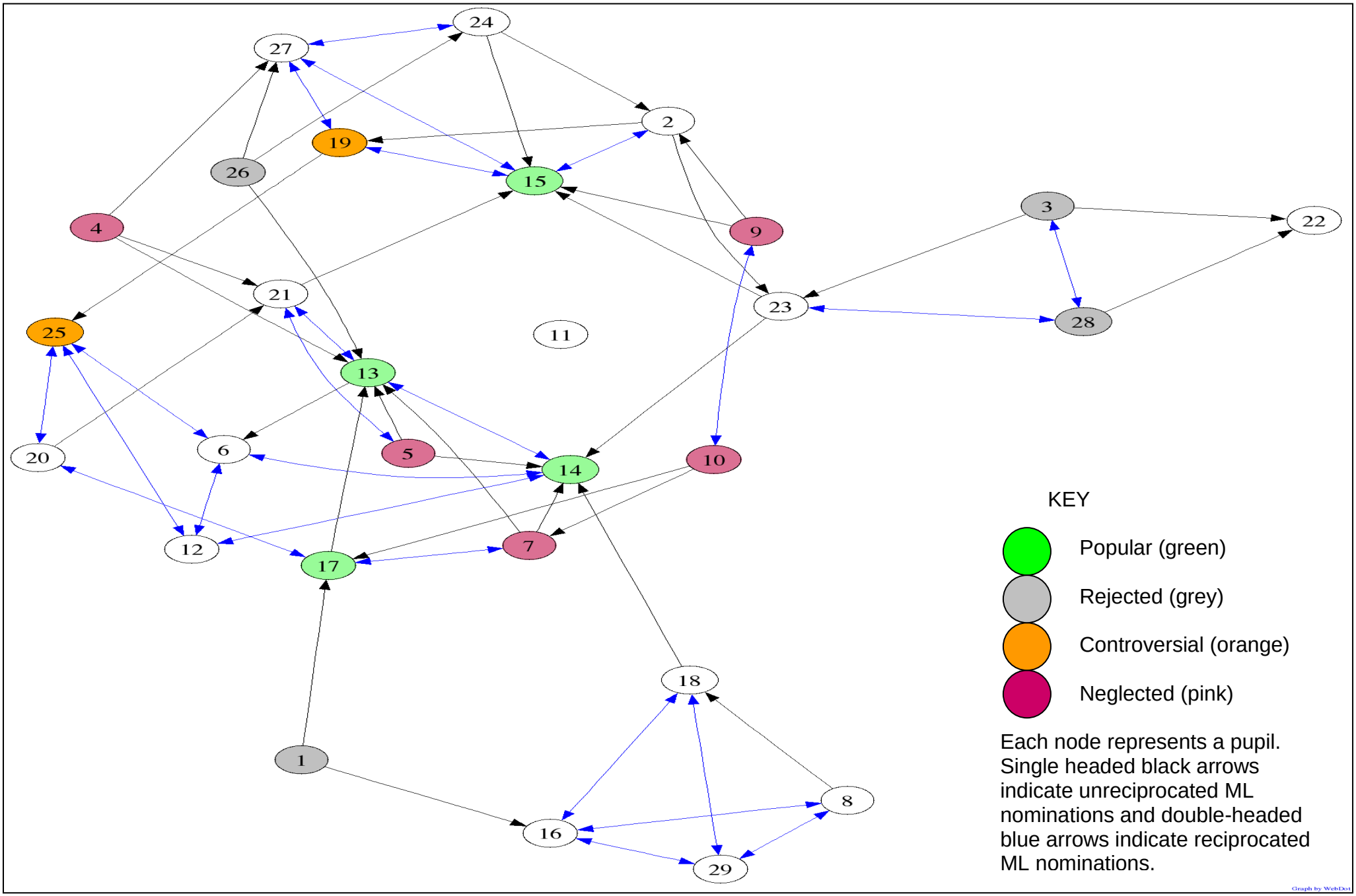
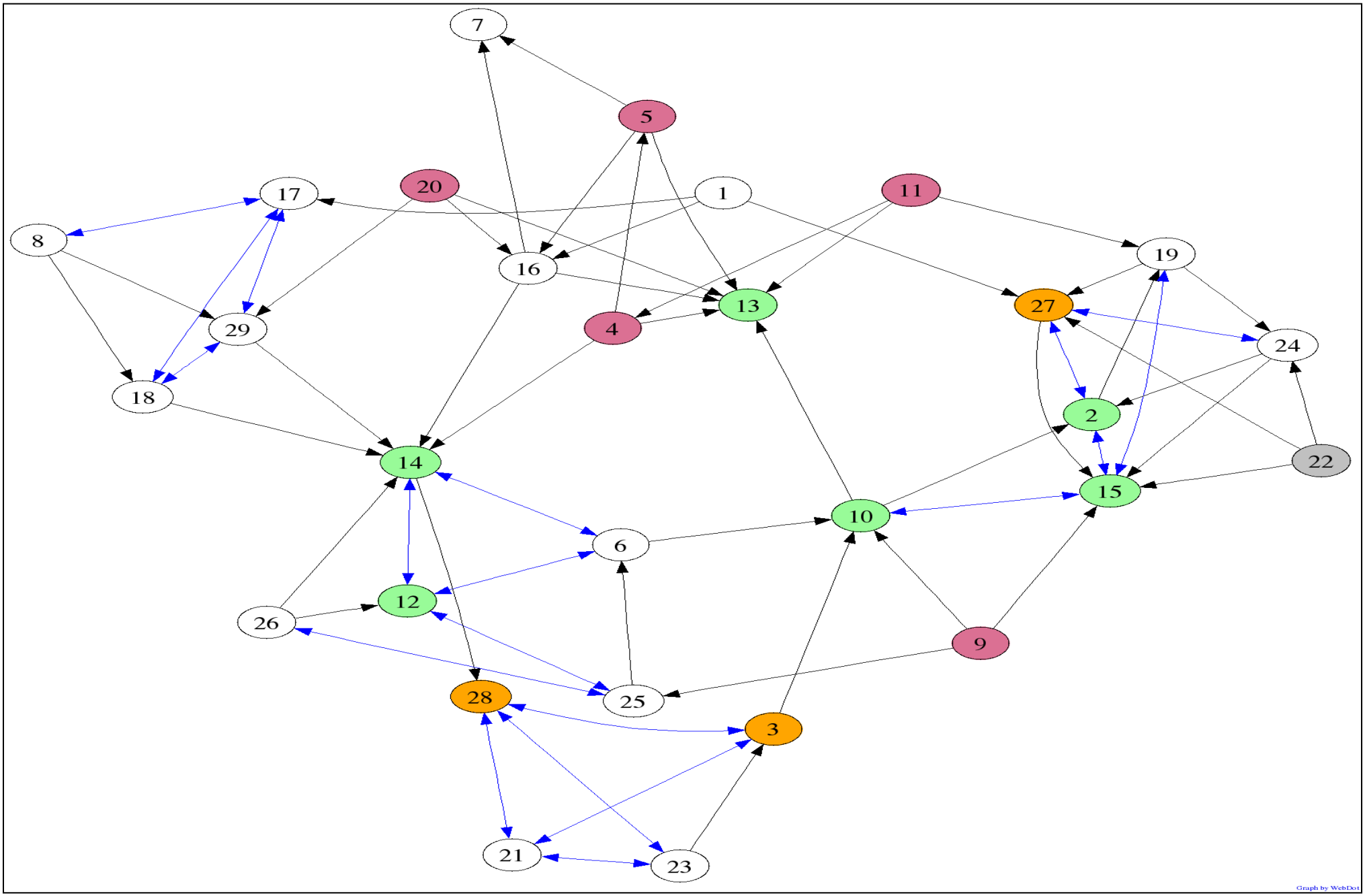


Figure 6: A sociogram of the focus child's class <u>following</u> the CoF intervention



Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to implement and evaluate a Circle of Friends intervention for J, as one part of a response to a specific case formulation. A unique benefit of the CoF approach is that it moves away from traditional formulations of social skills difficulties which focus on a deficit approach of the individual attributes of the focus child (Fredrickson, Miller and Cline, 2008) and instead focuses on building support networks around existing relationships and building reciprocal elements of 'social cognition' (Fredrickson, 1991; Booker and Faupel, 2009). It was envisaged that this would support the development of J's level of social cognition and long-term level of social skills, and also reattribute/reframe the reactions of others within the class. An additional aim of the study was to attempt to evaluate the intervention with more rigour and objectivity then has been applied in the past, as critics have argued that evaluations have been largely descriptive and focused on the subjective experiences of those involved in the intervention (e.g. Barrett and Randall, 2004; Fredrickson et al, 2005).

Although caution must be shown when interpreting the results of the study due to the small sample size and inability to isolate and exclude other confounding variables, the results using the Emotional Literacy Checklist (EL-AI) showed several positive trends. Results indicated that all members of the group that took part in both the pre and post test increased their overall level of Emotional Literacy by approx 10%. More specifically, all individuals showed an increase in empathy, 3 children (60%) increased their level of self-awareness; 4 children (80%) increased their level of self-regulation; and 3 children (60%) increased their level of social skills. However, the size of these changes varies significantly. Findings in these areas, which relate to Booker and Faupel's (2009) model of factors that influence pro-social behaviour, are similar to those reported by Barrett and Randall (2004), who showed increases in empathy, self-regulation and self-awareness following a CoF intervention. The results are also consistent with previous findings that attitudinal change tends to occur in the wider CoF group, not necessarily the focus child (Fredrickson and Turner, 2003).

By sampling and evaluating classroom dynamics through a sociogram, it was hoped that increases in pro-social behaviour/social cognition (e.g. development of empathy and understanding) and opportunities to reframe pre-conceptions and attitudes towards the focus child, might be evident post-intervention within the relational dynamics within the class. However, it appears that any changes in the EL-AI data did not translate into changes in the classroom, and predicted improvement in the social inclusion of the focus child was not found. This is consistent with findings reported by Fredrickson et al, 2005). However, it must be noted that the timeframe dedicated to the current study may not have allowed enough opportunity for such changes to occur; this suggests a need for follow up studies over time. Even so, as Dodge et al's (1986) model of social competence suggests, classmates attitudes and behaviour may not be sustained without observable behavioural change from the focus child: a point suggested within Fredrickson et al's (2005) data involving follow-up acceptance of children's peer acceptance. Furthermore, this factor may be compounded by the pervasiveness of reputational bias towards the focus child and, furthermore, by the relative permeability of friendship patterns, particularly amongst younger children.

Although previous literature (e.g. Newton et al, 1996; Taylor, 1997) appears to present a general method of delivering a CoF intervention, this is not simply a manualised intervention. As briefly noted in the methodology, several caveats must be considered when discussing this and other CoF interventions. These will be considered in turn in Box 4.

Box 4: limitations of CoF interventions

1. Outcomes of each intervention will depend upon limitations of evaluation methodology, not withstanding sample size. For example, whether standardised measures, teacher observations and/or sociometric data represent the best way to measure the effectiveness of such interventions;

2. The effectiveness of all CoF interventions will differ considerably depending on the skill set of the practitioner (including the quality of relationships that are developed) and how fully the activities address the required outcomes; and

3. The effectiveness of a CoF intervention will depend on the maintenance and generalisation of CoF principles within the participant group and across the wider class/school. Failure at this stage may result in a lack of understanding by the wider peer group and thus limited changes in the reaction of others, which may further reinforce the focus child's feeling of rejection. Therefore, the CoF approach must be accompanied by a whole class/school approach to friendships

Consequently, the outcomes of CoF interventions will vary according to the sensitivity and attunement of intervention methods and, therefore, any research into this area must consider the effect and limitations of individual, contextual and systemic factors inherent in the delivery and interpretation of CoF interventions.

A significant weakness of the present study was failure to obtain evaluation data from the focus child (J). Although consent was negotiated with J at the outset, he exercised his right not to participate in both the initial sociogram activity and EL-AI questionnaire. I suspect that there were wider reasons for this (such as his emotional state on the days set aside for evaluation) as opposed to dissatisfaction with the process. Pragmatically, this seems to be a realistic risk when working with those children who may be experiencing significant social emotional and behavioural difficulties. However, it could be suggested that J's willingness to select peers he liked to play with in the follow-up sociogram activity could be deemed an indicator of progress. During the intervention, it was impossible to control for J's emotional state prior to the CoF meetings and he displayed a number of outwardly difficult/challenging behaviour in the group. However, over the intervention period, J seemed more willing to attend and behavioural difficulties occurred with less frequency and intensity.

Issues arising from the study

Before considering the implications of the present study, I will address its limitations, many of which have occurred in previous studies in this area of interest:

- Firstly, as referred to earlier in the discussion, the small sample size may have influenced results and makes it impossible to generalise the results beyond the sample itself, therefore limiting the implications that can be drawn from the study. Similar self-criticisms have been made of earlier studies, such as Barratt and Randall, (2004); and Fredrickson et al, (2005).
- Due to the delivery of the intervention being carried by myself, (as an agent of the Psychology Service) and fleeting involvement from the school partner, there was little opportunity to train up a member of

school staff. Therefore, I would question the extent to which the intervention will continue to be used as part of the school strategy to address social, emotional and behavioural problems.

- The final point links into the investment of school partners within interventions by external agencies. From the outset, it was planned that a questionnaire would be completed by the teacher of the children within the CoF group (i.e. the Social Competence Inventory- SCI; Rydell et al, 1997), however, pre-intervention measures were misplaced and thus the findings could not be reported. A learning point was made by myself, as the researcher, that investment of time from the school should be negotiated more clearly to prevent this from happening in the future.

Conclusion

Given the long-term outcomes associated with relationship difficulties (Fredrickson, 1991; Bagwell, 1998) and increased emphasis on targeted mental health in schools (e.g.; and DFE, 2008), there is greater recognition of the role of social difficulties in wider emotional and behavioural difficulties (Mental Health Foundation, 1999). With isolated children identifiable with reasonable accuracy through teacher observations and sociometric tools, it seems obvious that assessment of social difficulties and subsequent evidence-based interventions should form part of a school's early intervention response to these and associated difficulties. The CoF intervention and a wider peer support approach provides a useful tool for school and educational psychologists to use to promote positive change and social inclusion, within a developing pedagogic context of social, emotional aspects of learning. However, convincing evidence to demonstrate the efficacy of such an approach for the target child and/or for peers who form the 'circle' remains elusive. The example presented in the current report has provided evidence that is encouraging, but by no means convincing.

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Introduction Quotes available at:

Cicero: www.Quotationspage.com/quote/2034.html
Aristotle: www.Quotationspage.com/quote/1485.html
Shakespeare: www.quotegarden.com/friendship.html

Appendix 1: Summary and conclusion of J's SEN

Section of assessment report dated February 2010 when J was aged 8 years 3 months.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

At times, J can present as a happy and charming young boy. He appears to have a good grasp of spoken language and has a vivid imagination. When J wants to, he can participate in activities and be both polite and conscientious. During these times, J can behave within expected boundaries, can concentrate for extended periods of time and also show self-directed and internally motivated behaviour. However, these incidents seem to be infrequent and for relatively short periods. In contrast, J can often present with a number of challenging behaviours which put him at risk of exclusion. These behaviours span both the school and home context.

J's behaviour appears to be a product of his experiences. J and his family have experienced a great deal of emotional turmoil and unsettlement over the past eighteen months due to unexpected bereavements. These in turn seem to have had an enormous negative impact on J's behaviour. Although there had been some minor concerns raised about J's behaviour before this period and in his previous school, I, and those who work closely with him, feel that J's behaviour has worsened as a result of recent traumatic experiences in his home life. J appears to be confused about what has happened and is reacting to instability in his personal life, which has in turn led to various inappropriate behaviours. Freedom at home might be perceived as desirable for J, instead of the rules and structure that school employs.

J appears to find it difficult to regulate his own emotions. This manifests in a refusal to work, emotional outbursts, running away, and frequent verbal and physical aggression. J has an awareness of how his body feels when he is starting to become upset, although I feel these signals pass too quickly for J to act upon. At times, I feel that J can subconsciously engage in the behaviours outlined above to gain attention and because he is not sure how else to get what he wants/needs.

J appears to thrive on the attention of others and displays a number of attention seeking behaviours, such as calling out in class and also running away. This seems to be a kind of game to J in which he likes to be chased and challenged by adults in the school. When others do not follow him during these situations, J will often return of his own accord. I feel J understands that by misbehaving he receives as much attention (albeit negative) as he wants.

During periods of anxiety in our lives, we can often attempt to closely control elements of our lives for an added sense of security and can resort back to things that we know we can achieve success. For J, I believe that this is evident by his resolute and inflexible choices to only do the things he wants to do.

Although it often doesn't appear so, I feel that J's self-esteem is particularly low. Although, when engaged, J seems to be a relatively able boy, the academic

aspects of school for J appears to be unimportant and thus is met with varying degrees of defiance. The social element of school has been negatively affected by J's inappropriate, unpredictable and often aggressive behaviour, which has led to rejection from his peers. I feel that this, in turn, has had a major impact on his self-esteem. This may explain why most of J's behaviour incidents occur at unstructured times of the day, such as break time and lunchtime.

In conclusion, J seems to be entrenched in a negative behaviour cycle. I believe that J possibly perceives that the attention he desires can only be gained by performing unacceptable behaviours. These behaviours, in turn, socially isolate him from his peer group and make his limited social interactions difficult and he finds himself increasingly excluded by his peers during the school day. This further impacts on J's self esteem, which adds to his sense of helplessness and makes him more prone to 'act out' to get the attention he requires. All these factors combine to make J a particularly complex character, which will need a multi-faceted and long-term approach to bring about any significant changes.

J's situation is significant:

- Due to his social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, J needs specific arrangements in order to independently access an age appropriate curriculum.
- J's difficulties potentially place him at risk of his not fulfilling his potential and of falling further behind his peers.
- J's difficulties are currently a potential barrier to his being able to independently access the social elements of school.

J's situation is complex:

- J displays some challenging behaviours which manifest, most significantly, from his lack of strategies to deal with moments of anxiety and stress.
- A number of factors lead to J's low level of self-esteem and self-concept which, in turn, affect his social, emotional and learning behaviour.

J's situation is enduring:

- Now in year [redacted], J has experienced social, emotional and behavioural difficulties for a long period of time.
- Despite alternative arrangements and support, J's social, emotional and behavioural difficulties have persisted.

To conclude, J's educational needs are considerably greater than those of the majority of similarly aged children. Clearly, he will require support arrangements beyond those which are usually available within the provision usually available at 'School Action Plus'.

Appendix 2: Parent consent letter

Circle of Friends

As discussed, I am proposing to set up a group (a Circle of Friends) to help and support ……. in school. This approach takes children as active participants in their own learning and helps them to think about and understand the building of social relationships by nurturing self-awareness, empathy and self-esteem. Activities and discussion within the Circle of Friends approach develop the skills needed for positive relationships, including talking and listening, problem solving, negotiation, emotional understanding and expression. These skills are consistent with those taught and developed in the Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE) part of the curriculum.

In order to monitor whether this intervention is effective, we will be using some questionnaires with the whole class both before and after the group. A further part of this will involve asking all of the children in your child's class to think about and tell us about their friendship groups. In …….. case the questionnaires will need to have his/her name on them to evaluate whether the intervention has been effective for him/her.

Participation in this intervention is voluntary and, therefore, requires your informed consent to be carried out. If, at any time during the intervention, you wish for the intervention to stop, please contact me on [redacted]. For any further questions, please contact me on the above number.

Yours faithfully,

Daniel Rouse
(Trainee Educational Psychologist)

Name of child: …….. School: ……

I have met with the Educational Psychologist to discuss the Circle of Friends intervention and I consent to my child's participation.

Signed: …… Date: ……..
Relationship to Child: …….

Appendix 3: Whole class session consent letter (opt-out)

Circle of Friends

Dear Parents/Carers,

My name is Daniel Rouse, I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist linked to [redacted] School. Following discussions with [redacted] (Headteacher) and [redacted] (Special Educational Needs Coordinator - SENCo), I am proposing to set up a group (a Circle of Friends) to help and support a pupil who is experiencing difficulties in school. This approach encourages children as active participants in their own learning and helps them to think about and understand the building of social relationships by nurturing self-awareness, empathy and self-esteem. Activities and discussion within the Circle of Friends approach develop the skills needed for positive relationships, including talking and listening, problem solving, negotiation, emotional understanding and expression. These skills are consistent with those taught and developed in the Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE) part of the curriculum.

An introductory meeting is planned for ……. that will include all the members of your child's class. It is anticipated that this meeting will last about 45 minutes. Depending on the amount of children's responses, a number of children will then be chosen to form a circle of friends for approximately five weeks.

In order to monitor whether this intervention is effective, we will be using some questionnaires with the whole class both before and after the group. These questionnaires will be filled out anonymously by pupils. A further part of this will involve asking all of the children in your child's class to think about and tell us about their friendship groups.

Participation in this session is voluntary and, therefore, if you do not wish your child to be involved or have any queries about Circle of Friends, please would you be kind enough to contact the school. For more information, please feel free to contact me on 0116 2211200.

Thank you in advance for your support,

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Rouse
(Trainee Educational Psychologist)

Appendix 4: Group selection consent letter (opt-in)

Circle of Friends

Dear Parents/Carers,

Following on from my previous letter, your child has generously volunteered to be in a Circle of Friends to help and support another pupil who is experiencing difficulties in school. Research evidence suggests that pupils all benefit from being in a group, although it is set up to help one particular child. The circle will meet weekly with an adult to review progress.

Participation in this intervention is voluntary and, therefore, requires your informed consent to be carried out. If, at any time during the intervention, you wish for the intervention to stop, please contact me as soon as possible.

If you have any objections or queries, please do not hesitate to contact me for more information on [redacted]

Yours faithfully,

Daniel Rouse
(Trainee Educational Psychologist)

Name of child: …….. School: …….

I consent to my child participating in a Circle of Friends.

Signed: …… Date: ……
Relationship to Child: …….

Please return this form to school by:
……...

Appendix 5: Whole class session plan

Circle of Friends (Whole class session)

Date/time: [redacted]
Location: [redacted]
Focus child: [redacted]

Resources: Flip chart; pens; enlarged copy of circles diagram; paper for nominations

Introduction

- Introduce myself
- Interested in how your class are getting on with each other and how you can help each other.
- Do you notice that anyone is missing this morning?
- We're here to help J – we don't normally speak about people behind their backs but we've spoken to J and his Mum and they both know that we are here to think about ways that we can help him.
- AIMS – to discuss the behaviour of J and the class as a whole and think of ways that we can help him and each other
- We're saying that as adults, we can't make it better by ourselves, so we are here to ask for your help and ideas about how we can help J and help your class get along together better.
- CONFIDENTIALITY – Does anyone know what this means? It means that what is said is this room is just between us- keeping it within the class. Its private. You can talk to your parents/carers but not to each other in the playground/other children in the school about the discussion we're having today.
- GROUND RULES – we want to set some ground rules for the session today

    1. **Confidentiality**
    2. **Listen to each other – take it in turns to speak**
    3. **Treat each other with respect – no comment is a silly comment**
    4. **Can you think of any others?**

Discussion of the focus child

We don't know J very well so we want you to tell us about him.

1. What is J doing well?

First of all can you tell us about his positives – his good points. What things does J do well? This could be on the playground, in the classroom. For example, sharing, thoughtful, drawing etc.

2. What could J do better?

What things do you think J finds difficult? E.g. sometimes he doesn't get jokes, turn taking.

Praise attempts: specific and immediate praise using child's name.

Explain to class honesty will give us a better picture of J and a better chance of being able to help.

Relationship Circle

Now we would like to have a discussion about relationships in general. We're going to have a think about all of us.

- Here we have 4 circles which represent different kinds of relationships we have with the different people in our lives.
- **First circle** is made up of people we are closest to and who love us. Would anyone like to volunteer to come up and give us some examples of people in their life who would fit in this circle? Mum, dad, brother, people we live with etc.
- **Second circle** is made up of close friends, people that we trust and may share secrets with. Would anyone like to volunteer to come up and give us some examples of people in their life who would fit in this circle? Best friend, aunt, uncle, nan, granddad etc.
- **Third circle** is made up of acquaintances (people we know but might not be close friends with). Does anyone know what this means? It means people who are part of our lives but that we may not be as close to as those in the second circle. For example, people in clubs we are members of. Would anyone like to volunteer to come up and give us some examples of people in their life who would fit in this circle?
- **Fourth circle** is made up of people who are paid to help us or look after us. For example teachers, doctors etc. Would anyone like to volunteer to come up and give us some examples of people in their life who would fit in this circle?
- So we all have different kinds of relationships with different people in our lives. Some people may have a few friends and family who they are really close to and other people may have lots of friends and family who they are not so close to.

What would it be like if…

4. Everybody has days when they are not getting on with their friends or when they move somewhere new and they don't know anybody. I want you to think about how you would <u>behave</u> if you had nobody in circles 2/3 most of the time?

- Can anyone give any examples? *Make a list on the board.* Try to get attention, get upset, find school work difficult/find it hard to concentrate etc.
- How would you <u>feel</u> if you had no one in those circles? *Make a list on the board.* Sad, lonely, unhappy, rejected etc.
- Does this sound like anyone you might know?

- Maybe some of this persons behaviour could be a result of not having many people in their circles/not having many friends? Compare list with first flip chart for J
- Maybe J sometimes behaves in this way because he is lonely and doesn't have many people to talk to?

Validate ideas: " pretty big stuff, isn't it…?

Ways of helping:

- Does anyone have any ideas of how we could help J?
- What do you think would be unhelpful for J?

Introducing the idea of a Circle of Friends

- There is a group we can set up which I've done in other schools and children have really enjoyed coming – it's called a circle of friends, although each club can think of their own name if they want to.
- The club meets once a week to talk about whatever it is they decide a pupil needs help with. We tackle these together.
- Now so that we can work well together I only have 6 children in each club, so it's very special. This does mean not everyone can be involved so I would like to know who would like to come along and then 5 names will be chosen.
- *Hand out pieces of paper* – just put your name and a 'yes' or a 'no' then fold it in half, keep your papers to yourselves so that it is an individual choice for each person.
- I'll take these away and your teacher will let you know the 5 pupils who can be part of the club in the next few days.
- If you're not chosen to be part of the club I want you to try really hard to think about what we've talked about today and remember that even if you're not in the club you can still try and help Jack and be his friend.

Speak to J after whole class session. We have discussed you with your class mates, they highlighted a few problems you are having that you may already be aware of……
They also had some very positive things to say, these included…..
Lots of children in the class wanted to join your special group of friends! We had so many offers we had to look through and pick 6 children! We are going to meet on …. with your group of friends and think of a name for ourselves!

Appendix 6: Example session plan

Circle of Friends – Initial Circle Meeting

Date/time:
Location:
Focus child:

Resources: Flip chart; pens; Emotional Literacy Checklists copies; Social Competence Inventory copies; social skills ball

INTRODUCTION (2 mins)	Introduce ourselves and explain today is our first 'Circle of Friends' meeting. The circle has been set up to help J and our group support each other in the class room. You may remember that we came in to speak to your whole class. We discussed friendships and how it may feel to not have many friends. We also discussed how your feelings may effect your behaviour.
ICE BREAKER (5 mins)	I'm going to pass this ball around the group and I would like each of you to pick one question to answer from it.
RE-STATE GROUND RULES (2 mins)	There are three very important ground rules for this group. What do you think they might be? When we meet in this group these rules are: We listen to each other We treat each other as we would like to be treated Confidentiality Recap on very important word- CONFIDENTIALITY what did that word mean? It means that we only talk about these things with the people in this group we don't discuss these issues outside of this group. Can anyone think of any others?
PRE/POST-TEST MEASURE (10-15 MINS)	Split into two small groups. Go through the Emotional Literacy Checklist with the children. Collect in.
REMINDER OF AIMS (3 mins)	Let's think about why we are setting up this 'circle of friends'. Why do you think we are doing this? 1) To work with J to help him make friends and get on with people 2) To help him to think about and sort out difficulties that he might be having 3) To support each other in helping J Set boundaries – the group is here to help and support each other and are not responsible for unacceptable behaviour against school rules. If they are concerned in any way they should tell an adult.

REASON FOR BEING IN THE GROUP (5 mins)	We would like to go round the circle and for everyone to introduce themselves and explain why they wanted to be in the circle.
GROUP TO LIST POSITIVES (5 mins)	Do you remember when I came into your class and we discussed all the good things about J? Let's list all the positive things about J. J can you add any positive things to the list? What do you think you're good at?
AGREE NAME FOR GROUP (5 mins)	Now the exciting bit! What would we like our group to be called? Votes for possible names. Examples include: 'The Happy Helpers', 'The Funky Friends'. *The name of the group must not include J's name.* Tell the group when we are going to meet again: same time and day if possible
ARRANGE NEXT MEETING AND INTRODUCE WEEKLY PROCESS (3 mins)	Agree time of next meeting Each time we meet for 'Circle of Friends' we are going to follow the same plan: Welcome and check how everyone is Reminder about group rules Review the targets from past week: celebrating success and thinking of areas where more change is needed. Discussion and problem solving together Agreeing plans for the coming week We will set targets every week and ask you to feed back on these the following session.

Appendix 7: Emotional Literacy- Assessment and Intervention (EL-AI: Faupel, 2003) Checklist

Emotional Literacy Pupil Checklist

Ages 7 to 11

First name ..... Surname .....

Date ..... Year group ☐ Boy ◯ Girl ◯

Here are some questions about you. Please try to answer them as honestly as you can. Read each question and then put a tick in one of the boxes. Make sure you do each question.

Here is an example of how to answer the questions. If you do not think you are shy at all, you would tick the box 'not like me at all'.

	Very like me	Quite like me	Only a bit like me	Not like me at all
I am a rather shy person.				✓

Now please answer the rest of the questions.

	Very like me	Quite like me	Only a bit like me	Not like me at all
1 I try to help people when they are unhappy.				
2 I often forget what I should be doing.				
3 I know what things I'm good and bad at.				
4 I often lose my temper.				
5 A lot of people seem to like me.				
6 I get annoyed when other people make mistakes.				
7 I often leave it to the last minute to do my school work.				
8 I can describe how I am feeling most of the time.				
9 I get upset if I do badly at something.				
10 I find it difficult to make new friends.				

Please turn over

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	Very like me	Quite like me	Only a bit like me	Not like me at all
11 I know when people are starting to get upset.				
12 I carry on trying even if I find something difficult.				
13 I am easily hurt by what others say about me.				
14 I calm down quickly after I have got upset.				
15 I am usually included in other children's games.				
16 I laugh at other children when they get something wrong.				
17 I make a good effort with most of my school work.				
18 I am good at many things.				
19 I am usually a calm person.				
20 I spend too much time on my own.				
21 I try to help someone who is being bullied.				
22 I find it easy to pay attention in class.				
23 I worry a lot about the things I'm not good at.				
24 I can wait for my turn.				
25 I can make friends again after a row.				

Thank you for filling in this checklist.

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Appendix 8: Administering a sociometric survey (Banerjee, *http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/robinb/socio.html*)

- These instructions apply to pupils in Key Stage 2 and above (roughly 7-8 years onwards). Pupils of this age and above can usually complete a paper-and-pencil sociometric survey in a well-managed whole-class setting or in small groups. Sociometric procedures with younger children, or pupils with specific learning needs, may involve individual assessments and/or use of photographs to aid survey completion.

- Each pupil should be supplied with a **class/group list** with first names in alphabetical order, with a code number next to each name. For example:

Abi	1
Ben S.	2
Ben R.	3
Cara	4
Ed	5

etc.

- Each pupil should also have a **sociometric survey**. To use the sociometric tools provided in this web resource, you will need to ask the pupils to make up to three positive (Most-Like, ML) nominations of classmates with whom they most like to play/spend free time. You may also ask the pupils to make up to three negative (Least-Like, LL) nominations of classmates with whom they least like to play/spend free time.

  Both ML and LL nominations will be necessary for allocating pupils to peer status groups.

- Please explain to the pupils that they are going to be filling in a short questionnaire to help you know more about their friends in class. Make it clear that there are no right or wrong answers, that different pupils will give different answers, and that they should just answer honestly by saying what is true for them. The pupils should also be told that their answers will remain private and will never be shared with any other pupils.

- The pupils should be told that if they need help or do not understand something, they can simply let the teacher/adult know by putting their hand up. Make it clear that if they do not wish to answer a question, they can skip over it. Remind pupils that it is OK if they do not feel able to nominate three classmates for each question.

- Read each question aloud and allow pupils time to answer before moving onto the next question.

Class _____ School _____ Date _____

My code _____ boy or girl

Use the code numbers on your class list to answer each question.

1. The three children in my class who I MOST like to play with: _____ _____ _____

2. The three children in my class who I LEAST like to play with: _____ _____ _____

PPR3

'The impact of Primary to Secondary School transition on social, emotional and behavioural adjustment': A small-scale evaluation of a focussed Transition intervention.

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Abstract

Childhood and adolescence is a period of constant transition: 'Some transitions are developmental, resulting from the ageing process and considerable individual physical, intellectual and emotional change, whereas some are systemic in-built structures of the school system' (Rice, 1997, p1). The multi-tiered school system used in England and Wales means that one such transition occurs at the end of Key Stage 2, when pupils traditionally transfer to secondary school. Previous research suggests that this transition can have potentially detrimental consequences on children and young peoples' progress, in terms of their social, emotional, behavioural and cognitive well being; as well as their academic attainment (e.g. Anderson, 2000). In the following study, I have described and evaluated an example of a small-scale 'manualised' intervention; designed by Overdale City Psychology Service to address the emotional needs of potentially vulnerable Year 6 pupils prior to transition. In the Summer Term 2010, 'Transitions' groups were run for 47 pupils across seven schools. The five-week intervention was evaluated using a pre- and post-intervention measure of self-esteem (BG Steem- Maines and Robinson, 1998), as well as a number of Likert scales to evaluate participant's feelings towards the upcoming transition. Although non-significant, findings indicate a small positive increase in participant's levels of self-esteem. Scaling question findings showed a statistically significant increase in participant's confidence in 'meeting new people', in 'feeling prepared to go to a new school' and 'happiness to try new things'. Subsequently, I have discussed findings in relation to previous literature on transition to secondary school, and have reflected on the 'Transitions' intervention within a wider context of Educational Psychology and evidence-based practice.

Introduction

> *'Unlike any other educational system, that of England and Wales requires a sizeable number of its school children to engage in a process that research suggests at best causes slight apprehension, whilst at its worst, deeply felt anxiety' (Galton 2000; p341).*

Students experience numerous transitions as they move through the education system (Anderson, 2000; p325). 'Some transitions are developmental, resulting from the aging process and considerable individual physical, intellectual and emotional change, whereas some are systemic in-built structures of the school system' (Rice, 1997, p1). Due to the complex multi-tiered school system in England and Wales, largely due to reorganisation in the 1970s, a substantial number of children move to new schools at times other than at 6, 15 and 17 (Galton et al, 2000). Of particular interest to the current paper, the transition between primary and secondary phases of learning at the end of Key Stage 2 has been a continuing preoccupation of administrators, teachers and researchers over the last 30 years (Lucey and Reay, 2010). Nevertheless, despite increased awareness and understanding of the effects of such transitions, as the title quote suggests, the consequences can be significant and wide-ranging.

The current paper looks at an example of intervention that aims to address problems that many children face during the primary-secondary transition. 'Transitions' is a school-based intervention, free at the point of delivery, run by Educational Psychologists and Assistant Educational Psychologists working within a Behaviour Initiative that forms part of the Psychology Service in Overdale City[3].

To understand where this intervention fits in context, it is important initially to review literature in the area of primary to secondary school transfer. Following this, I will give detail of the methodology employed when carrying out the intervention, including a brief discussion of the psychological theory at its core. Finally, having presented an analysis of evaluation data gathered from the intervention, I will interpret the results in the context of related background literature and consider implications for future research and practice.

[3] The name of the Local Authority has been changed to ensure confidentiality.

Literature review

To address the needs of children during Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition, it seems appropriate to begin with consideration of inconsistencies in definitions in this area. The following review of literature begins with a discussion of the impact of 'institutional discontinuities' in transition (Anderson, 2000; p326) on social, emotional and behavioural adjustment to secondary school and on student achievement: two key themes that run throughout this literature review. Subsequently, I will discuss what literature suggests as possible explanations for such an impact, and then discuss how schools, Local Authorities and other service providers can best facilitate successful transition into the secondary phase of education.

As will become apparent, research in this area is complementary to wider developments in educational research traditions, reflecting a move from quantitative to qualitative enquiry (Galton and Morrison, 2000). Whereas research into school transition has traditionally included large sample survey and observations (including questionnaires exploring emotional and behavioural characteristics/attributes), Lunham (2009) argues that a more recent move towards qualitative studies (including pupil voice studies), has contributed to a sophisticated understanding of *why* the transition period may have a negative impact on pupils.

Problems with definition

Within this area of interest there seems to be confusion around the inter-changeability of the terms 'transfer' and 'transition' to describe both movement between schools and movement between year groups. Galton et al (2000) use 'transfer' to describe when a whole group of pupils move from one school to another and 'transition' to describe the move from one year to another within a school (p9).

However, to ensure consistency within the present study, the term transition will be used to describe children's transfer from primary to secondary phases of school (e.g. McGee et al, 2003; Lucey and Reay, 2010; Evangelou et al, 2008).

Any discussion of year-to-year transition within school will be highlighted as appropriate.

Impact of transition

Literature suggests that the impact of transition can be broken down into two domains: social adjustment and academic attainment. However, these factors are closely related and should not be seen in isolation.

- **Social, emotional and behavioural adjustment**

Initially, research attention focussed predominantly on factors affecting students' social, emotional and behavioural development, such as the age of transfer, factors affecting school choice, and the impact of transfer as a 'rite de passage', on students' personal and social adjustment (Demetriou et al, 2000). Reviewing literature with a social and emotional focus, Lunham (2009) posits that studies appear to have explored either pupils' immediate response to the immediate transition period, or pupils' subsequent adjustment to, and experience of secondary school (p12). Interventions in the late 1960s and 1970s sought to establish greater continuity between the primary and secondary school experiences, and reduce anxiety in transition (Galton et al, 2000). Nisbett and Entwistle's (1969) early large-scale study questioned what effect transition had on pupil progress, finding that pupils who had difficulties adjusting to their new school, in particular the youngest and least mature, tended to be less successful in their schoolwork. Another significant study was carried out by Youngman and Lunzer (1977) who, when following 1500 pupils beyond the transfer, found that 10% of students experienced distress for at least the two terms after transfer. In addition, Youngman and Lunzer identified six 'clusters' of students, the most interesting of which were the 'disenchanted cluster' who, despite initial social adjustment and good academic performance, experienced a gradual decline in engagement over time, and the 'worried cluster' whose performance declined over the course of the twelve-month research period. However, there is no guarantee that these groups are stable, and thus a child may move between these groups at different points during transition.

Whereas these studies evaluated characteristics at two points (within the primary setting and at some point in the new school) and were able to identify those students for whom transition was difficult, they were not able to offer explanations of why this impact occurred (Galton et al, 2000). Spanning a five-year period (1975-1980), the much quoted 'ORACLE transfer study' (Observational Research and Classroom Learning Evaluation), published by Galton and Wilcocks (1983), adopted a different approach which used both observations, and inventories/questionnaires to measure individual characteristics and attitudes *across* the transfer process. This research found similar patterns to that reported by Nisbett and Entwistle (1969) in that anxiety peaked at the point prior to transition and fell gradually over the first year. However, a significant finding was that students' motivation and enjoyment had increased during the first term after transition, but had fallen below that measured prior to transition by the end of their first year in the new school. More specifically, losses were greatest in language and were greater for boys than girls (Galton et al, 1999). This suggests that there could be some key differences in the experiences of boys and girls during this critical period of transition. Furthermore, in a recent replication of the ORACLE study by Galton and Wilcocks (2003), similar patterns in levels of enjoyment and motivation post school transition were found.

Whereas early research saw most researchers operating within a framework that saw problems with transition explained primarily through individual developmental changes (Anderson, 2000), Schumaker, (1998) noted a shift in focus towards contextual influences on students' abilities to negotiate successful transitions and deal with two types of 'institutional discontinuity': 'organisational discontinuity' (changes in school size, departmentalisation, academic standards, teacher expectations, student autonomy); and 'social discontinuity' (changes in diversity of student population, relations with teachers, and sense of belonging) (Anderson, 2000; 326).

More recently, qualitative studies suggest, contrary to earlier views, that anxiety is always present under the surface and does not elevate and then quickly subside as previous studies suggested (Galton and Morrison, 2000).

Furthermore, Lucey and Reay (2010) argue that anxieties concerned with coping at a new school quickly fade and are replaced by anxieties about schooling in general (Ward, 2001; as cited by McGee et al, 2003).

In summary, stress associated with transition is widely recognised among researchers but there is disagreement about the focus, duration and severity of this stress (Ward, 2001; as cited by McGee et al, 2003). It appears that anxieties and excitement around transition can result in changing identities during this period (Lucey and Reay, 2010). Although historically the majority of studies have focused on the effects on social adjustment (i.e. social, emotional and behavioural) during secondary transition, a significant move over the last twenty years has seen an increased interest in the apparent dip in standards following KS2 transition, which has firmly cemented transfer/transition on the research and political agendas.

- **Impact on pupil progress**

Whilst early studies into transition focused primarily on the personal and social effects of transition, relatively few studies (e.g. Suffolk LEA, 1997) investigated the impact of transitions on pupil progress (Galton et al, 1999). In a review of literature, current and historic, Lunham (2009) cites Galton and various colleagues as particularly influential within this field of enquiry since the 1970s. Reviewing data collected during the original ORACLE study by Galton and Wilcocks (1983), Croll (1983) found between 40-50% of pupils within the original ORACLE study failed to make progress in standardised tests of core areas (e.g. English, maths and reading comprehension) in their first year of secondary school. Subsequently, similar patterns were observed in the ORACLE replication study- 20 years on (Galton et al, 1999).

More recently, there appears to have been an increase in interest in the secondary transition ‘dip’ in performance. Galton et al (1999) suggest that, even after an allowance is made for a ‘summer dip’ in performance following lengthy summer holidays, two out of five students fail to make expected progress in the year following transition (Galton et al, 1999). Further support for this argument has been reported using a combination of qualitative (e.g. observations and

interviews) and quantitative methodologies (e.g. analysing figures) by OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education), (1998) who found a steep rise in the number of schools where progress in Year 7 was judged to be unsatisfactory- a figure which amounted to approximately 50% of schools (OFSTED, 1998).

In summary, there is substantial agreement that there is often a decline in achievement following transition (McGee, 2003; p3). However, it appears the nature of 'progress' is prone to misinterpretation. Rather than a decline in pupil progress per se, Galton et al (2000) suggest this phenomenon amounts to a hiatus in pupil progress: that is, students tend not to progress to the extent expected in the year following secondary transition. Comparing figures internationally, patterns of findings from research in the USA (e.g. Alspaugh, 1998; Anderman et al, 1999) have been 'remarkably consistent' with those found in the UK (Galton and Morrison, 2000; 443). In addition, Alspaugh (1998) found that middle schools produced a 'double drop' in pupil progress, although it is not clear whether the results of these 'academic dips' are cumulative (Galton and Morrison, 2000). This finding suggests that it is school transfer per se, rather than the age and 'developmental stage/readiness' of children, which causes 'dips' to occur.

However, as will become apparent when considering explanations for this, contributory factors are numerous, complex and interrelated (See Box 1 on page 104).

Some explanations

From literature discussed above, it seems apparent that some pupils lose ground at transfer, some children find the social, emotional and behavioural adjustment in the transitional process difficult, and 'some students for whom transitions are particular problematic: suffer decreases or declines in all areas' (Anderson, 2000, 326*).* McGee et al (2003) argues that transition represents a 'major milestone' (p13), which can produce mixed reactions of anticipatory anxiety and satisfaction/excitement. Given that literature tells us that the factors

that affect a successful transition are complex and inextricably inter-related, it seems prudent to focus on explanations of this from a shared perspective, in terms of both social adjustment and impact on pupil progress. In essence, social adjustment may impact on academic attainment and conversely, difficulties with academic adjustment and progress may affect children's social adjustment. Box 1 illustrates what literature suggests as key points explaining *why* some students make a successful transition, whilst some students encounter complex, significant and enduring difficulties during, and long after school transfer.

However, although Anderson (2000) report that 'systemic transitions affect virtually all students in some way' (p326), it must be noted that there is not a simple cause and effect relationship relating to the outcomes of these various factors. The same experiences of two children may produce very different outcomes for each child. The ability to cope with transition may depend on numerous factors: within child and in the wider systems surrounding the child (e.g. family, school and community environments). Furthermore, measures of achievement and emotional adjustment are based on snapshots of childrens' experiences and are likely to be uniquely affected by a large number of situational factors, in any given context, at any given time. These explanations draw parallels with a Bio-ecological Systems Theory of development (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994). In this theory, Bronfenbrenner and Ceci posit the importance of developmental influences of bi-directional synergistic interactions between layers of a child's immediate and wider environment (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem) (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994). Such an understanding of the dynamic and interactive nature of 'context' for children can help us to become 'effective helpers' (Swick and Williams, 2006). Such a multi-layered understanding is represented when we consider how schools have responded to issues around transition.

Box 1: Possible explanations for difficulties with school transition

- **'Social novelties' of school transfer (Demetriou, 2000; p429)**
- *Features of transfer include: moving from known to unknown, smaller to larger school, one teacher for several subjects to a different teacher for each subject normally in different rooms (Anderson et al, 2000). In most cases this means moving from a comparatively nurturing and child-centred approach in primary school to an increasingly impersonal, more evaluative, more formal and competitive environment in secondary school (Harter et al, 1992) ('the loss of a family ethos'- Shaw, 1995).*
- *'Institutional adjustment' (Evangelou et al, 2008) can lead students to become preoccupied with negotiating the social hurdles of a new situation (Hargreaves and Dalton, 1999).*

- **Relationships affect performance (Wentzel and Caldwell, 1997)**
- Peer acceptance a predictor of success at school: *children who had more peers, old or new, had more favourable perceptions of school and better performance (Ladd, 1990).*
- *Positive relations and sense of belonging strongly related to students' positive attitudes to school, self-esteem, self-deprecations and feelings of anger (Midgley and Maehr, 2000).*
- Demetriou et al (2000) argue learning can be overshadowed by negotiating social hurdles during transition and that more attention should be given to social interactions and affiliations and its impact on performance.

- **Negotiating secondary transfer is an 'anxiety ridden enterprise' (Shaw, 1995)**
- *Measor and Woods (1984) posits that anxiety around transition based on 5 major issues: the size and complex organisation of the new school; new forms of discipline and authority; new demands of work; the prospect of being bullied; the possibility of losing ones friends.*
- *Anxiety affected by myths and misinformation about secondary school given by older children (Measor and Woods, 1984)*
- *Due to ever larger, more impersonal, bureaucratised schools, students begin to feel increasingly anonymous and can experience a sense of rejection in which they are not respected nor valued by others (Anderson et al, 2000; p329).*

- **Transition occurs at the time of other adjustments such as puberty (McGee, 2003; p14)**

- **Changes in teaching approach and problems with curriculum continuity (Fresh start approach vs curriculum continuity: Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008);**
- *Galton et al (1999) highlighted problems in the curriculum with repetition/ revision and task demands underestimate pupils' abilities, which can lead some students to become bored and lose motivation (Galton and Morrison, 2000). Yates (1999) reported that student were concerned that in their first year of secondary school they were studying to much that they already knew. Furthermore, provision of a challenging curriculum may relieve the serious stresses and boredom of the first year in secondary school (Green, 1997).*
- *Inconsistencies of expectations and unnecessary differences in teaching and learning practices (e.g. Kruse, 1995) may produce a pygmalion effect in which low expectations results in low achievement (e.g. McGee, 2003).*

- **Decline in motivation and enjoyment**
- Impact of high stakes in Year 6 versus low stakes exams in year 7 (Galton et al, 1999; p13).
- *A mismatch between school environment and psychosocial needs of early adolescents can contribute to a decline in intrinsic motivation and commitment to learn (Harter et al, 1992).*
- *Decrease investment in academic activities and increased investment in non-academic activities (Anderman et al, 1999).*
- *Mismatch between environment of school and emerging adolescence: post transfer curriculum allows little opportunity for autonomy and self-determination* (Demetriou et al, 2000; p426).
- *Declines in motivation are not just a function of pubertal change (Eccles and Midgley, 1989).*

- **Vulnerable groups**
- *Some groups of children more vulnerable to transition than others. At risk pupils tend to be those who were marginalized in society: boys, certain minority ethnicities and low-socio-economic status (Galton and Morrison, 2000). However, in contrast a report by Evangelou et al (2008) found these children did not experience a less successful transition than others, but may experience other difficulties, such as an increase in experiences of being bullied in children with SEN.*

Responding to the issue: what are schools doing?

Thus far I have considered the difficulties inherent in systemic transitions and discussed explanations research gives for these difficulties. This gives rise to the question of central importance to the current study: what can be done to facilitate successful transition into secondary school? This question warrants careful consideration, given the need for a holistic approach to transition within and across different contextual levels, as advocated by Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994). In order to discuss how schools respond to difficulties that manifest before, during and following transition, it seems appropriate to elaborate on what a successful transition (and implicitly an unsuccessful transition) might comprise. Commissioned by the DCSF, the EPPSE 3-14 project (Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education 3-14 project- Evangelou et al, 2008) carried out a large-scale longitudinal study to investigate the influence of transition on children's cognitive and social/behavioural development from the perspectives of four key stakeholders related to the process of transition: Local Authority officers, children, parents and school staff. Using a mixed-methodology, the study used large-scale questionnaire-based survey to gather data from 550 children and 569 parents across six Local Authorities, and subsequently followed this up with a more in-depth analysis of twelve case studies (including semi-structured interviews with children, parents and school staff). However, case studies were only carried out for children who had positive experiences of transition, which inevitably skews results. According to data analysis, successful transition was characterised by five factors (see Box 2).

Box 2: Factors that characterise a successful transition (abridged from Evangelou et al, 2008).

- children had greatly expanded their friendships and boosted their self-esteem and confidence once at school
- they had settled so well that they caused no concern for their parents;
- they were showing more interest in school and work in comparison to primary school;
- they were finding it very easy to get used to new routines
- they were finding work completed in year 6 to be very useful for the work they were doing in year 7

Whilst these factors do highlight outcomes associated with successful transfer, such broad and overarching themes do not specifically address the diversity of the impact of transition, such as the effects on attainments, motivation, friendships and anxiety, nor do they identify the mechanisms through which successful outcomes are attained. Further specificity would require a focussed, multi-faceted approach to addressing and intervening transitional challenges, and charting the impact of specific measures on specific outcomes for children.

Historically, McGee et al (2003) described that most attention has focussed on smoothing social and emotional adjustment throughout transitions. Where there has been an increase in what is known about the wider impact of transition, this has resulted in increased attention and a number of interventions aimed at reducing any negative effects (Galton, 2000). In the UK, Galton and Morrison (2000) suggest that most schools operate within a system suggested by Anderson (2000). Anderson's framework suggests two key principles that shape transitional success or failure: preparedness and support, which highlights the need for a graduated and temporal approach to transition that spans not only the immediate transition itself, but the years before and after school transfer takes place. According to Anderson et al, preparedness is a multidimensional concept, which includes:

- academic preparedness (the knowledge and skills to succeed);
- independence and industriousness (the ability to work without direct adult supervision);
- conformity to adult standards (through appropriate behaviour and effort); and
- coping mechanisms (which allow students to cope with problems that arise in the transition process) (p331).

Such preparedness implies both schools' responsibility to build competencies within children to enable them to cope with the transition more successfully.

Anderson's concept of support implies the importance of the role of others (such as parents, peers or teachers) in successful transitions, suggesting four specific types of support:

- informational,
- tangible (e.g. provision of resources or services),
- emotional; and
- social (e.g. friends in same school) (p332).

Baker and Stevenson (1986) argue that the less prepared students are for transition, and the greater the discontinuity between settings, the more support is needed. Also, Anderson suggests that although deficiencies in children's capacity to cope are generally inter-related, the type of support should be consistent with type of discontinuity (discussed earlier) (p333).

Galton et al (1999) suggest that despite increased awareness and understanding of the impact of transition, the application of knowledge through targeted intervention and support has neither been universal nor reliable. Initiatives targeted at successful transition remain the responsibility of individual schools, which has led to inconsistency. In an evaluation of approaches to transition collated from 215 schools, Galton et al (1999; p27-28) categorise approaches to transitions in five ways:

- managerial/bureaucratic (easing administrative duties);
- social and personal (reducing anxieties e.g. open evenings, induction days);
- curriculum continuity (secondary links to feeder schools);
- pedagogy (developing joint approaches to teaching and learning); and
- managing own learning (extended induction programmes)

Box 3 breaks these categories down, into specific types of initiative, and presents how many schools surveyed used each approach. According to Galton et al (1999), these data suggest that schools have primarily focused their attention narrowly: upon managerial, personal and social approaches to support transition. In contrast, few schools reported initiatives that focussed on the curriculum or teaching and learning (p28). However, as Galton et al also point out, with a 60% return rate in this evaluation, it is possible that figures may overestimate the number and nature of transition initiatives. Reports by Galton et al (1999) and Evangelou et al (2008) offer further insight into specific

approaches implemented to smooth the transition process for pupils, parents and teachers. However, data do not exist to inform evaluation of the impact of these initiatives.

Box 3: Initiatives on transition in English schools

(1) Administrative/ bureaucratic	Meetings of: senior staff	50%
	Heads of Year	100%
	Subject Heads	30%
	SENCOs (Special Educational Needs Coordinators)	35%
	Exchanging information & records	100%
	Holding Parent's evenings	100%
(2) Social and personal	Induction days	100%
	Open evenings	50%
	Parent and pupil guides	70%
	Special ICT, drama and sports visits	10%
	Identifying problem pupils and offering guidance and counselling	2%
(3) Curricular	Teach lessons in feeder schools	20%
	Joint projects	10%
	Summer schools	5%
	Joint training days	2%
(4) Pedagogic	Joint programme of teaching skills	2%
	Employing ex primary head to coordinate first term's work after transfer	1%
	Teacher exchanges	5%
(5) Managing learning	Extended induction programmes involving 'becoming a professional learner'	2%

Taken from Galton (1999; p28/29)

Within the conceptual framework suggested by Anderson (2000), Galton (2000) posits that to achieve an holistic and multi-faceted approach to transfer, detailed transfer plans are needed, in particular for the most vulnerable students (e.g. students with Special Educational Needs). Perkins and Gelfer (1995;171) suggests five essential components of a systemic transition model:

- developing a planning team;
- generating goals and identifying problems;
- developing a written transition plan; acquiring the support and commitment of teachers and all those involved in the transition process;
- evaluating the transition process; and
- need for multi-faceted support combining several types of support

Reflecting on previous research and their conceptual framework Anderson (2000) claim that implementation of these recommendations should ensure that efforts to facilitate successful transitions should be comprehensive, involve parents as well as educators, and should make every effort to create a sense of community and belonging (Anderson, 2000).

Summary and introduction to the present study

As Zeedyk et al (2003) describe, periods of transition are 'amongst the most difficult in pupils' educational careers, and success in navigating them can affect not only children's academic performance, but their general sense of well-being and mental health' (p68). As such, increases in our understanding over the last 40 years have seen a general improvement in the way schools seek to bridge the gap between primary and secondary school. Such improvements have aimed to support students in their social and institutional adjustment and reduce any negative impact on academic attainments during this period of turbulence.

One significant criticism of schools' responses to transition is a lack of data gathered to evaluate the outcomes of interventions and other support mechanisms used by schools and Local Authorities (Galton et al, 1999; Evangelou et al, 2008). It appears that examples of intervention are delivered on a framework of assumed universal beneficence.

The current paper introduces one such example of a transition initiative. Acting within the framework identified by Anderson (2000), which advocates the utility of interventions that focus on 'preparedness', the following intervention highlights the important role that Educational Psychologists can perform to target developmental challenges and needs (such as friendships, e.g. Wentzel and Caldwell, 1997; and anxiety, e.g. Lucey and Reay, 2010) for those children who may find social and institutional adjustment to the secondary setting difficult.

As a Trainee Educational Psychologist employed within the Local Authority, I was expected to co-deliver the in-house intervention as part of a wider remit of Psychology Service work. It must be noted at the outset that this intervention represents an 'off-the-shelf' manualised intervention that has been delivered by my Local Authority. As such, there were limits to the extent to which I could influence the core of this intervention or the donated evaluation measures. However, in exploring literature and delivering the intervention, I hope to offer recommendations to improve the intervention for future years.

Methodology

Background/context

The current study was delivered as part of a package of services offered by the Behaviour Initiative. The Behaviour Initiative is a multi-agency team, which offers early intervention for children (aged 0-11) in schools and families where there are emerging difficulties in behaviour and emotional well-being.

The 'Transitions' intervention has been designed by Educational Psychologists, working within the multi-agency team, to prepare children identified by schools as 'vulnerable' for the primary to secondary transition.

The transition intervention: theoretical rationale and evidence base

The 'Transitions' intervention seeks to address the social, emotional and behavioural domain reported in previous literature (e.g. Demetriou et al, 2000). Operating within a framework that targets individuals, rather than layers of contextual/environmental influences, the intervention addresses what Galton et al (1999) describe as 'identifying problem pupils and offering guidance and counselling', which represents only 2% of transition initiatives in Galton et al's study. In doing so, the intervention fits loosely with Anderson's (2000) concept of 'preparedness' prior to the transfer to secondary school.

It should be noted that 'the Transitions' intervention represents a small-scale example of a transitions intervention. The intervention should be seen as part of

the more general package of preparation and support offered by individual schools, and thus should not be seen in isolation.

The current study: the intervention

- **Design of the intervention**

The theoretical basis of the 'Transitions' intervention draws upon the cognitive-behavioural perspective. The basis of this perspective is that cognitive processes (e.g. perceptions, attitudes, images, expectations, attributions and beliefs) are associated with behaviours, can bring about changes in behaviour, and can be assessed, changed and evaluated (Ayers et al, 1995; p25).

By giving Year 6children a 'safe place' and through open and honest discussion, the intervention aims to help children identify thoughts and feelings towards their upcoming primary-secondary transition and become more aware of how they reason and ascribe meaning by self and/or guided discovery. By developing children's ability for inductive reasoning, the approach aims to help participants to attend to new or overlooked information that might allow them to reconsider or revise generalisations and evaluate common cognitive biases that risk generating anxiety or distress and/or undermining perceptions of self-efficacy (e.g. Robins and Hayes, 1995).

Within the Transitions activities, several approaches commonly associated with the cognitive behavioural perspective are used, such as social skills training, activity scheduling, anxiety prediction and problem solving (Beck, 1995, cited in Friedberg and McClure, 2002). The foundations of the problem-solving method used in the Transitions intervention can be compared to the five step model suggested in Friedberg and McClure (2002):

- identifying problems in concrete terms;
- generating alternative solutions;
- evaluation of options;
- planning and implementation of best solution; and
- reward experimentation.

Transitions group sessions took place over a consecutive five-week period in the Summer Term of 2010, each session lasting for approximately one hour. The format of each session followed a consistent structure of:

- an introduction;
- warm up activity;
- main content (consisting of numerous focused activities);
- end of session review; and
- presentation of reward/praise cards.

The titles and aims of the individual Transitions intervention sessions can be seen in Box 4.

Box 4: Session titles and aims.

Session 1: Feeling good about yourself
Aim: To elicit children's thoughts about their new school and collaboratively problem solve solutions in response to identified concerns

Session 2: Thinking ahead
Aim: To think ahead about some of the social, emotional and practical challenges that may face children in secondary school. To explore positive and negative choices that children may be faced with at secondary school.

Session 3: Meeting people and making new friends
Aim: To consider which social skills, including verbal and non-verbal behaviour (e.g. the importance of facial expressions and body language), may be important to be confident when meeting new people at secondary school.

Session 4: Being more independent
To familiarise children with practical aspects of secondary transition and collaboratively problem solve any perceived difficulties, such as managing a timetable, planning for a bigger school environment, being prepared and discussing strategies for managing homework.

Session 5: Wave goodbye and say hello
Aim: To review the content of the previous 4 sessions. To prepare and plan for leaving primary school (e.g. saying goodbye to friends and staff) and settling into the first weeks of secondary school.

- **Ethical considerations**

According to the British Psychological Society Code of Practice (BPS, 2009), research should adhere to four ethical principles, which constitute the main domains of responsibility within which ethical requirements are considered. These are respect, competence, responsibility and integrity. Table 1 sets out how these principles have been applied in the context of the current study.

Table 1: Application of ethical principles to the current study.

Ethical Principle*	Standards	Application in current study
RESPECT	*GENERAL RESPECT*	*- Respect the knowledge, insight, experience and expertise of participants: ground rules negotiated in the sessions*
	PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY	*- Pre/post-testing anonymous* *- Data kept in accordance with Local Authority (LA) protocol*
	INFORMED CONSENT	*- Written consent letter ('Opt in') to go to parents/carers of selected children before inclusion in the final Transitions group*
	SELF-DETERMINATION	*- Explain right to withdraw to children during initial visit and subsequent Transitions sessions.*
COMPETENCE	*AWARENESS OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS*	*- Maintain familiarity with BPS Ethical Code of Practice*
	ETHICAL DECISION MAKING	*- Identify ethical requirements for research before research commences* *- Recognise and record any ethical dilemmas during the intervention process, and address these within professional supervision*
	LIIMITS OF COMPETENCE	*- Practise within my competence level* *-Be able to justify reasons for decision-making within research*
	RECOGNISING IMPAIRMENTS	*- Identify and address any impairments to personal practice and to the participation of staff and children involved with the research*
REPONSIBILITY	*GENREAL RESPONSIBILITY*	*- Be mindful of any potential risks to researchers and participants*
	TERMINATION AND CONTINUITY OF CARE	*- Make clear within consent letters and initial visit with children the conditions under which the intervention may be terminated* *- Terminate the intervention if I become aware that the intervention is off no benefit to the participants*
	PROTECTION OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS	*- Make due consideration for any individual differences within the class/group, and differentiate methods accordingly* *- Follow up any issues that arise that may require further assistance by school, parents/carers or other professionals*
	DEBRIEFING	*- Debrief to all parties involved in the research though appropriate medium*
INTEGRITY	*HONESTY AND ACCURACY*	*- Maintain high standards of honesty and transparency about research decisions, and avoid bias in the evaluation*
	AVOIDING EXPLOITATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST	*-Clarify the parameters of my professional role within the context of the research and following the end of research* *- Recognise conflicts of interest and inequity of power relationships*
	MAINTAINING PERSONAL BOUNDARIES	*- Maintain professional relationships at all times*
	ETHICAL MISCONDUCT	*- Challenge colleagues/clients/participants who may act against strict ethical guidelines adhered to in this study*

- **Sample**

During the Summer Term of 2010, 7 primary schools took part in the 'Transitions' intervention, having targeted 48 Year 6 pupils (23 females and 25 males).

Those schools which had not recently been offered/received the Transitions intervention in previous years were contacted by telephone by Assistant Educational Psychologists during the Spring Term and offered this intervention on a 'first-come first-serve basis'. To select groups, schools were then asked to select between 6-8 pupils who may find the transition challenging, with reference to several criteria:

- low confidence/low self-esteem;
- shyness and/or difficulties with social skills and making new friends; and
- feelings of anxiety about the upcoming transfer to secondary school.

Schools were asked not to select any pupils who may have overtly difficult behaviour in school. This was to allow a trusting and nurturing environment within each group so that children felt able to talk honestly. However, in doing so, the absence of any objective method of selection for behaviour questions the reliability/validity of the sample selection (see Discussion for further consideration), and indeed principles of equality of opportunity and access.

Complete sets of data are not available for all those who took part due to difficulties in abstracting data from the seven schools.

- **Procedure**

The Psychology Service provided the same two members of staff from the Psychology Service (Educational Psychologists or Assistant Educational Psychologists) to co-deliver the sessions, materials and resources, consent forms and information for parents; and a pre and a post intervention evaluation proforma to measure its impact. A key aim of the Transitions intervention is to build the capacity of the school so that they can continue to deliver intervention in the future. Consequently, school staff were asked to provide a school partner (usually a teaching assistant) to assist in the delivery of the group.

Following the identification of a group of appropriate children by staff in each school, a consent letter was sent home to the parents of prospective

participants to explain the nature of the intervention and ask for written consent. (A copy of the letter can be found in Appendix 1).

The effectiveness of the Transitions intervention was evaluated using a repeated measures design. Pre- and post-tests were carried out with the children initially during the first session and repeated in the final session. Further information about the evaluation methods is presented below.

The current study: evaluation

Measures of evaluation employed within the Transitions intervention were chosen by the CBII head of service and had been used in previous years. Evaluation measures represent a positivist, quantitative orientation, so designed so for several reasons:

- to allow the quick evaluation of the intervention for a large number of pupils, given the time pressures within limited delivery time in schools; and
- to seek to identify any 'difference' in targeted pupils following the intervention

The two measures chosen were the BG Steem questionnaire (Maines and Robinson, 1998) and a series of Likert scaling questions. Pre-test measures were taken at the beginning of the first session, and then at the end of the final session.

- BG Steem (Maines and Robinson, 1998)

For the purposes of this study, the B/G STEEM (Maines and Robinson, 1998- see Box 5 for more detail) measure of self-esteem was the preferred instrument as it represents, 'a straightforward, standardized measurement tool that is relatively quick and easy to administer' (Bowen, 2010; p49). See Appendix 2 for a copy of this questionnaire.

Box 5: BG Steem

The B/G STEEM is a standardized measure which incorporates self-assessment questions to provide a measure of both overall self-esteem and locus of control. Children are asked to respond 'yes' or 'no' to 27 closed questions, 20 relating to self-esteem both in general areas and in specific areas such as social relations, academic performance, physical appearance and family life, and seven that address the issue of locus of control (Bowen, 2010). The BG Steem was first standardized in 1987 and provides a table of norms for both boys and girls over three age ranges: 6–8, 9–11 and 12–14 years. High scores of self-esteem indicate high self-esteem; low scores indicate low self esteem. Although answered by all participants, locus of control items were not evaluated in the current study.

However, given that previous literature suggests the central role of anxiety during transition, I would question the degree of ecological and predicative validity of BG Steem scores: a basic measure of self-esteem does not reflect the fullness of what we know about emotional difficulties in transition, nor does the BG Steem represents a measure of what the intervention is trying to address (i.e. anxiety), despite a focus of selection criteria on low confidence/low self-esteem.

- Scaling questions:

A series of Likert rating scales was used that asked respondents to consider their feelings (e.g. confidence and preparedness) towards their upcoming transition to secondary school. Each question required children to select a number from a 1-10 scale. Descriptors at each end of the scale were alternately positively and negatively framed to encourage respondents to think in depth about each answer, and to avoid bias arising from the response set.

All questions were given to children in both the pre and post-tests. Individual questions are shown in Box 6 and a full copy of the scaling question format can be seen in Appendix 3.

Box 6: Scaling questions

Questions used in both the pre and post intervention evaluation

1) How much are you looking forward to secondary school?
2) How confident are you about meeting new people?
3) How prepared do you feel to go to a new school?
4) How easy do you think it will be to make new friends?
5) How confident are you about going to a new school?
6) How happy are you about having a go at new things?

However, the use of Likert scales in general and specifically related to the present study could be criticised since:

- Likert scales are highly subjective, i.e. it is impossible to establish any consistency/reliability between individuals' answers;
- the number range of scales (1-10) used in the study is wide, and as such, there is a risk that extreme scores would adversely affect group means; and
- there is significant overlap between each item. Therefore, (without undertaking a detailed factor analysis) it is impossible to isolate constructs measured by each item.

Results

To analyse the effectiveness of the intervention, all participants took part in pre and post-test measures (see methodology for details of measures). Once the raw data had been collected, SPSS 17 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used to analyse the data. To compare pre-test data and post-test data means in the research ('pre-intervention' and 'post- intervention'), all measures in the study (BG Steem and Likert scaling questions) were analysed using a two-tailed dependent t-test (or paired samples t-test) at a significance level of $p = 0.05$. Effect sizes were calculated using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient r (Field, 2009).

Descriptive statistics and t-test data can be seen in Table 2 and 3 below. For raw data, see Appendix 4. The data below are organised so that responses to

the BG Steem questionnaire and six scaling questions are presented separately.

It is suggested that cautious interpretation of the following data sets is necessary due to the relatively small sample size and high standard deviations within the data corpus. High standard deviations may have been influenced by outliers present within the small sample, the subjectivity inherent in using a 1-10 point Likert scale and also due to difficulties brought about by reversing the descriptors with the scaling questions. Most importantly, high standard deviations imply that the intervention had a differential impact, suiting some children better than others. The implication of this effect is that the reader must give due caution when interpreting the results of the statistical test and should give greater emphasis to observations of patterns within the data set.

Whole cohort findings

BG Steem (Maines and Robinson, 1998)

According to statistical tests, there was no significant difference to children's self-esteem before (M = 15.46, SE = 0.45) or after (M = 15.84, SE = 0.46) the Transitions intervention. There was, however, evidence of a small positive trend in the post-intervention data.

Table 2: Descriptive data for paired sample t-tests

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	BGSteemPre	15.4595	37	2.73450	.44955
	BGSteemPost	15.8378	37	2.80390	.46096
Pair 2	PreQ1	8.2188	32	2.57449	.45511
	PostQ1	8.9063	32	2.05347	.36301
Pair 3	PreQ2	6.5625	32	2.85044	.50389
	PostQ2	4.2500	32	3.43605	.60741
Pair 4	PreQ3	7.0000	32	3.20282	.56618
	PostQ3	8.1875	32	2.69333	.47612
Pair 5	PreQ4	4.6250	32	3.25031	.57458
	PostQ4	4.6250	32	2.94848	.52122
Pair 6	PreQ5	7.4194	31	3.00859	.54036
	PostQ5	8.2581	31	2.56863	.46134
Pair 7	PreQ6	8.4375	32	2.52647	.44662
	PostQ6	3.2500	32	3.16228	.55902

Table 3: Statistical analysis data from paired samples t-tests

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	BGSteemPre - BGSteemPost	-.37838	1.94867	.32036	-1.02810	.27134	-1.181	36	.245
Pair 2	PreQ1 - PostQ1	-.68750	3.25713	.57578	-1.86182	.48682	-1.194	31	.242
Pair 3	PreQ2 - PostQ2	2.31250	4.40994	.77957	.72255	3.90245	2.966	31	.006
Pair 4	PreQ3 - PostQ3	-1.18750	2.46835	.43635	-2.07743	-.29757	-2.721	31	.011
Pair 5	PreQ4 - PostQ4	.00000	4.47934	.79184	-1.61498	1.61498	.000	31	1.000
Pair 6	PreQ5 - PostQ5	-.83871	4.00081	.71857	-2.30622	.62880	-1.167	30	.252
Pair 7	PreQ6 - PostQ6	5.18750	4.78194	.84534	3.46343	6.91157	6.137	31	.000

Scaling questions

As already mentioned in the methodology, descriptors were framed negatively on alternate questions - see (N) at end of question.

Of the six scaling questions presented to participants in both pre- and post-tests, three questions yielded statistically significant results. These questions were:

- Q2: How confident are you about meeting new people? (N)
  On average, children showed a significantly higher confidence to meet new people following the Transitions intervention (M=4.25, SE=0.61) in contrast to before they had had the intervention (M= 6.56, SE= 0.50), t (31) = 2.97, $p < .05$, r = 0.47.

- Q3: How prepared do you feel to go to a new school?
  On average, children experienced significantly higher feelings of preparedness to go to a new school following the Transitions intervention

(M = 8.19, SE = 0.47) in contrast to before they had had the intervention (M= 7.00, SE= 0.57), t (31) = -2.72, p < .05, r = 0.44.

- Q6: How happy are you about having a go at new things? (N)
  On average, children were happier about having a go at new things following the intervention (M = 3.25, SE = 0.56) in contrast to before they had had the intervention (M= 8.44, SE= 0.45), t (31) = 6.137, p < .05, r = 0.74. Results for this scaling question were highly significant, representing p<0.001.

There was no statistically significant difference in the remaining three scaling questions.

Specific 'within cohort' findings/trends

In addition to the whole statistical analysis of the data corpus, as previously mentioned, a small sample size and high standard deviations mean that it is important to consider 'within cohort' trends.

As can be seen in Table 4, a greater proportion of pupils improved or stayed the same, rather than worsened, following the Transitions intervention in all of the measures carried out.

Of particular note from the current study, are positive findings that:

- 54% of children increased in self- esteem (via the BG Steem);
- 56% of children increased their confidence to meet new people; and
- 75% of children were happier at having a go at new things.

However, in contrast, attention should be drawn to two negative findings for pupils following the intervention:

- 32% of children decreased in self-esteem (via the BG Steem)
- 44% of children felt it would be harder to make new friends.

Table 4: Movement of pupils from pre-post test (including percentage of whole sample)

Measure	N	Improved	Stayed the same	Worsened
BG Steem	37	20 (54%)	5 (14%)	12 (32%)
Scaling Q1	32	11 (34%)	14 (44%)	7 (22%)
Scaling Q2	32	18 (56%)	5 (16%)	9 (28%)
Scaling Q3	32	14 (44%)	14 (44%)	4 (12%)
Scaling Q4	32	14 (44%)	4 (12%)	14 (44%)
Scaling Q5	31	12 (39%)	11 (35%)	8 (26%)
Scaling Q6	32	24 (75%)	4 (12.5%)	4 (12.5%)

Reflecting on the whole data set, there does not appear to be any obvious consistency between those children who increased/decreased in self-esteem and their subsequent scores from the scaling questions, i.e. increases in self-esteem do not appear to predict positive scores within the scaling questions, and vice versa, decreases in self-esteem do not predict negative scores within the scaling questions.

Discussion

Although there are several positive findings from the present study following the Transitions intervention, particularly with three statistically significant findings within the scaling questions, on reflection the overwhelming picture from the Transitions data is one of inconsistency. More importantly, a lack of any significant pattern in the data corpus seems to indicate that the Transitions intervention is more suited to some children than others, with no significant universal or dominant trends apparent.

For the remainder of the discussion, I will consider how findings from the study fit against the evidence base considered in the Literature Review, and subsequently will reflect on how limitations/weaknesses within the methodology may have affected findings, and offer recommendations for future practice.

Considering my role as an applied (Trainee) Psychologist, I will also discuss what role Educational Psychologists may play within applied evidence-based practice.

Where do findings fit within the context of background literature?

The intervention reported in the present study represents a departure from traditional research in this area that has attempted to measure which children are most susceptible to difficulties with transitions and what impact transition has on individual characteristics (e.g. happiness, motivation and anxiety), which are considered to relate inextricably to pupil achievement levels. Despite numerous initiatives used by schools to smooth the transition period (see Galton et al, 1999), few (approx 2% according to Galton et al, 1999) focus directly on 'identifying problem pupils and offering guidance'. More importantly, there is a lack of evidence of research which evaluates the effectiveness of such direct targeted intervention for groups of children,

Evangelou et al (2008) posits that an important indicator of successful adjustment is the extent to which children have developed new friendships, report higher self-esteem and greater confidence: they further suggest that there is a need to help children to develop social and personal skills for transfer. Such preparedness implies the need to build children's coping capabilities prior to institutional transition. Albeit incompletely, as a small element of the multi-systemic approach required (and advocated by Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994), the intervention in the current study fits within the framework suggested by Anderson (2000) which focuses on children's preparedness for transfer, and specifically, the element of preparedness that focuses on social, emotional and behavioural adjustment to institutional change.

Given the distinct lack of research that evaluates interventions that focus specifically on the primary-secondary transition (McGee, 2003), particularly at the individual level (i.e. identifying vulnerable pupils and offering guidance), findings of the current study offer insight into the importance of intervening with those children who may find transition particularly problematic. However, the

extent to which results can be generalised depends on a consideration of limitations within the present study and recommendations to improve the effectiveness of such an intervention for future practice.

Limitations / recommendations

Before considering possible ways forward, a number of limitations in the present study need to be acknowledged. As the intervention is part of a package of interventions offered to school year-on year, several elements should be reconsidered in order to improve the Transitions intervention and evaluation for future years. These will be fed back to the service manager. The main points are considered in Table 5.

Table 5: Limitations of the Transitions intervention and implications/recommendations for future practice.

Limitations	Implications/recommendations
Pupil selection/identification method 'Loose' method of selection for inclusion in the Transitions Intervention: the intervention relied on teaching staff to subjectively identify vulnerability.	Tighter selection criteria for selection of potential participants (to ensure the most vulnerable receive the limited support available). This could be achieved, for example, through direct observations, self- and/or teacher-report instruments, participant interview etc.
Inconsistencies in evaluation methodology. Methods of evaluation did not investigate what previous literature into the social, emotional and behavioural domain tells us is important: motivation and anxiety (Lucey and Reay, 2010). More importantly, the evaluation measures did not match the intended focus of the intervention: to reduce anxiety and provide skills to prepare children for secondary transfer	Consideration of whether the BG Steem measure of self-esteem is an appropriate measure. Given the intended focus of the intervention, the evaluation may more appropriately include measures that focus on anxiety.
Extent to which evaluation methods provide a basis for ecological and predictive validity	Address/consider the evidence base as a start point to evaluate effectiveness of intervention.
Evaluation methodology contributes to high standard deviations observed in the study, particularly in the use of Likert scaling questions An overly large range within the Likert scale and an unnecessary reversing of scaling questions potentially meant increased the likelihood of individual scores influencing sample means.	A smaller, more tightly defined likert scale may be appropriate to reduce such a high level of subjectivity and lessen the impact of individual outliers on the data set.
Given that pre- and post-tests both occur prior to primary to secondary transfer (and over a short 5-week period), it is impossible to make assumptions about the impact of such interventions without gathering data in the period following trasnsfer.	Longitudinal evaluation when children have moved to their new school. A method could be established which uses the same evaluation methods (albeit with greater consideration) before, during and after primary to secondary transfer.

Conclusion:

From my earlier discussion of the impact of transition, it seems that two points are fundamental:

- transfer causes a hiatus in progression; and
- transfer is stressful.

However, through an increase in focus to improve the smooth social, emotional and behavioural transition between primary and secondary environment, the personal-social effects of transfer may be less significant than was previously considered (McGee, 2003). Evidence gathered during the past fifteen years suggests that the environmental contexts (as conceptualised by Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994) 'has a stronger effect on the success or failure of school transitions than developmental characteristics do' (Anderson, 2000; p336). As such, schools/educators are implicated in facilitating successful (person-centred) transitions.

Induction processes and structured transfer to new schools has meant that the process is now more user-friendly and that fewer students experience anxiety, which tends to be short-lived (Demetriou, 2000). However if, as seems likely, the system of multiple transitions in a school lifetime continues, efforts must be made to reduce the levels of anxiety for 'at-risk' pupils. Interventions, such as the one summarised in the current study, potentially represent an important building block for successful adjustment to secondary school. However, this type of intervention should be seen in a context of a whole series of strategies to target and reduce difficulties with institutional adjustment- such as school visits etc (as suggested by Galton et al, 1999). To ensure that children's transition [transfer] is successful, all three areas (social adjustment, institutional adjustment and curriculum interests and continuity) need to be taken into account when planning transition strategies at Local Authority and school levels (Evangelou et al, 2008; pvi). If schools are to support successful transitions for their students, Galton et al (1999) argue that schools will need to redirect current efforts towards achieving a balance between social and academic concerns at transfer… and give greater attention to pupils accounts of why they lose ground or lose interest at these critical moments' (p5).

Besides the administrative role in transition that Local Authorities often support, they may also provide a platform for wider processes through the sharing of good practice and resources. However, given that most Local Authorities do not provide funding to assist in managing primary-secondary transition (Mann, 1997), perhaps they should target this as a critical point of risk for many children. Without such programmes, for far too many students, 'systemic transitions are the beginning of the end, rather than a new beginning' (Anderson, 2000, p336).

Reflections on the role of Educational Psychologists within the current study and in the wider context of evidence-based practice (E-BP)

Reflecting on the current study, I appreciate that the intervention is not wholly congruent with the evidence base summarised at the outset. However, I would argue that this intervention represents a sign of wider challenges around evidence-based practice within the profession of educational psychology.

> *Practitioners can no longer assume that offering something is useful: there is an expectation of professional accountability in determining students' needs and linking them to optimal preventative strategies. And practitioners must be committed to the evaluation of practice and providing feedback on the application of empirically supported interventions in schools (Stoiber and Kratochwill, 2000; p100)*

Having emerged from the medical profession, over the last decade, the concept of evidence-based practice has been gathering momentum across all areas of social policy, including education (Fredrickson, 2002). However, according to Fredrickson, current practice in educational psychology in Britain lacks 'commitment to evidence-based practice or to use empirically validated interventions and tools' (p97). Against a standard of 'high reliability practice' required within clinical/care settings, the traditional role of Educational Psychologists (EPs) sees practitioners often drawn into interventions that might not represent the highest standards of evidence-based practice, regularly

operating below stage 5 of Scott et al's (2001) hierarchy of evidence (See Figure 11).

Figure 11: Traditional hierarchy of evidence (from Scott et al, 2001)

1. Several systematic reviews of randomised control trials;
2. Systematic review of randomised controlled trials;
3. Randomised controlled trials;
4. Quasi-experimental trials;
5. Case control and cohort studies;
6. Expert consensus opinion
7. Individual opinion.

Questions also remain about how able EPs are to develop empirical evidence, given the necessity for EPs to react quickly to difficulties and limited Local Authority service time available to support carefully designed evaluation. At two ends of the 'evidence spectrum', it appears a balance is needed, where pragmatism is retained and where EPs become providers, as well as consumers, of research evidence. There is a need for EPs to align themselves more fully with the principles of evidence-based practice, and, where it is not possible to conform to the highest standards of research, EPs should, as a minimum, ensure that their work is professionally defensible and psychological (Fredrickson, 2002; p97). For change to occur, Fredrickson (2002) suggests that the 'onus for broadening the defensible evidence-base for practice within educational psychology rests within the profession itself' (p101). Therefore, EPs must shift attention to the effective evaluation of interventions and of individual pupil outcomes, starting with interventions such as the one reported in the present study, albeit, at very least, noting shortcomings and addressing these in subsequent work.

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Appendix 1: Parental consent letter

Dear Parent/Carer

Year 6 'Moving On Up' Group

This term we have arranged for staff from the Child Behaviour Intervention Initiative to come into school and run group work for some Year 6 children about moving on to secondary school.

The children will take part in five one hour sessions where they will learn about how to make and keep friendships, improve confidence and prepare for change.

During these sessions we would like to take some photographs of the group, as a memento for the children and to record the group's progress. We need your permission for this and have recorded a space within the reply slip below.

The Child Behaviour Intervention Initiative would like to meet again with your son/ daughter probably within their first term at their new school, to find out how useful they found the sessions. They will also be looking at changes in self esteem, resilience and how your son/daughter feel about change, before and after the `Moving on Up' group.

We feel your son/daughter would benefit from and enjoy these sessions. We would welcome your permission for them to take part.

Please fill in the form below and return it to your child's teacher as soon as possible.

I am happy for my child to take part in the 'Moving On Up' Group

Name of Child…….. Class……

I am happy for my child to have their photograph taken
for use in School/CBII ☐ (Please tick box if this is OK)

I am happy for my child to complete questionnaires which may measure self esteem, resilience etc as part of the gro ☐ (Please tick box if this is OK)

Signed…….
Parent Name……..

Appendix 2: Copy of BG STeem questionnaire (Maines and Robinson, 1998)

B/G-Steem Primary Scale for Boys

Please answer all the questions. put a ring around YES or NO

Name Age School Date

1. Is your school work good?	yes	no
2. Do you like being a boy?	yes	no
3. Are you strong and healthy?	yes	no
4. Does someone else always choose what you wear?	yes	no
5. Do your parents think you behave well?	yes	no
6. Do children like playing with you?	yes	no
7. Are you very nice looking?	yes	no
8. Are you as clever as other children?	yes	no
9. Does the teacher notice when you work hard?	yes	no
10. Are you a fast runner?	yes	no
11. Can you make your work better if you really try?	yes	no
12. Are you a good reader?	yes	no
13. Are you good at looking after yourself?	yes	no
14. Does your mum or dad like you to help them?	yes	no
15. Do you choose your friends?	yes	no
16. Do you have a best friend?	yes	no
17. Is your teacher pleased with your work?	yes	no
18. Do you need a lot of help?	yes	no
19. Are your parents usually fair?	yes	no
20. Do you often get the blame when it is not your fault?	yes	no
21. Do you find sums hard?	yes	no
22. Do you have nice clothes?	yes	no
23. Do other people decide everything about your life?	yes	no
24. Are you the best looking in your class?	yes	no
25. Are your parents proud of you?	yes	no
26, Do you think that wishing can make nice things happen?	yes	no
27. Would you like to be someone else?	yes	no

Appendix 3: Copy of the Pre- & Post scaling questions



Moving On Up
(pre/post)



Name:_____

School:_____

How much are you looking forward to secondary school?

not at all _____ a lot

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How confident are you about meeting new people?

not at all _____ very confident

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How prepared do you feel to go to a new school?

not at all _____ well prepared

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How easy do you think it will be to make new friends?

very easy _____ very difficult

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How confident are you about going to a new school?

not at all _____ very confident

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How happy are you about having a go at new things?

not at all _____ very happy

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

Appendix 4: raw data from analysis

Transition groups Summer 10: Scaling / BG Steem results

		Pre-test data							Post test data							Pre-/post-intervention data							
School	Number	BG Steem	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	BG Steem	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	BG Steem	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	BG Steem % change
A	1	17	10	10	10	1	10	10	no data														0.00
	2	12	10	10	9	10	10	10	no data														0.00
	3	17	5	8	6	7	7	8	no data														0.00
	4	13	10	10	10	7	10	10	no data														0.00
	5	18	10	10	10	8	10	10	no data														0.00
	6	18	10	10	10	6	10	10	no data														0.00
	7	18	8	7	8	6	7	8	no data														0.00
B	1	14	5	4	1	2	6	7	15	4	5	4	4	4	4	1	-1	1	3	2	-2	-3	7.14
	2	18	8	5	8	7	8	9	no data														
	3	12	5	5	8	10	10	3	14	10	1	10	1	10	1	2	5	-4	2	-9	0	-2	16.67
	4	13	3	1	5	10	1	10	14	10	1	8	5	9	1	1	7	0	3	-5	8	-9	7.69
	5	14	10	10	10	1	10	10	17	3	5	10	10	2	2	3	-7	-5	0	9	-8	-8	21.43
	6	19	5	5	6	3	8	8	19	10	1	5	1	5	2	0	5	-4	-1	-2	-3	-6	0.00
	7	17	8	9	3	4	5	10	16	10	3	9	7	9	2	-1	2	-6	6	3	4	-8	-5.88
	8	18	9	7	6	8	8	8	18	10	2	9	4	10	3	0	1	-5	3	-4	2	-5	0.00
	9	no data																					

C	1	15	10	5	9	7	6	1	17	10	9	10	6	10	9	2	0	4	1	-1	4	8	13.33
	2	15	10	7	5	5	1	8	13	10	8	7	9	9	6	-2	0	1	2	4	8	-2	-13.33
	3	13	2	7	5	1	1	10	9	10	1	10	5	10	1	-4	8	-6	5	4	9	-9	-30.77
	4	17	7	5	7	4	6	8	19	10	1	10	3	10	1	2	3	-4	3	-1	4	-7	11.76
	5	12	10	1	10	10	10	10	14	10	10	10	1	10	1	2	0	9	0	-9	0	-9	16.67
	6	11	1	4	2	10	2	4	15	9	4	8	7	10	7	4	8	0	6	-3	8	3	36.36
	7	8	9	3	1	1	6	3	10	6	6	6	6	6	6	2	-3	3	5	5	0	3	25.00
	8	13	10	10	1	2	5	5	14	6	6	6	3	6	6	1	-4	-4	5	1	1	1	7.69
D	1	18	10	1	10	1	10	10	13							-5							-27.78
	2	10	10	5	8	5	8	10	11							1							10.00
	3	15	10	7	10	6	10	10	14							-1							-6.67
	4	17	9	3	6	10	5	4	20							3							17.65
E	1	19	10	10	10	10	10	10	16							-3							-15.79
	2	18	10	10	10	2	10	10	19	10	10	10	1	10	1	1	0	0	0	-1	0	-9	5.56
	3	17	9	8	10	3	9	10	18	10	1	9	5	9	1	1	1	-7	-1	2	0	-9	5.88
	4	19	8	9	9	2	8	9	20	9	1	9	2	8	2	1	1	-8	0	0	0	-7	5.26
	5																						
	6	16	10	8	8	6	10	10	15	10	5	10	7	10	1	-1	0	-3	2	1	0	-9	-6.25
	7	16	10	9	8	4	10	10	16	10	1	10	1	10	1	0	0	-8	2	-3	0	-9	0.00
F	1	16	8	6	7	4	5	7	15	5	8	3	9	4	7	-1	-3	2	-4	5	-1	0	-6.25
	2	17	8	10	10	1	10	10	16	6	8	10	7	8	10	-1	-2	-2	0	6	-2	0	-5.88
	3	16	9	8	9	2	9	10	17	7	9	9	3	8	1	1	-2	1	0	1	-1	-9	6.25
	4	17	10	1	10	2	10	10	19	10	1	10	2	9	1	2	0	0	0	0	-1	-9	11.76
	5	14	7	5	8	4	6	9	17	10	6	8	5	9	2	3	3	1	0	1	3	-7	21.43
	6	16	10	6	10	6	9	10	18	10	1	10	4	10	1	2	0	-5	0	-2	1	-9	12.50
G	1	19	10	9	10	1	10	10	19	10	1	10	1	10	1	0	0	-8	0	0	0	-9	0.00
	2																						
	3	14	10	6	10	7	9	10	13	10	1	10	5	10	1	-1	0	-5	0	-2	1	-9	-7.14
	4	18	10	10	10	10	10	10	17	10	1	10	1	10	10	-1	0	-9	0	-9	0	0	-5.56
	5	13	10	3	1	10	10	10	12	10	8	1	10	10	1	-1	0	5	0	0	0	-9	-7.69
	6	17	10	10	5	1	10	10	18	10	10	1	10	1	10	1	0	0	-4	9	-9	0	5.88
	7																						
	8	19	10	9	10	5	10	10	19	10	1	10	3	0	1	0	0	-8	0	-2		-9	0.00

PPR4

‘The potential of pupil voice in schools’: gathering pupil views on effective teaching and learning in a large secondary school.

By Daniel Rouse



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Abstract

‘Student involvement is an idea whose time appears to have come’ (Lodge, 2005; p125). Although, over the past two decades, attempts at gathering the pupil voice in schools can be traced (e.g. school councils), recent research and policy developments have drawn attention to the emancipatory and transformative potential of Pupil Voice initiatives (PV) in schools. One such potential arises from providing pupils with a platform to inform and shape the nature of teaching and learning. However, this is not a simple process and the ways in which we engage become increasingly constructive, as well as complex, as more time and thought is invested. This paper reports on a small-scale mixed-method collaborative project within a mainstream secondary school which aimed to gather pupil voice (Year 8) on teaching and learning across a number of activities; using pupil tracking, focus groups and a questionnaire-based survey. In general, findings indicated that pupils perceived ‘teacher attributes’ and the ‘environment’ as most important to the learning experience. Furthermore, pupils reported that they were happy with current practice (mean = 6.71, mode = 7 on a ten-point scale) and made suggestions for future initiatives. In my discussion of findings, I explore the limitations of the project and discuss the importance of such research within an emerging PV research context.

Introduction

> *'Some educators have forgotten the important connection between teachers and students. We listen to outside experts to inform us, and, consequently, we overlook the treasure in our very own backyards: our students. Student perceptions are valuable to our practice because they are authentic sources; they personally experience our classroom firsthand (SooHoo, 1993; p386).*

Almost twenty years after the title quote was written, it seems that 'student involvement is an idea whose time appears to have come' (Lodge, 2005; 125). However, 'student involvement' can mean very different things. In its widest sense, 'Pupil Voice' (PV), as it shall be called in this paper, covers a range of initiatives and includes every way in which schools allow or encourage pupils to offer their views (Hargreaves, 2004). For example, traditionally schools have consulted pupils through activities such as student councils, although the breadth and depth of discussions have been predictably limited (e.g. to school uniform policy) (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). However, taken in a more narrow and focused way, PV (in which I incorporate Students As Researcher and Consulting Pupils initiatives) can be understood as pupils taking a more active role in their education and schooling as a direct result of teachers becoming more attentive, in sustained and routine ways, to what pupils say about their experience of learning and school life (Hargreaves, 2004). Consequently, the range of topics and manner of consultation has been extended. Furthermore, as Arnot et al (2004) suggest, the more time given to engaging with pupils, the more informative and insightful the ideas shared are likely to be.

The current paper reports on a small-scale example of a school-based PV initiative, and demonstrates the inherent potential of utilising pupils as a source of information/evaluation, with a particular focus on teaching and learning. Following an initial detailed literature review, I will introduce a school-commissioned and pupil-led piece of action research, carried out within a mainstream secondary school. The research took an emergent inductive design through three primary activities: pupil tracking, focus groups and a

questionnaire, the findings of which shed light on what pupils felt were the most important factors to encourage successful learning in the school. Following a presentation of key findings, I will discuss the research in the context of current literature and consider future opportunities and challenges in the area of 'Pupil Voice'.

Literature Review

According to Rudduck and McIntyre (2007), the principles of pupil voice have attained 'unprecedented national and international support' (p3) over the past decade and its key principles of encouraging pupil consultation and participation are evident in official policy and guidance in many countries around the world (Flutter, 2007). As interest in pupil voice has grown, there has been increasing acceptance of the 'progressive possibilities and transformational experience' for teachers and pupils (Whitty and Wisby, 2007; p317). One specific application of this, of central importance to the present study, is that schools are increasingly using pupils as active participants to help them identify and develop pedagogy, informing developments in teaching and learning. However, PV as an approach is not without detractors/criticism, and application of these principles has not been universal. Furthermore, discussion about the implications of involving pupils in decision-making highlights the issue as complex and contentious (Flutter, 2007). As Lodge (2005) describes, there is a 'range of views about the extent to which young people should be or can be empowered' (p125).

Within this background literature review, each of these issues will be discussed. To begin, I shall trace the roots of the approach from past to present to unpick why the approach has gathered such momentum and, in doing so, will consider what is distinctive/different about the concept of PV. I will then discuss what consulting pupils has told us in relation to developing teaching and learning in schools. Subsequently, having discussed numerous issues/difficulties that have arisen regarding PV at an individual, school systems and procedural level, I will summarise arguments for and against this approach and consider possible ways forward, suggesting possible implications for practice.

Pupil voice: the developing context

According to Rudduck and Flutter (2004), Pupil Voice is based on the pretence that 'we need to see pupils differently, to re-assess their capabilities and to review and change aspects of school organisation, relationship and practices to reflect what young people are capable of being and doing' (pXII). The implication here is that practice needs to progress and move away from a model of childhood and adolescence that Grace (1995) calls 'an ideology of immaturity' (p202). Furthermore, Noyes (2005) argued that 'PV is predicated on the idea that pupils have expert knowledge about their own learning' (p537).

Historically, the topic of consulting pupils about their school life gained interest in the 1960s and 1970s though researchers such as Peter Woods. Despite researchers at this time taking interest in pupil perceptions in learning, there was no expectation of their feedback being harnessed as a basis for informed action (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007). In essence, this early work omitted the most important aspect of PV: the developmental, progressive and transformative potential of consulting pupils.

It was not until the 1980s that a more active, participatory and individualistic role for children and young people was placed on the agenda. A major catalyst in the 'Pupil Voice' movement came in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which marked a landmark in the development of rights of children. Article 12 states:

> *'parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child'.*

Freeman (1996) comments on the importance of this landmark:

> *'the right enunciated here is significant not only for what it says, but because it recognizes the child as a full human being with integrity and personality and the ability to participate freely in society. … the views of children are to count [in relation to] decisions ranging from education to environment, from social security to secure accommodation, from transport to television'. (Freeman, 1996, p37).*

Lundy (2007) further analysed the rights established in the UNCRC into four distinct and important concepts: '*Space'* (children must be given the opportunity to express a view); '*Voice'* (children must be facilitated to express their views); '*Audience'* (the views must be listened to); and *'Influence'* (the views must be acted upon as appropriate) (p933). These fundamental concepts underpin the design and conceptualization of Pupil Voice projects, in particular within the current study.

The theory and, in part, the application of PV strategies appears to have mainstreamed in the 1990s. Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) suggest that the 1990s and 2000s saw evidence of a steadily increasing interest in young people's voices and involvement. During this period, PV gained increasing recognition and legitimacy through being woven into national policy and legislation in relation to children and young people more generally, and specifically to education (see Table 1 overleaf for more detail).

Working Together: Listening to the voices of children and young people (DfES, 2008) represents the most recent guidance on PV. This guidance promotes the participation of children and young people in decision-making in school, local authority and related settings, and provides advice on the principles and practice that should support such involvement. However, although this guidance acknowledges that there is now widespread agreement with the principles of participation, it posits that there is no single right way of supporting children's and young people's participation: the process of developing effective values and structures to this end is not straightforward.

Table 1: Significant policy and guidance in the development of Pupil Voice 1989-2005 (abridged from Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007)

General policy and guidance	Policy and guidance related specifically to education
Children Act (1989) Gave legal foundation that children should be consulted and involved in decisions that affect them.	*National Healthy Schools Standard (DoH,1999)* Provided a vehicle to support the implementation of Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE). To meet the criteria for this standard, schools must give pupils a voice across all areas of school life that affect them and in policy development.
United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (1989) *See* above.	*Citizenship curriculum (2002; cited in OFSTED 2004)* Placed an emphasis on PV primarily on principles of citizenship. '*The citizenship curriculum recognizes the importance of learning the skills of participation and responsible action. Clearly citizenship and democracy is best learned experientially, by living in a culture where it is seen as part of everyday life, not as an optional extra which does not create real change (DfES & NHSS, 2004; p9)*
Children and Young Peoples Unit (2001) Set up following the 2001 election, the Children and Young People's Unit aimed to incorporate the consultation of C&YP in a systemic way into government decision making. This fitted with the Labour Government's concepts of 'active citizenship' and 'consumer choice' to drive improvements in public sector provision (Whitty and Wisby, 2007; 304).	*DfES - Working together Giving Young People a Say (2004)* Suggested a number of the benefits of PV to schools and argued for broader dialogue between pupils and staff.
Every Child Matters (2003) and Children Act (2004) Emphasised that local services should reflect the needs of CYP by incorporating a good level of participation. The Children Act also led to the establishment of the Children's Commissioner whose main purpose was to give young people a voice in public life.	*OFSTED (2005)* This framework supported the concept of PV and placed an expectation on schools to systematically seek the views of the child. Of particular importance, the framework emphasised that young people should be consulted in relation to teaching and learning.

In summary, as argued above, PV as a concept has gained much momentum over the past twenty years. Despite successive Governments' obvious interest in PV, Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) suggest that guidance was 'strong in rhetoric but less forthcoming in terms of practical support' (p7). This has meant that, to the present day, the application of PV initiatives is by no means universal and depends largely on the ethos and commitment of individual schools and local authorities.

Pupil voice in practice

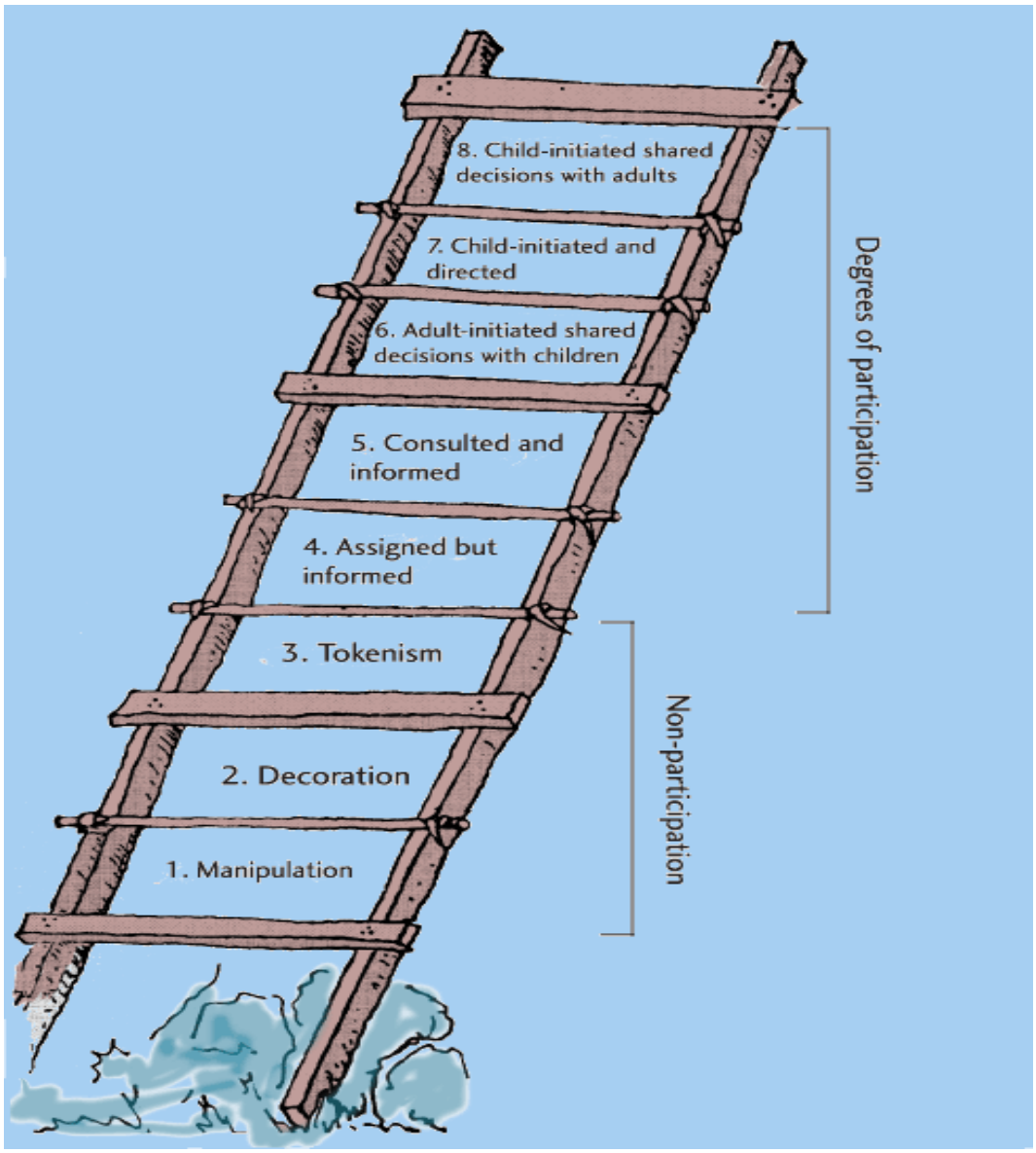
As discussed earlier, engaging with students is not a new idea, but the ways in which we engage becomes increasingly constructive, as well as complex, as more time and thought are invested. Moving away from tokenistic strategies used in the past, PV relies on an active and sustained effort by educators to include and consult pupils about in-depth issues (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007). This is founded on the pretext that 'we need to see pupils differently, to re-assess their capabilities and to review and change aspects of school organisation, relationship and practices to reflect what young people are capable of being and doing' (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004; XII).

According to Fielding and Bragg (2003), provision of PV takes many forms and can fit into three categories:

- peer support arrangements;
- systems that enable pupils to articulate their views and see appropriate changes; and
- activities that encourage various forms of overt pupil leadership.

Aligned to these categories, Fielding and Bragg allude to a hierarchy, or continuum, of participation/consultation. At the lowest level on this continuum, children are used as a source of information and consulted for purposes of quality control; whereas the highest level involves more child-initiated initiatives, in which young people initiate activities and invite adult involvement. Hart (1992) provides a more detailed eight-stage continuum of participation that proposes eight levels of pupil involvement (see Figure 1). Hart's 'Ladder of Participation' has eight rungs, climbing from manipulation (where adults use young people to support causes under the auspices that the causes are inspired by young people), through adult-led but shared decisions, reaching toward children and young people initiating projects/programmes and sharing decisions with adults. The ladder highlights that participation can take various forms, offering both a gauge of the nature of involvement and a guide to how its quality might be improved.

Figure 1: Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation



*Taken from 'Hear by Right' (*Badham and Wade, 2008; *p7)*

As Figure 1 demonstrates, PV initiatives can vary widely based on the investment of the school and depend largely on the idea that 'voices are nothing without hearers' (Noyes 2005; 536). By involving students, we move from the more traditional role of schools as 'working on' children, towards 'working with' children: an 'outside in' to 'inside out' focus (Noyes, 2005).

In addition to the legal obligation to gather pupils' perspectives, Cooper (1993) argues that we should also be interested in this field for two reasons. Firstly, Cooper draws attention to the idea that the principles within much of psychology posit the individual's perceptions as paramount (e.g. perceptions of self and environment). Secondly, Cooper suggests that establishing the

pupil voice allows schools and organisations to understand effects and evaluate effectiveness of provision and interventions, thus allowing us to move away from the crude measures of outcome used historically. Furthermore, Lindsay (2004) suggests that 'research and practice indicate that benefits are gained from pupil participation' (p195). According to Rudduck and Flutter (2004), PV plays an important role in school improvement at a number of levels, as demonstrated below in Box 1.

Box 1: The impact of pupil voice on schools

What's in it for pupils?

Being able to talk about your learning helps students:

- feel more positive about school and more included in its purposes – the organisational dimension;
- have a stronger sense of self worth – the personal dimension;
- have a stronger sense of self-as-learner so that they are better able to manage their own learning – the pedagogic dimension and;
- contribute to improvement in teaching and learning and wider school matters – the political dimension

What's in it for teachers?

- A deeper insight into young people's capabilities
- The capacity to see the familiar from a different angle
- A practical agenda for improvement
- A renewed sense of excitement in teaching

What's in it for schools?

- A practical agenda for change that pupils can identify with
- Enhanced engagement with school and school learning
- A more partnership-oriented relationship between pupils and teachers
- A sound basis for developing democratic principles and practices
- A more inclusive approach to self-evaluation
- Support for developing the school as a learning organization

Taken from Teaching and Learning Research Programme- Research Briefing, Rudduck (2003; p1)

The right to participate applies to 'all aspects of pupils' lives in schools and is especially important, but perhaps most neglected, in relation to teaching and learning, the main purpose of schooling' (McIntyre et al, 2005; p150). In a study of 15 schools by Whitty and Wisby (2007), which gathered information from various sources (visits/talking to staff, online survey, MORI teacher omnibus survey), findings indicated that although school improvement was most cited by schools in relation to the purpose of their PV initiatives, only 11% of schools saw improving teaching and learning, attainment and behaviour as one of main aims for PV work. This focus on teaching and learning will be the focus of the next part of the literature review.

Pupil voice in teaching and learning

Stenhouse (1983) notes that teaching is a highly complex, dynamic and responsive process: and idea which Flutter (2007) further elaborates; using a bike-riding metaphor

> *'Cycling, like teaching, requires forward momentum, keen awareness, adaptability to changing conditions, a good sense of direction and the perseverance to keep on pedalling when the going gets tough' (p343).*

The importance of this quote in relation to PV is that consulting pupils, using various activities, affords a platform to support 'momentum', 'awareness', 'adaptability', 'forward direction' and 'perseverance'. The basic premise of PV is that 'listening to pupils can provide a powerful tool in helping schools and, more specifically, teachers to investigate and improve their own practice' (Flutter, 2007; p344). By consulting pupils, their voices make a positive contribution to their own learning, through first contributing to teachers' learning (McIntyre et al, 2005).

The most significant body of findings in the area of PV and teaching and learning was collected as part of the Teaching and Learning Research Project (TLRP) undertaken within the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Involving key researchers with collective experience in the field of PV from the past two decades (e.g. Flutter, Rudduck and McIntyre), the TLRP conducted seven interview-based research projects over three years (See Appendix 1 for research titles and authors). The aims of the TLRP (see Box 2 overleaf) give a convincing rationale for such studies.

In their book 'How to improve your school', which draws together findings from the TLRP and other projects in which they had been involved, Rudduck and Flutter (2004) argue that:

Box 2: Aims of TLRP project- consulting pupils about teaching and learning

1. to integrate theory of teaching, learning and attainment with a theory of pupil consultation and participation;
2. to understand and document the process whereby giving attention to pupil perspective and participation in schools can enhance pupil engagement and achievement;
3. to understand and document the conditions in schools in which pupil perspective and participation in schools can enhance pupil engagement and achievement;
4. to support teachers who want to develop ways of enhancing pupil engagement and achievement through consulting pupils and increasing opportunities for participation;
5. to ensure that the growing interest in pupil consultation is grounded in worthwhile and defensible principles and practices.

Taken from TLRP project website at www.consultingpupils.co.uk; accessed 21.12.10

> *'Pupil commentaries on teaching and learning in school provide a practical agenda for change that can help fine-tune or, more fundamentally, identify and shape improvement strategies. The insights from their world can help us to 'see' things that we do not normally pay attention to but that matter to them' (p29).*

Rudduck and Flutter (2004) present a number of examples that highlight what pupils can do to make a difference, at a number of levels (see Table 2 overleaf). Across these levels, Rudduck and Flutter highlight interesting variations in the way pupils see social and academic aspects of schooling and provide evidence for the power of pupil commentary, particularly in relation to teaching and learning.

However, it seems very few schools give improvements in teaching and learning as a rationale for engaging in PV activities (Whitty and Wisby, 2007). Rudduck and Flutter (2004) suggest that such a devaluing of the voice of pupils may be explained by the amount of attention the government (and consequently schools) give to academic progress and achievement through testing. Ironically, in doing so, they dismiss the potential of PV to improve teaching and learning in schools. By developing activities designed to build mutual understanding and collaboration there can be improvements in long-term outcomes for children and young people, academically and within a wider context of school. With a deeper and wider understanding of the factors that affect learning, schools may come to view pupils as active learners, not passive recipients, in the classroom.

Table 2: Examples of how pupil voice can make a difference to teaching and learning in schools (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004)

The organisational dimension	The individual dimension
By this Rudduck and Flutter refer to 'policies that shape and colour, limit and extend pupils' experiences as learners' (p30). Activities: - the role of pupil voice in school transfer; and - consulting pupils about apparent dips in progress (e.g. Yrs 3 and 8) Findings & Impact: Highlighted anxieties and tensions experienced by pupils prior to transfer (e.g. Nisbet and Entwistle, 1969; Lucey and Reay, 2010) and identified factors that affect motivation at key points in the school careers of pupils. Resulted in more effective induction arrangements and more effective strategies to maintain motivation, raise the status and more generally to strengthen procedures and practices.	By this Rudduck and Flutter refer to how consulting pupils can help schools to build or sustain pupils' confidence as learners. Activities: - a study of dividing practices in school, i.e. experiences of grouping and setting, and testing Findings & Impact: Identified that school systems often unwittingly 'disadvantages pupils, individuals and groups, to the extent that assumptions about their capabilities are made and sustained on their position within internal hierarchies' (p57). Strengthening PV allows schools to: - identify pupils with a poor image of self-as-learners; and - provide targeted and legitimated support/interventions for pupils with low confidence and poor self-images.
The pedagogic dimension	**The social dimension**
By this Rudduck and Flutter refer to engaging pupils directly in aspects of teaching and learning. Activities: Consulting pupils about what makes a good teacher and what makes a good lesson. Findings & Impact: As much about how pupils are treated as about how they are taught (p78) Therefore, a vital factor in teaching and learning is pupils' relationship with teachers. Good teachers are: - good teachers are human, accessible, reliable and consistent - respectful of students and sensitive to their difficulties in learning - enthusiastic and positive - professionally skilled and expert in their subject (p76) Good lessons provide: - opportunities for participation and engagement ; - active learning with a variety of learning tasks; - challenge (that is exciting not overwhelming); - opportunities to exercises autonomy (p79). PV helps schools to identify 'good practice' for helping pupils to learn and provides an opportunity to shape practice accordingly. In doing so, it has the ability to challenge what we, as educators, believe to be the status quo.	By this Rudduck and Flutter consider how to balance and link social and academic arenas and opportunities (p87). Activities: Unpicking the social aspects of both lessons and break times: e.g. sitting and working with friends; and balancing schoolwork with social activities. Findings and Impact: Social activities in all of these areas often go unnoticed by adults, but have a big impact on the classroom itself (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). Pupils are often 'very discerning about who they chose to work with' (p94), they are able to choose which friends they work well with and which ones they don't. Allows schools to understand and give due weight to social factors '*outside the school; outside the classroom; and within the classroom'* (Pollard and Filer, 1996; p16). Practically, findings: - give schools a legitimacy for intervening with social difficulties inside and outside the classroom; - highlight a need to provide structured activities during unstructured times of the day; and - suggest that staff need to consider social elements within schooling, e.g. classroom peer groupings.

Challenges with Pupil Voice

As discussed above, it seems that the ideal of PV offers much to schools on a number of levels. However, whilst the focus of Pupil Voice activities has widened amongst those schools which apply the principles of PV, its application has been by no means universal. Important issues need to be addressed to weigh potential benefits against potential drawbacks (Flutter, 2007). McIntyre et al (2005), meanwhile, take a more in depth look at the question of how responsive schools are to the pupil voice. From their research, they suggest that there are a number of "comfortable and uncomfortable learnings" for teachers that need to be considered (see Box 3).

Box 3: Comfortable and Uncomfortable Learnings for Teachers from Using the Pupil Voice

Comfortable learnings

1. In most settings there is nothing to fear from giving pupils opportunities to comment on teaching. Pupils in this study commented almost without exception in polite, serious, thoughtful and constructive ways.
2. The general thrust of what pupils have to say about desirable approaches to classroom teaching and learning is highly consensual—across teachers, subjects, schools, gender and different levels of previous academic success.
3. The general thrust of what pupils have to say about desirable approaches coincides closely with teachers' own general views. This and previous studies show that teachers generally agree in principle with what pupils suggest.
4. Pupil suggestions are most commonly derived directly from teacher practices which they value. Far from saying 'Do something completely different', pupils tended very often to ask for more of teachers' existing or past practices or for extensions and elaborations of these.
5. Incorporating pupil suggestions into one's teaching, to pupils' satisfaction is not difficult and indeed teachers often took up and developed pupil ideas with enthusiasm and imagination, though not without effort.

Uncomfortable learnings

1. Pupils who have experienced most success in school learning tend to be the most articulate about what helps them to learn. Those from whom teachers most need to hear are those whom it will be most difficult to consult.
2. It is as easy as it is legitimate for teachers to claim that pupils' suggestions rarely take adequate account of the complexity of the teacher's task. Only teachers who believe that pupils' perspectives are important will make the sustained effort that they will need to make if they are to engage in pupil consultation and to change their teaching in response to it.
3. Sustained and significant responding to pupil suggestions about what should happen in classrooms involves some change in the balance of classroom power. Committed teachers need to remember that pupils will need adequate opportunities to learn how to undertake any new responsibilities.
4. Given current pressures, teachers can easily feel that they have to choose between professional compliance and responding to their pupils. Some of the most impressive incorporation of pupil ideas McIntyre et al saw was reserved for marginal end-of-term 'less serious' times. It does seem however that sustained incorporation of pupil ideas into everyday 'serious' classroom teaching is possible if teachers have the confidence, commitment and skill to make this happen.

Taken from McIntyre et al (2005), P 166-167.

Reflecting further on McIntyre et al's identification of potentially uncomfortable learning for teachers, it seems that complexities around PV exist on a number of levels, ranging from within the classroom to external national pressures upon the school. At an individual (and procedural) level, Flutter (2007) posits that teachers' investigations of pupil views often lack validity as it is often only the most able and articulate pupils whose views are heard. In consequence,

> *'if adopted uncritically, pupil voice initiatives may yield a picture of pupils' views that is partial and that fails to give genuine insights into what helps or hinders pupils learning. Information that lacks credibility cannot provide a strong basis for teacher development' (Flutter, 2007; p350).*

In attempting to engage with those hard to reach pupils, benefits may be two-fold: firstly, pupil voice may reap information from a more diverse sample, adding validity and also diversity to pupil accounts of teaching and learning; and PV activities may provide a platform to reengage potentially disengaged/disenchanted learners. If not considered, MacBeath et al (2003) suggest that we are in danger of reinforcing divisive practices in schools, and that PV can potentially risk reinforcing existing hierarchies.

A second level relates to the responsiveness of teachers to the concept of PV. Challenges to traditional power dynamics within schools mean that teachers may experience reservations and anxieties about consulting pupils, particularly about teaching and learning. Pupil voice activities may fundamentally challenge existing power dynamics within schools and risk creating personal and interpersonal insecurities (Flutter, 2007). Rudduck and Flutter (2004) suggest that:

> *'in the present judgmental climate, teachers are, understandably, anxious, lest consulting pupils means unlocking a barrage of criticism of them and their teaching' (p75).*

Against this backdrop of internal and external pressures, Rudduck and Flutter (2004) suggest that teachers are likely to judge the legitimacy of pupil responses based on several factors:

- educational effectiveness: the extent to which teachers felt suggestions would help achieve educational purposes;
- validity: the extent to which teachers felt views represented valid accounts of what happened in the classroom;
- practicality: the extent to which teachers consider pupil suggestions to be both sensible and feasible. Suggestions need to be judged as realistic and compatible with time, equipment and space;
- representativeness: the extent to which suggestions represented the views of the class; and
- affirmation of teacher practices: it is easier to accept those views which encourage teachers to do more of the things they already did (p137).

Only after these factors are considered and addressed are teachers likely to initiate and sustain pupil consultation. As Noyes (2005) argues, 'power differentials between teacher and pupils require careful negotiation and critique in order to allow pupils to shape such dialogues' (p536).

Finally, at a school systems level, Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) suggests that it is important to remember that very different levels of interest, commitment and experience exist within schools in relation to PV. In what Noyes (2005) describes as an 'era of deprofessionalism' (p539) in which teaching is becoming more prescriptive, Noyes argues that there is a lack of flexibility to incorporate PV in day-to-day teaching and learning. Such competing pressures mean that:

> *'teachers are uneasy about spending time on introducing and sustaining something as complex and demanding as consulting pupils about teaching and learning when they know that the*

priority for government is performance' (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007; p9).

Flutter (2007) argues that approaches to PV need to be driven by schools with a clear purpose and rationale for engaging with pupils. Attempts to enforce change through external pressure, 'may lead teachers to overlook the more simple and profound rationale of pupil voice: to understand how learners learn best' (Flutter, 2007; p345).

Summary

An interesting aspect of pupil voice research lies in its power to unlock the shackles of habit that so often bind teachers to their familiar routines of practice and thought (Flutter, 2007, p352).

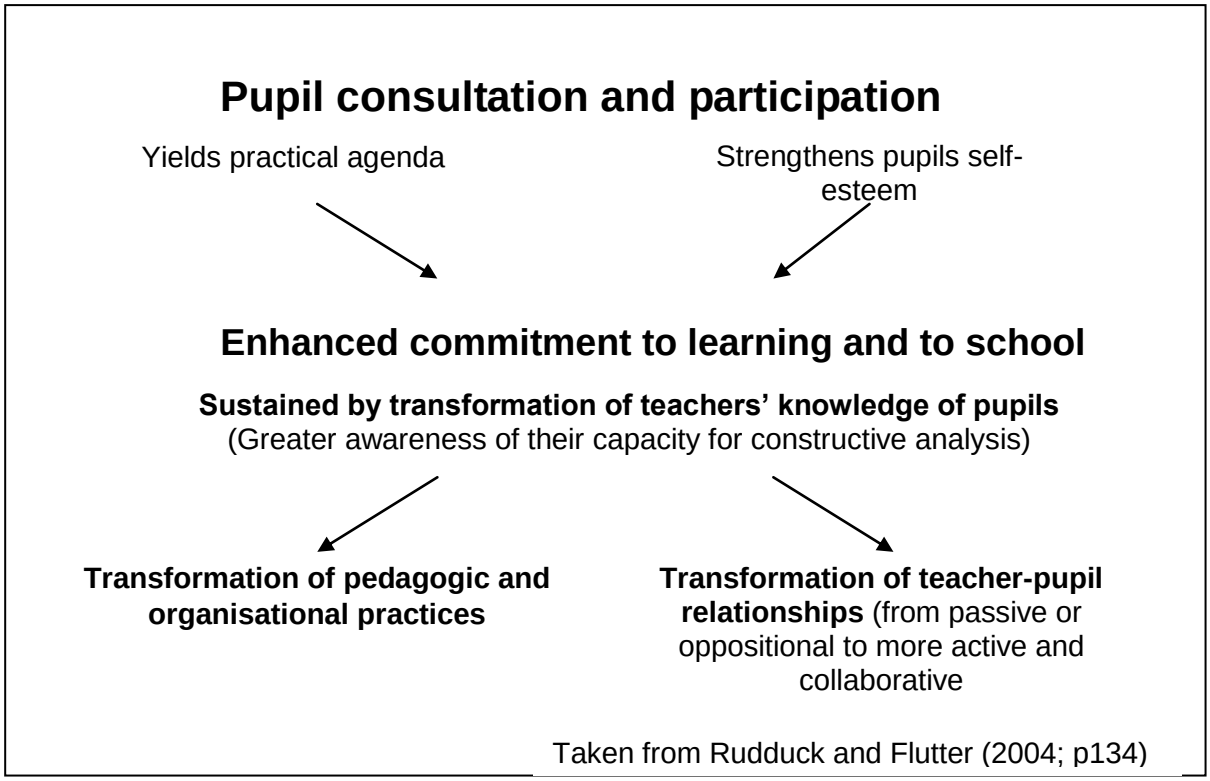
The value of consulting pupils then, is that it provides a platform to challenge the status quo in schools, and most importantly provides an impetus for educators actively to evaluate and evolve/progress teaching and learning practices. However, gathering the pupil voice should be seen in context, as one part of a wider continuous process which evaluates the effectiveness of pedagogy, appraises outcomes and sets new targets. For example, schools may gather feedback about teaching and learning though activities such as parental feedback/consultation, peer observations, school improvement plans, OFSTED monitoring and the use of Local Authority and national Department of Education outcome (value-added) data.

As interest in Pupil Voice has evolved over the past 20 years, research has provided ample evidence of the transformative potential of pupil voice (Flutter, 2007; p353). Figure 2 overleaf presents a simple model of the potential of consulting pupils on an individual, teacher, whole school level.

Whilst I understand and give due caution to the criticisms of the Pupil Voice movement (e.g. power distortions, institutional and cultural boundaries), I believe that by reflecting on their experiences through a spectrum of simple and increasingly complex activities, pupils as 'expert witnesses' have the potential to provide new insights about many aspects of school. Flutter (2007)

argues that the new understandings developed from engaging with pupils, provide a useful starting point for improving practice 'whether it is for teachers as individual practitioners in their own classrooms, in reviewing practice for departments within a school, or as a basis for all round professional development planning' (p352). Of particular interest to the current study, are pupils' role within a pedagogic context and the progressive possibilities of engaging with pupils about teaching and learning.

Figure 2: The potential multi-systemic benefits of consulting pupils



Methodology

Context and Setting

The following research took place during a first-year placement at a West Midlands Psychology Service within the remit of my role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist. This collaborative project represented a compulsory element of my first year professional practice in studying a Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Birmingham. The collaborative action research project reported in this paper was initially designed, implemented and analysed/reported by myself and a

colleague, Lorraine Jebbett (Trainee Educational Psychologist). The current report is, however, wholly my own.

The setting was a mainstream secondary school with pupils ranging between Years 7 to 11.

At this stage, it is important at the outset to draw attention to our position as researchers, which brought certain constraints:

- both researchers were new to the setting, in a service where link Educational Psychologists are not allocated to each school. It was therefore difficult, given our limited experience (and developing confidence) with the school, to navigate through school politics, understand historical challenges in the area of PV and to negotiate cultural pressures;
- the duration of the placement within the Psychology Service was 20 weeks. Both researchers worked within the service for two days per week, and the project was undertaken alongside other Psychology Service work. This is important because, after this period, both researchers moved to other services and thus were not able to follow up research or to unpick how findings were implemented in practice (a point that will be picked up again when discussing the application of the RADIO model of organisation change; Timins et al, 2003); and
- given the early stage of training, both researchers were at a relatively early stage of experience/expertise in research methods.

Rationale

The rationale and focus for the present study were negotiated during a meeting with stakeholders during the initial phase of the research. The purpose of this was to identify research topics from the School Improvement Plan for the academic period 2007-9. The area considered most important by school staff was to work with children to establish their experiences of teaching and learning. The School Improvement Plan had explicit reference to this:

> *"… a commitment to the enhancement of learning and teaching at X…(through) the value we place on the student voice, underpinned on self-esteem…"*

More specifically, aims of the School Improvement Plan set out an ambition to 'increase student involvement in curriculum and teaching and learning evaluation' by:

- providing a structured system for student voice/consultation; and
- supporting student input to curriculum delivery/learning and teaching.

Ideally, given the ethos of pupil involvement described in the literature review, a sample of pupils would have been incorporated as stakeholders to guide the design research process, and more generally to add greater authenticity within the domain of PV. However, given the time constraints of the project, this was not possible – a point which will be commented upon further later in this report (see Section 5.5).

Method

After reflecting on the rationale and objectives of the study, we judged that we were essentially being asked to undertake a piece of collaborative action research on behalf of the school. Put simply, it required an approach which identified a problem, acted to try and resolve the problem, and evaluated the effectiveness of the action.

Action research can be used in almost any setting and typically involves direct participation in order that 'research and its findings will be used in some way to make a difference to the lives and situations of those involved in the study, and/or others' (Robson 2002; p201), coupled with an intention to initiate change (Robson, 2002; p87). A more detailed but simplistic description is given by Hopkins (1985):

> '*Action research is a form of disciplined enquiry, combining action and research, in which a personal attempt is made to understand, improve and reform practice' (p32)*

Action research challenges and deviates from the 'expert model' (Outhwaite and Turner, 2007), adding the promotion of change to the more traditional research purposes of description, understanding and explanation. It does this so that research will make a difference to the lives and situations of those involved in the study, or others (Robson, 2002).

Given that action research is 'methodologically eclectic' (Cohen et al, 2007; p299) and that the study required an approach that allowed the research participants (i.e. pupils) to determine the area, breadth and depth of enquiry, we decided that a qualitative emergent research approach would be most appropriate. The aim of this approach was to enable findings to emerge from the research project, and to provide a platform on which to develop an understanding of pupils' thoughts and feelings surrounding the area of teaching and learning. Therefore, a flexible research design was employed. In particular, it was my intention to:

- find out what is understood, both in previous research and by the research participants, in a little understood situation;
- assess a phenomenon, to ask questions and to seek new insights;
- generate ideas for future research; and
- draw out implications and offer recommendations (Robson, 2002).

This approach also allowed the process of analysis to be wholly inductive in nature. Throughout the analysis, theory is built through the researchers' interaction with the data, making comparisons and asking questions of the data. The flexibility inherent in the project, and more generally in action research, allowed us to make methodological decisions during the research process as well as at the outset. We considered that that this would allow the research methods or 'tactics' (Manstead and Semin, 1988) to evolve naturally, based on experiences and findings which emerged at each successive stage of the process.

Procedure: organisational change

To guide the negotiation of the research project with key stakeholders, the Research and Development in Organisations approach (RADIO: Timmins et

al, 2003) was employed to provide a structured framework to guide ongoing research-client interaction. Table 3 (see p60) presents the stages of the model and how these were applied to the current research. According to Timmins et al (2003), this approach allows researchers to understand and deal with 'organisational culture' and consider the effects of multiple perspectives that exist and often threaten (e.g. feelings of threat, defensiveness or alienation) school improvement initiatives. Such a 'real world' approach to research gives the foundation for:

> *'the need for a dynamic research process that is responsive to and may be constructed from the multiple perspectives that stakeholders and research sponsors bring to organisational life' (Timmins et al, 2003; p235)*

Through ongoing negotiation, stakeholders and research sponsors contribute to the focus and process in an attempt to avoid a negative response, and to encourage ownership of the improvement process (Timmins et al, 2003). Although sequential in its presentation, the stages set out within the RADIO process are not linear, and depending on issues that arise, the process often involves movement back and forth between stages.

Procedure: The research process

[NB: Ethical considerations will be discussed following presentation of the research process]

The initial aims of the research process were to immerse ourselves, as external agents, into the culture of the classroom within the unfamiliar school situation. From that point, the data collection methods were discussed between the researchers and the research sponsors (the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Pastoral Manager and Head of Year 8).

The research took place in three inter-related consecutive phases:

- Pupil tracking with two pupils
- Focus groups with two groups of Year 8 pupils
- A questionnaire-based survey with 43 year 8 pupils

Table 3: Phases and stages of the RADIO model (Timmins et al, 2003)

RADIO phases	RADIO stages	Addressed by:
CLARIFYING CONCERN MODE	1. Awareness of need 2. Invitation to act 3. Clarifying organisational and cultural issues 4. Identifying stakeholders 5. Agreeing the focus of concern	Although a research project had been agreed by the host Psychology Service with the school prior to our own direct involvement, the focus and scope of the research was to be negotiated as part of the research process. Phase 1 stages were addressed through a number of early meetings with school partners (i.e. the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Pastoral Manager and Head of Year 8). From early discussions, it was apparent that there was already an established culture of engaging with pupils in the school and there were numerous examples of ongoing PV initiatives, such as: - Every Child Matters working group; - student council; - year group council; - LA training for student council using materials produced by the DCSF; - external agency involvement, with a focus of specific target groups, such as a visit from Cambridge lecturers for Gifted and Talented Students; and - focus groups formed for specific issues, such as the development of the behaviour policy and the us of rewards/sanctions. However, at this point it was not clear how these initiatives were bound within a culture of continuous organisation change and development. When this was discussed in initial meetings, senior management expressed how staff were willing to accept insights gathered from PV initiatives. At this point, ideally, it would have been appropriate to engage with pupils as stakeholders in the research, and furthermore to engage with pupils to design the research process. The absence of this process is discussed in Section 5.5. Ideally, given more time to work at this stage of the RADIO model, it would have been appropriate to carry out an activity with school staff to unpick their views re: potential barriers to change and to identify and thereafter nurture factors that may facilitate a successful reciprocal relationship between pupils and staff. A significant organisational issue within the school arose from interpersonal relationships between staff members, and more specifically tensions between senior managers and the Head of Year 8. It appeared from the outset that our involvement, as external professionals, had been forced upon the year head, resulting in animosity about the time commitment involved in such a collaborative project. Consequently, we were forced to keep meetings to a minimum and use staff resources sparingly. On reflection, this may demonstrate an example of the school's approach to consulting with fellow staff (and/or pupils), and lack of understanding/foresight into potential barriers. During the 'agreeing the focus of concern' phase, the research sponsors (i.e. senior management at the school) asked for the research to focus on Year 8 pupils, as they considered that this cohort had fewer pressures than pupils in other years who may for example, be preparing for external tests and/or examinations.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">RESEARCH METHODS MODE</td><td>6. Negotiating the framework for data gathering</td><td rowspan="2">Due to the complex remit of the research and the flexibility allowed within the chosen research methodology, research tactics were addressed and negotiated at each stage through regular meetings and ongoing contact with the research sponsors (although, as noted above, the time available for this was contained by the year 8 Head of Year's recalcitrance. The design of the project was emergent – that is, each secondary phase evolved from the one before. The three phases of data gathering are discussed in the Sections 3.5.1-3.5.3.

See Section 3.5 below for details of the mixed method approach.

As discussed earlier, the framework for data gathering and the tactics chosen would ideally have been achieved through a process of engaging pupils as co-researchers within the development of research design. Given the time constraints of completing the negotiation, implementation, analysis and reporting of findings within 20 weeks, this was not possible. I do not feel that this undermines the findings of the research, but does however suggest a possible design improvement to be incorporated in future PV projects in the school.</td></tr>
<tr><td>7. Gathering information</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE MODE</td><td>8. Processing information with stakeholders</td><td rowspan="5">Following completion of data collection and preliminary analysis, this phase of the RADIO model was addressed during a final presentation of findings and implications to key stakeholders. As discussed earlier, in relation to Hart's (1992) ladder of participation, this is the most important phase as it is at this point where the transformative potential of PV initiatives is realised and positive changes occur.

However, on reflection, the mediation of this phase of the process is a relative weakness of the current project. Given our limited timeframe, and as the focus of the study represented an ongoing commitment by the host school to address pupil participation, within teaching and learning, Stages 9-12 would be coordinated by school staff over the subsequent months. Consequently, it is not possible to ascertain how findings were shared with pupils or whether any actual change occurred within the school. For future projects, more time would be given to this important stage of the research.</td></tr>
<tr><td>9. Agreeing areas for future action</td></tr>
<tr><td>10. Action Planning</td></tr>
<tr><td>11.Implemenation /Action</td></tr>
<tr><td>12. Evaluating action</td></tr>
</table>

The overall aim of this project was to gather information about perceptions and experiences of teaching and learning in the school from a significant number of pupils. The aim of the first two phases of the project was predominantly exploratory (the findings of which will be presented in this section), and aimed to develop an understanding for both researchers of the factors likely to inhibit or facilitate teaching and learning, through which we could create a data collection instrument to gather the wider views of a greater number of participants. The findings of the final questionnaire-based survey will be presented in Section 4 of this report.

Pupil Tracking

The purpose of the tracking exercise was for the researchers to experience the 'life of a pupil' at the setting school. We both viewed this was an important step in acclimatising to the new environment and in informing the content of the subsequent focus groups. To achieve this, we tracked two Year 8 pupils (1 boy, 1 girl: both chosen by the Head of Year) through their classes during a 'typical' morning at school. Both researchers were aware of the ethical implications of this, and that the pupils could present biased perceptions and may not accurately represent the voice of the wider school population. However, these pupils acted more as a guide throughout the morning rather than a source of information. Each pupil attended three classes: Mathematics, English and either French or German (with one researcher attending French and the other German). Consent was gained from the teachers for the researchers to attend their class prior to the exercise. Both pupils consented orally to our accompanying them during the morning lessons. There was limited opportunity to discuss what the pupils had liked and not liked about the lessons during the morning.

During our observations, we recorded any factors that might impact on teaching and learning during the tracking exercise. Prior to the pupil tracking activity, we had decided not to use any formal, structured method of data collection. This decision was made to prevent our observations from being fitted into any predefined category or theory. Thus the nature of our observations was interpretative: we were forming hypotheses about aspects of

lessons which appeared to influence pupil participation, engagement, inclusion, enjoyment and the quality of learning outcomes achieved. This activity was, in essence, highly subjective to both researchers and involved our ethnographic interpretation of the target phenomenon: effective teaching and learning. Therefore, it is important to reflexively recognise the influence of our role as researchers in these initial findings, including the impact of our perceptions, experiences, judgements and attitudes.

Following a detailed debrief and discussion of our findings (including discussion of semantics), a number of factors were identified based on inter-rater consistency and these were later grouped into themes that are shown in Table 4 below. The themes were used to generate prompts (if required) for the focus groups that are described below.

Table 4: Factors and themes generated from the pupil tracking exercise

Themes	Factors
Fun	Variety, Games, Social Grouping, Humour, Competition, Friendliness, Interaction, Activity.
Teacher	Friendliness, Humour, Strict, Praise, Interaction.
Physical Environment	Light, Space, Temperature, Noise, Layout, Size of Class, Time of Day, Seating Arrangements.
Teaching	Pace, Interaction, Questions, Goals, Variety, Relevance, Competition, Structure/Plan, Expectations, Individual/Group Work, Interest, Resources, Challenge, Activity, Length, Objectives, Explanation.
Assessment	Relevance, Rewards, Contribution to Formative Outcomes, Type.
External factors	Friends, Family, Health**.**

Focus Groups

According to Cohen et al (2007), focus groups have become an increasingly popular method in both in educational and wider research. As a form of group interview, focus groups allow participants to interact with each other, as well as with the interviewer, so that views about a topic (usually supplied by a researcher) can be discussed. However, as Morgan (1998) suggest, their contrived nature is both their strength and weakness:

'they are unnatural settings yet they are very focused on a particular issue and, therefore, will yield insights that might not otherwise have been available in a straightforward interview' (p19).

Key characteristics of focus groups highlight the utility of their use in the current study. For example, according to Cohen et al (2007, p376) focus groups:

- develop themes flexibly for subsequent interviews and/or questionnaires;
- gather a large amount of qualitative data quickly and at a low cost; and
- empower participants (and groups) to speak out and voice their opinions.

However, on the contrary, there are a number of disadvantages when using focus groups. For example, they can provide data that is difficult to analyse succinctly; group dynamics can stifle the opinion of quieter (or inarticulate) participants; and data may lack overall reliability due to the potential for dominance of a few participants, in what are artificial/unnatural settings for open discourse to take place.

The purpose of the focus groups in the current project was to gain greater depth of data about what constitutes and influences effective teaching and learning for a wider number of pupils and to test and elaborate the general hypotheses developed through the pupil tracking phase. The information was then used to inform the design and content of a questionnaire, used to elicit further information from the wider target population of Year 8 students. 16 pupils (12 boys and 4 girls) from Year 8 were selected by the Head of Year (two from each form of the four forms in this year group) to take part. The pupils were then divided in two groups of eight: pupils were randomly split into the two groups, and focus groups were run one after the other with both researchers facilitating each group. Both researchers were aware of the potential for bias in the selection of samples for the focus groups. However, given that this part of the study was, in essence, formative (supporting the design of the questionnaire-based survey), we decided that this was an acceptable compromise and would not directly affect the course of the study.

To ensure consistency in the management of the two groups, a semi-structured interview format was used to structure the focus group discussion. A copy of the format can be seen in Appendix 1. It was our intention to promote pupil discussion regarding aspects of lessons and teaching which, from their perspectives, contribute to pupil engagement and learning. Questions for the focus group centred upon four main areas: teaching, learning, assessment; and principles of participation. Having asked a series of open questions it was our aim to donate as little as possible. However, where necessary, prompts relating to the themes derived from the pupil tracking exercise were used to stimulate discussion.

The information generated from the discussions was summarised on 'post it' notes (sometimes written by the pupil and sometimes by the facilitator, but checked with the pupil), which were later collated. The pupils then regrouped for discussions relating to assessment and changes the pupils would expect to see in the school if their views had been acted upon.

Both researchers undertook analysis of the data corpus, by agreeing themes and later categorising data based on consistency of ideas and our own interpretation the semantics behind each point (see Appendix 2 for raw data). Analysis of focus group data was less formal/rigorous than the later analysis of the questionnaire data, and relied on an intuitive and deductive interpretation by both researchers. This was because the aim of this stage of the project was to inform the substantive element of research: the questionnaire survey. As with the information derived through the pupil tracking exercise, a list of factors that impacted on teaching and learning was identified (see Table 5 overleaf), with these factors subsequently grouped into six themes (Teacher Attributes, Behaviour Management, Lesson Delivery, Assessment, Environment and Pupil Factors). These themes were used to inform the content of the questionnaire that is described in Section 3.5. The grouping of the comments into themes required subjective judgement, and factors were not always easily identified as belonging to a particular theme. To ensure a degree of inter-rater reliability, categorisation was undertaken by both researchers independently, through which process a high level of agreement was, in fact, reached.

Table 5: Themes and associated factors generated from the focus group data.

Theme	Associated Factors
Teacher Attributes	• Approachable • Good listener Sense of Humour • Supportive • Empathetic • Consistent • Enthusiastic about the subject • Helpful • Interpersonal Skills • Interested in you as a person
Lesson Delivery	• Interaction between you and the teacher • Resources • Teaching method/style • Interesting content • Competition • Clear objectives/expectations • Setting • Relevance to the real world • Grouping/independence • Pace • Variety • Fun
Behaviour Management	• Consistent • Fair • Authoritative • Strictness • Prejudice • Realistic
Assessment	• Feedback • Having rewards • Type of assessment • Assessment as you work • Relevance • Appropriate • Pressure • Regularity of feedback/marking
Environment	• Space • Temperature • Noise • Displays
Personal Feelings	• Health • Mood • Things at home • Relationships with friends • Motivation

Questionnaires

According to Wilson and McLean (1994), the questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured data, being able to be administered without the presence of a researcher, and often being comparatively straightforward to analyse. However, Cohen et al (2007) argue that such advantages need to be counterbalanced against the time taken to develop and refine the questionnaire and, due to limited flexibility of response, limit the scope of data collection and thus restrict the potential for fresh insight.

Questionnaires can look very different form study to study and their design is not without complexity. Consequently, researchers using questionnaires need a thorough understanding of the intricacies of questionnaire design to gather reliable and valid data, for example, the impact of using open/closed questionnaires, ethics (including informed consent) and asking sensitive questions, and practical factors such as questionnaire length, sequence and layout.

In the current study, an emergent approach aided the development of the questionnaire as the content was derived from information gathered from the two preceding exercises: the pupil tracking exercise and the focus groups. Following the feedback of initial findings from the pupil tracking and focus groups activities, research sponsors suggested that it would be useful to find out which factors/themes were considered most important by a larger number of pupils. We considered that a questionnaire represented an appropriate method to gather this information from the pupils. The questionnaire comprised four sections (A, B, C and D) each of which is described in Box 4. See Appendix 3 for a copy of the final questionnaire.

As is described in Box 4, in Sections A and B were designed based on a list of factors/attributes donated by both researchers following the two initial information gathering exercises (Pupil Tracking and Focus Groups). Therefore, both researchers' perceptions played a central role within the research process and may therefore have biased findings.

Box 4: A summary of each section contained within the final questionnaire.

Section A
Section A of the questionnaire was designed to gain the pupils' views on which of the factors/attributes relating to each of the six themes identified from the focus groups were the most important for their learning. Pupils were asked to select the two or three (depending on the question) most important factors/attributes from a list that was donated by the researchers, or to give miscellaneous responses in an 'other' box.

Section B
Section B aimed to find out which of the themes the pupils thought to be the most important for their learning. To achieve this, pupils were asked to select the three that they considered most important from a list of themes that was donated by the researchers.

Section C
Section C aimed to find out the level of satisfaction that the pupils felt with their involvement in teaching and learning in their school by giving a rating between 1 = 'Not at all happy' and 10 = 'very happy'. The pupils were also asked to list three things that would make them happier with their involvement in the teaching and learning.

Section D
Section D aimed to find out what changes the pupils might expect to see as evidence that their views had been listened to. This was done with an open-ended question that asked the pupils what changes

Pupils were selected from the Year 8 list (comprising 180 pupils) by selecting every fourth pupil on the year group register in order to achieve a population of approximately 40 pupils. Using this system, 43 pupils (20 girls and 23 boys) were selected to take part in the questionnaire. This included two pupils described as having dyslexia. In response, a Learning Support Assistant was available for students who might require support with filling out the questionnaire.

To ensure that the pupils felt comfortable to provide honest and unbiased responses, no teaching staff were present. Pupils were not required to give their names or any identifying information and were informed that although their views would be fed back to the school, all information would be anonymous. We then talked through the instructions on how to fill out the questionnaire for each section and an example question was used to illustrate how to fill out Sections A and B. The pupils were then given the opportunity to ask any questionnaires and were asked to work on their own.

Quantitative data from Sections A and B were analysed by collating pupil responses with a tally chart, and descriptive data were reported using bar charts to show the number of responses, and percentage of respondents subscribing to each. Section C and D data underwent a rigorous and robust qualitative

analysis (See Box 5 for more detail). The method used in this section of the study drew parallels with the heuristic process described in Thematic Analysis (e.g. Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Box 5: Process of analysis for sections C and D.

Step 1: Collating the data
Data were collated in a table (See Appendices 5 and 6), so that the whole data corpus could be accessed easily.

Step 2: Reading and re-reading
During this step, data were analysed independently by both researchers. To immerse ourselves in the data and to get a feel for the overall picture for the data, time was spent reading and re-reading the data sets.

Step 3: Initial noting of emerging themes
The aim at this point was to examine/unpick the semantics behind each pupil comment. During this step, through in-depth discussion, we both noted our initial thoughts about each comment.

Step 4: Emergent themes
Initial comments were re-read and possible emergent themes noted. After a second process of reading and re-reading, decisions re: data categorisation into themes were finalised in order to begin to organise data into overarching themes.

Step 5:
At this point, the remaining comments were organised into overarching emergent themes. Any anomalous comments that were not easily organised into these themes were organised into a broad 'other' category. Appendix 5 and 6 show how each pupil comment was coded.

The results derived from analysis of the questionnaire responses are discussed in Section 4. Raw data can be found in Appendices 4-6.

Ethical considerations

According to the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2009) Code of Practice, research should be conducted that adheres to four ethical principles which constitute the main domains of responsibility within which ethical requirements are considered. These are respect; competence; responsibility; and integrity (p9). Table 6 sets out how these principles have been applied in the context of the current study.

Table 6: Application of ethical principles to the current study.

Ethical Principle*	Standards	Application in current study
RESPECT	*GENERAL RESPECT*	- *Respect the knowledge, insight, experience and expertise of clients ground rules negotiated at each stage of the process.* - *The selection method for the final questionnaire ensured that there was no selection bias.*
	PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY	- *Data gathered at each stage of the research process were confidential.* - *Data kept in accordance with LA protocol.* - *LA protocol: It was made clear to pupils at the outset that information would be shared if a risk to themselves or others was perceived.*
	INFORMED CONSENT	- *Through discussion with key stakeholders in the setting school, consent for pupils' inclusion in the 'Pupil Tracking' and 'Focus Group' phases of research was assumed as part of a general written agreement with parents to allow outside professionals to work with pupils. This was founded on a principle of non-maleficence.* - *Through face-to-face discussion with 'tracked' pupils and focus group participants, time was taken to describe the research and gather pupils' informed verbal consent. At each point, pupils were given the right to refuse and withdraw from the study at any point. However, in hindsight, I acknowledge that this is a significant weakness in the ethical design of the study as pupils would have found it hard to refuse due to pressure by the school, and additionally should have been consented to by parents* - *'Opt out' written consent letters were given to parents/carers of selected children before inclusion in the questionnaire phase of research.*
	SELF-DETERMINATION	- *Explained the right to withdraw to children at each stage of the research process* - *The right to withdraw was included within the consent letter.*
COMPETENCE	*AWARENESS OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS*	- *Maintained familiarity with BPS Ethical Code of Practice and research ethics.*
	ETHICAL DECISION MAKING	- *Ethical issues of research were identified before research commenced and were discussed during Psychology Service supervision.* - *Any ethical dilemmas were recognised and recorded during the intervention process.*
	LIIMITS OF COMPETENCE	- *Practised within my competence levels.* - *I ensured that I was able to justify reasons for decision-making within research. This was discussed weekly during Psychology Service supervision.*
	RECOGNISING IMPAIRMENTS	- *Any impairment to personal practice and to the participation of staff and pupils involved with the research were identified. For example, efforts were made to support any children with identified learning difficulties by having a teaching assistant present during the questionnaire phase of research.*

REPONSIBILITY	*GENREAL RESPONSIBILITY*	- *Potential risks to researchers and participants were considered. For example, children were not worked with on a one-to-one basis and group work was carried out with children in an open classroom with others present.*
	TERMINATION AND CONTINUITY OF CARE	- *The condition under which the data collection process/child's participation may be terminated was made within the consent letters and during contact with pupils.*
	PROTECTION OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS	- *Any individual differences within the class/group were considered.* - *Any issues that arose and that potentially required further assistance by school, parents/carers or other professionals were considered ad acted upon. For example, the school provided both researchers with the name of a key adult within the school's safeguarding protocol. Any concerns or disclosures within the research would subsequently be reported to this named professional.*
	DEBRIEFING	- *All parties involved in the research were debriefed at each stage of the research process through an appropriate medium (to include confidentiality, withdrawal, and next steps to the research).*
INTEGRITY	*HONESTY AND ACCURACY*	- *Endeavours were made to ensure that high standards of honesty and transparency about research decisions were maintained throughout.*
	AVOIDING EXPLOITATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST	- *Parameters of my professional role within the context of the research and following the end of research were clarified at each point in the research.* - *Any conflicts of interest and inequity of power relationships were recognised and considered accordingly*
	MAINTAINING PERSONAL BOUNDARIES	- *Professional relationships were maintained at all times.*
	ETHICAL MISCONDUCT	- *I aimed to challenge colleagues/clients/participants who may act against strict ethical guidelines adhered to in this study.*

*According to the BPS (2009)

Results

The following section presents the findings from the questionnaire phase of the project, which represented the substantive element of data gathering. The responses to the questionnaire were collated and can be seen in Appendix 4. The results for each section of the questionnaire are described below.

Section A

Section A of the questionnaire aimed to determine the pupils' views of the most important factors/characteristics for teaching and learning. The results give the

number and percentage of pupils who selected each factor as being one of the most important.

Item 1A. Teacher Attributes

Pupils were asked to select three teacher characteristics they believed to be the most important to help them to learn. All the pupils completed this as instructed. See Figure 3 for detail.

Figure 3: Percentage and number of pupils who selected each teacher attribute.

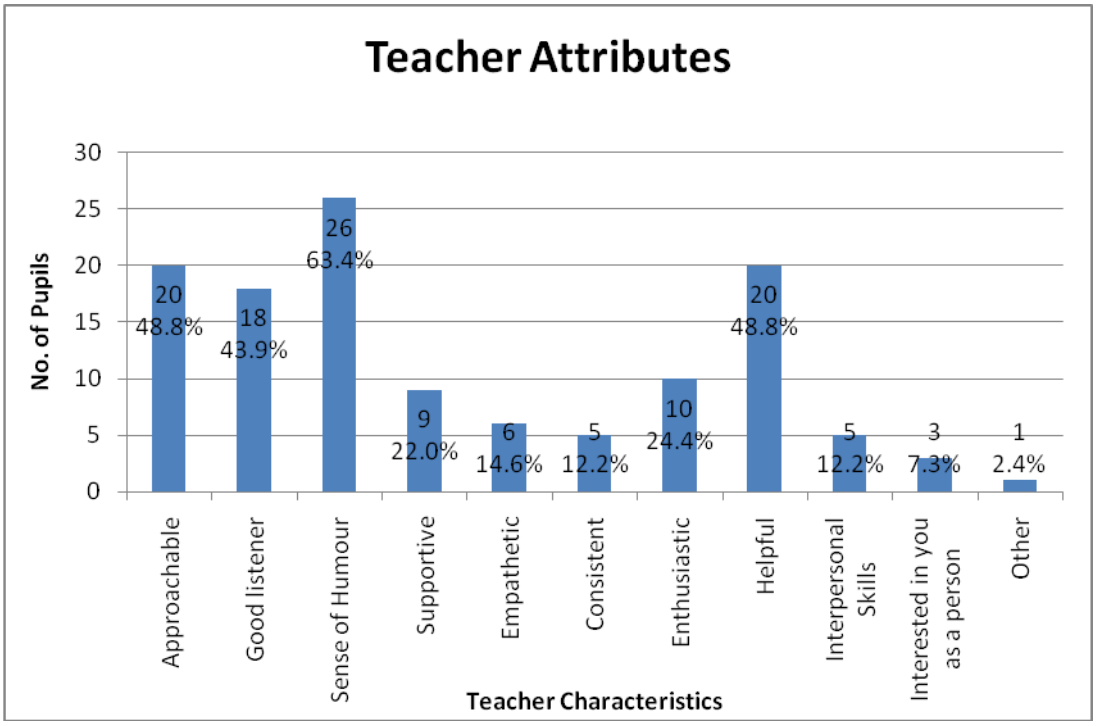


Figure 3 shows that the three most commonly chosen attributes are 'sense of humour', 'approachable' and 'helpful'. Over a half (63.4%) of the pupils selected 'sense of humour' and just under a half of pupils (48.8%) selected 'approachable' and 'helpful' (48.8%) as the most important teacher characteristic to help them to learn. A teacher being a 'good listener' was also chosen by nearly one half of the pupils (43.9%). One pupil selected the 'other' category and indicated that it is important for the teacher to be "firm enough to control class but not too strict".

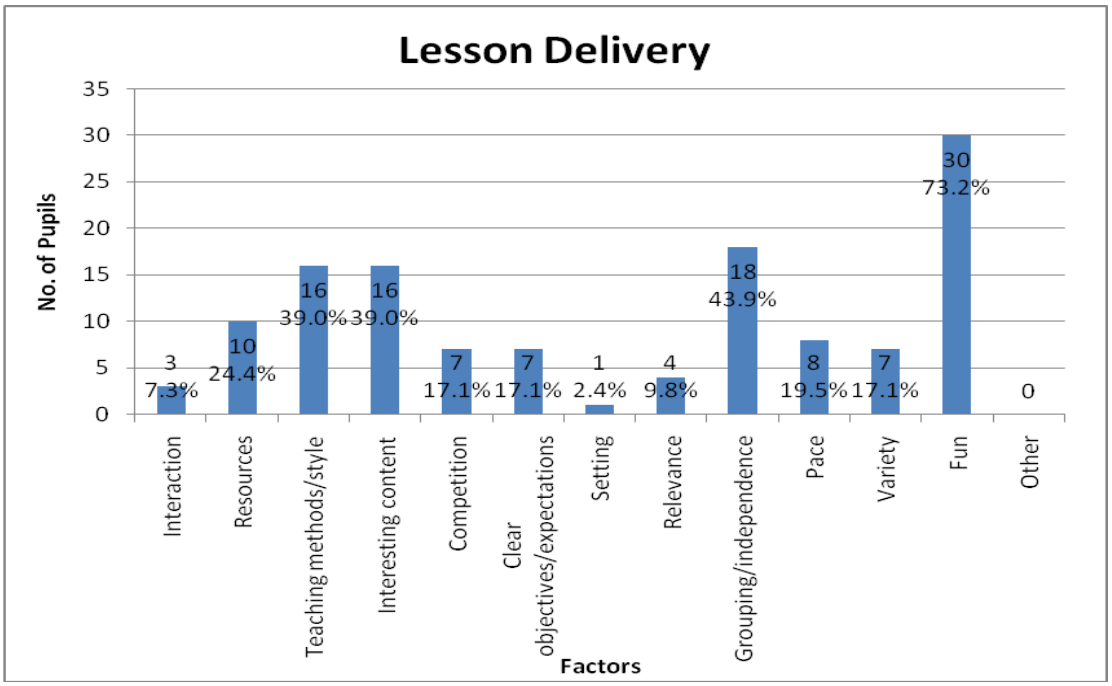
Item 2A Lesson Delivery

Pupils were asked to select the three most important factors from a list of factors that they considered contributed to a lesson in which they learnt a lot. All

41 pupils responded to this item, however, one of the pupils selected seven factors that s/he thought to be the most important. See Figure 4 (overleaf) for detail.

Figure 4 shows that 'fun' was chosen by 73.2% of the pupils as one of the three most important factors. The next most often chosen factors were 'grouping/independence' that was selected by 43.9% of pupils and this was closely followed by 'teaching methods/style' and 'interesting content' that were each chosen by 39.9% of the pupils.

Figure 4: Percentage and number of pupils who selected each factor relating to lesson delivery.



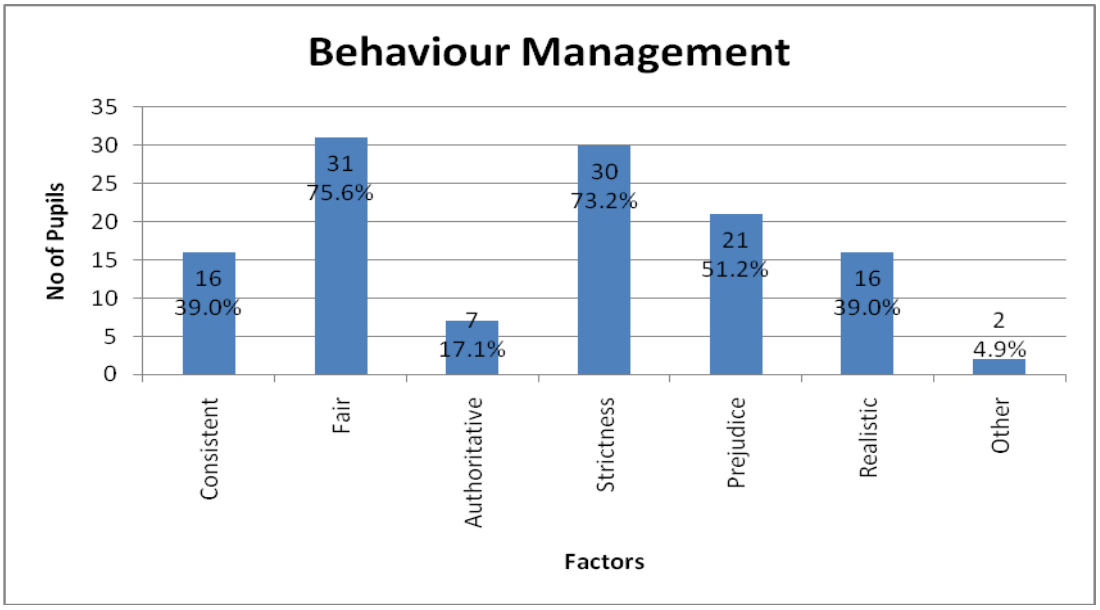
Item 3A Behaviour Management

Pupils were asked to select the three most important factors that reflected how they felt behaviour should be managed in order to help them learn. All pupils responded as instructed to this item. See Figure 5 (overleaf) for detail.

Figure 5 shows that around three quarters of pupils selected teachers' 'fairness' and 'strictness' (75.6% and 73.2% respectively) as one of the most important aspects of behaviour management influencing the quality of their learning. Just over half of the pupils selected a teachers' lack of 'prejudice' (51.2%) as one of the most important factors. Two pupils gave other factors as most important and

these were “people with bad behaviours punishment does affect other people” and “if one person does something then all the class shouldn’t get in trouble”.

Figure 5: Percentage and number of pupils who selected each factor relating to behaviour management.



Item 4A Assessment

Pupils were asked to select three factors relating to assessment that they thought were most important to help them to learn. All 41 of the pupils responded as instructed to this item. See Figure 6 for detail.

Figure 6: Percentage and number of pupils who selected each factor relating to assessment.

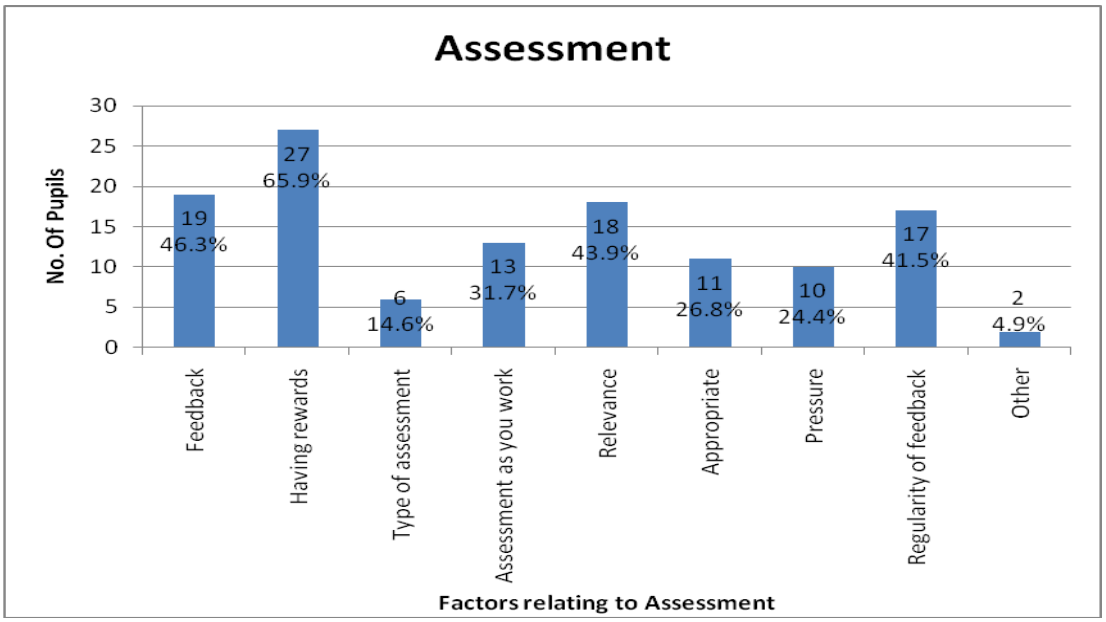


Figure 6 shows that the most commonly selected factor is ‘having rewards’, which was selected by 65.9% of the pupils. This was followed by ‘feedback’, ‘relevance’, and ‘regularity of feedback’ that were selected by 46.3%, 43.9% and 41.5% respectively. The two ‘other’ reponses related to “no assessment (no stress for revising)” and “not having them often (not having them every week)”.

Item 5A Environment

The pupils were asked to select the two most important factors relating to the environment that affected how they learn. All the pupils responded to this item; however, one of the pupils chose three factors. See Figure 7 for detail.

Figure 7. Percentage and number of pupils who selected each factor relating to the environment.

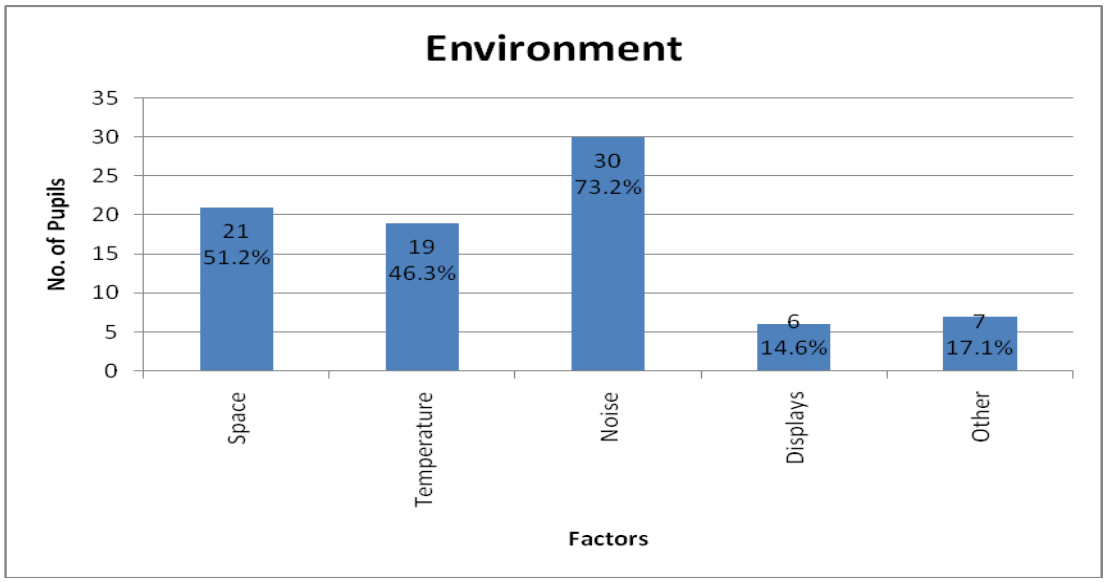


Figure 7 shows that the level of background ‘noise’ was most often chosen as being the most important environmental factor that affected learning with 73.2% of pupils choosing this, followed by ‘space’and ‘temperature’ (51.2% & 46.3% respectively). However, 17.1% of the pupils felt that other factors were more important and the following comments were given: “how people behave in lessons”, “concentration”, “friends not talking to you during lessons”, “being able to quietly talk while working”, “how many pupils in the class”, and “where you do it (outside, inside)”. These comments indicate that many of the pupils also considered the social environment to be an important factor that impacts on learning .

Item 6A Personal Feelings

Pupils were asked to select the two most important personal attributes that affect their learning. All of the pupils responded to this item; however, two of the pupils chose three factors. See Figure 8 for detail.

Figure 8: Percentage and number of pupils who selected each factor relating to the personal feelings.

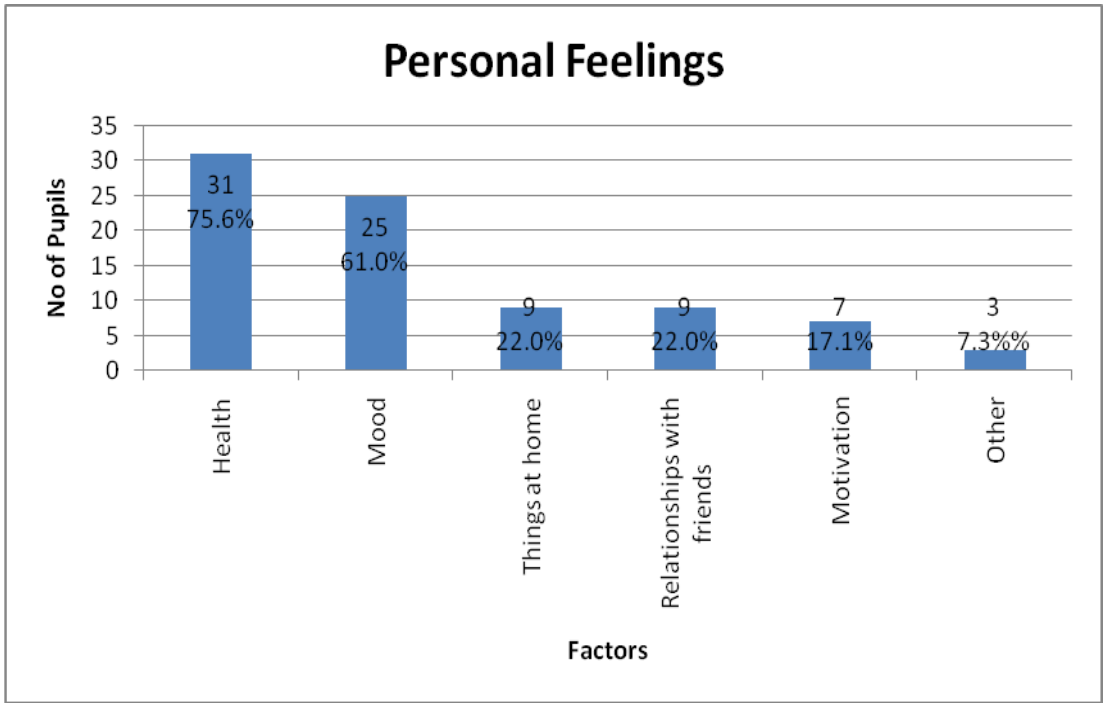


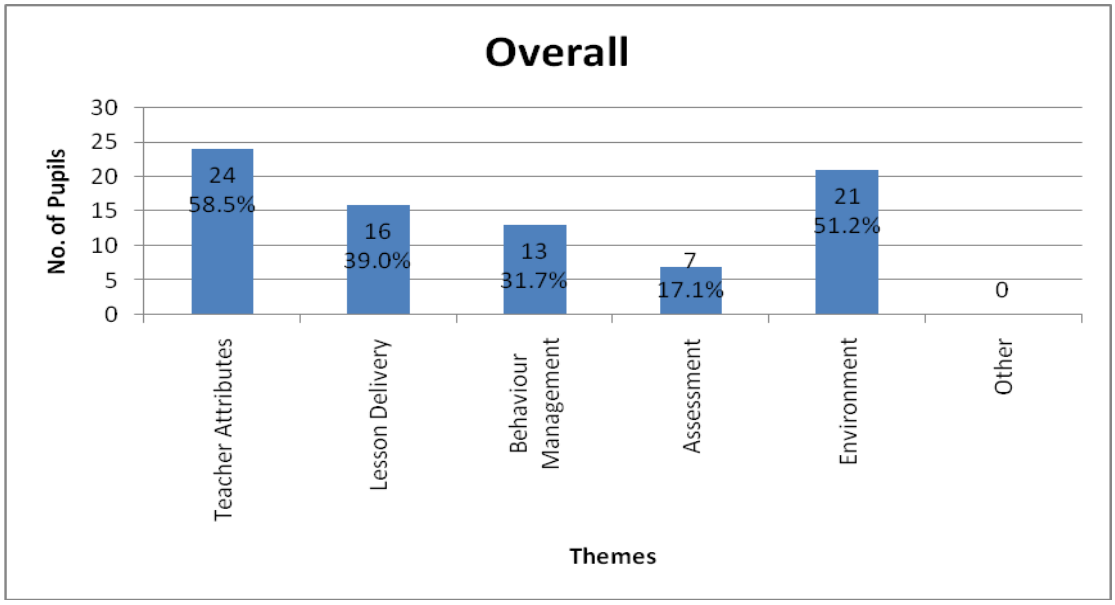
Figure 8 shows that just over three quaters (75.69%) of the pupils selected 'health' as the most important factor that impacted on their learning. The next most often chosen factor was 'mood', which was chosen by 61.0% of the pupils. Three of the pupils selected the 'other' category and gave the following comments: "School itself", "People distracting you" and "people having chats behind".

Section B

Section B of the questionnaire aimed to find out which of the six subordinate themes covered in Section A the pupils felt were most important for learning. Pupils were asked to select two themes from the list of themes that they felt were most important. All the pupils responded to this item; however, one pupil selected only 1 theme. See Figure 9 (overleaf) for detail.

Figure 9 shows that just over half of the pupils selected 'Teacher attributes' and 'Environment' (58.5% and 51.2% respectively) as the most important factors affecting their learning. The next most frequently selected theme was 'Lesson Delivery ' followed by 'Behaviour Management', which were selected by 39.0% and 31.7% of the pupils. 'Assessment' was the least often selected theme, chosen by 17.1% of the pupils. Thus, the pupils' responses show they believe the most important themes for learning are 'Teacher Attributes' and the 'Environment'. However, caution should be applied in interpreting the results as the 'personal feeling' theme was accidently ommitted and replaced with 'other' in this section of the questionnaire. However, the results presented in sections C & D later suggest that this area may in fact be less important to the majority of pupils since factors relating to personal feelings were rarely cited.

Figure 9: Percentage and number of pupils who selected each theme.



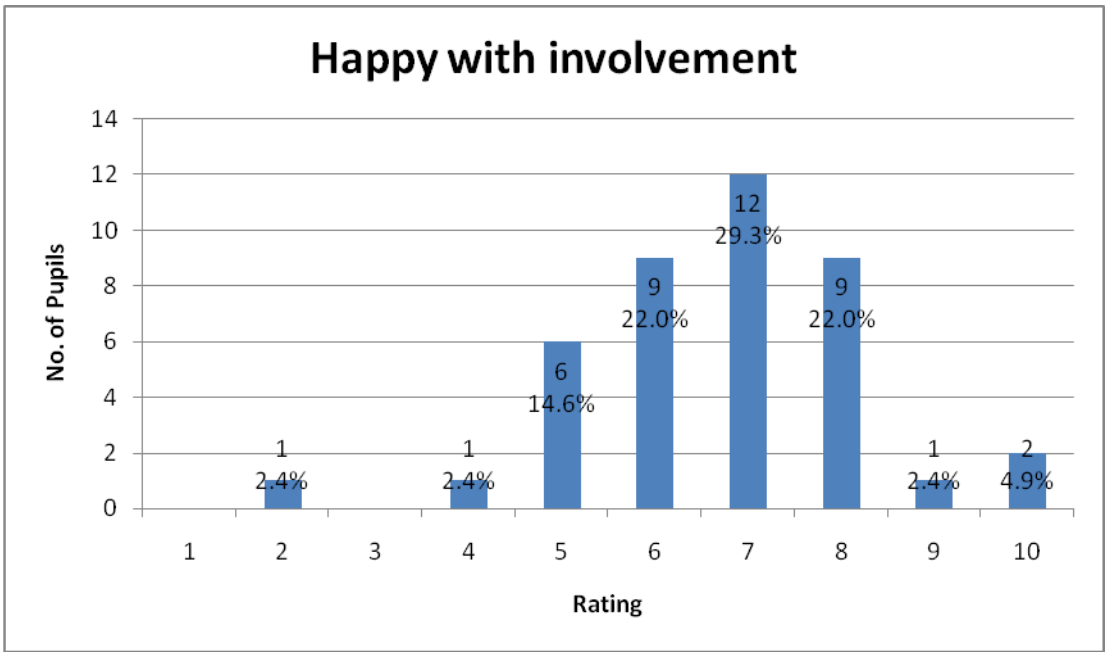
Section C

Section C aimed to find out how happy the pupils were with their involvement in teaching and learning in their school. The question asked pupils to rate their satisfaction on a scale of 1-10 where 1 indicated 'Not at all happy'and 10 indicated 'very happy'. All the pupils responded to this item. See Figure 10 (overleaf) for detail.

Figure 10 shows that the most frequent rating was 7, which was chosen by 29.3% of the pupils. This was followed by ratings of 6 and 8, which were each

selected by 22.0% pupils. Thus, 73.3% of pupils gave a rating of 6, 7 or 8. The mean rating given was 6.71, suggesting that on the whole, pupils report being fairly happy with their level of involvement with teaching and learning in their school.

Figure 10: Percentage and number of pupils who selected each rating.



The second part of section C aimed to gather qualitative data concerning how happy the pupils were with their involvement in teaching and learning in their school. The question asked pupils to give three things that would make them happier with their involvement with teaching and learning. The raw data can be found in Appendix 4 and the codings can be found in Appendix 5.

Although pupils were asked to give three responses, a number of children gave fewer answers, thus reflecting the decrepancy between possible total responses and actual total responses. To analyse the data, a decision was made to draw out themes from the responses, the results of which can be seen below in Table 7.

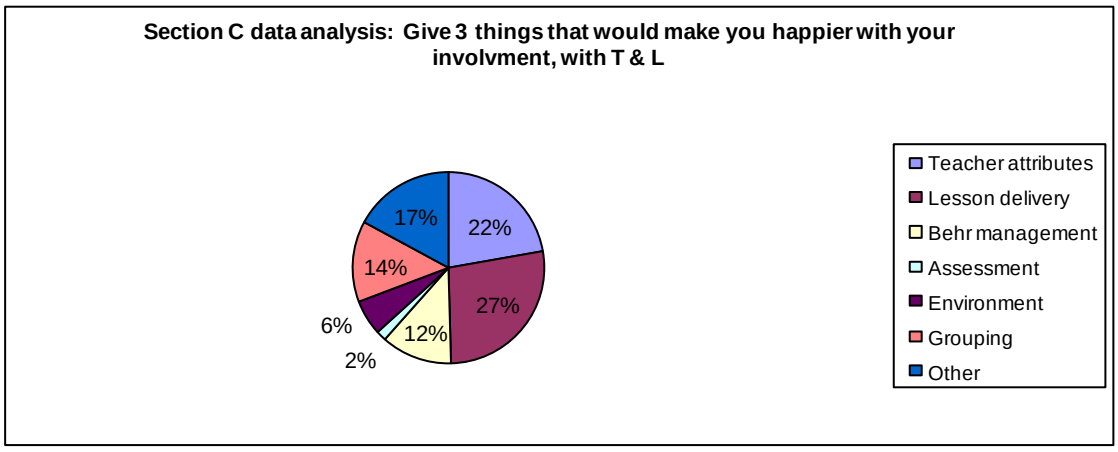
The results principally reflected the themes that were analysed in the formation of the questionnaire (Teacher attributes, lesson delivery, behaviour management, assessment, environment and an 'other' catergory). The only difference was found in the responses given concerning the 'grouping' in class. Consequently, an additional theme was included pertaining to 'grouping'.

Table 7: Number of comments relating to each category.

Section C data analysis: Give 3 things that would make you happier with your involvement, with T & L	
Theme	**Frequency**
Teacher attributes (e.g. 'the teachers listen to what you have to say' and 'teachers are more supportive'.	26
Lesson delivery (e.g. 'more interesting lessons' and 'more practical lessons')	32
Behviourr management (e.g. 'teachers are strict but not too strict' and 'behaviour in class is managed and under control')	14
Assessment (e.g. 'less assessments' and 'more feedback on what we're doing')	2
Environment (e.g. 'make the room quieter' and 'keep the temperature about right')	7
Grouping (e.g. 'the class works together more' and 'more group work')	16
Other	20
Total (41 participants)	117

Figure 11 below reflects the distribution of responses given by the children as to what would make them happier with their involvement, organised within six themes derived from qualitative analysis of these responses. Pupil responses identified 'lesson delivery' as the most important factor, identified in just over one quarter of all responses (27%). This was closely followed by a 'teacher attributes' theme, which reflected 22% of responses. 17% of the responses reflected a miscellaneous collection of suggestion grouped as 'other'. Within this group, responses were made up of comments relating, amongst other things, to the amount of homework, timings of the school day and class size.

Figure 11. Percentage responses relating to each category.



Section D

Section D aimed to find out what would lead pupils to believe that their views had been attended to (e.g. what would change in the school and how would they know that it had changed). All but two of the pupils responded to the question. From the 41 pupils, a total of 81 responses was given. Once again, the results principally reflected the themes that were analysed in the formation of the questionnaire (Teacher attributes, lesson delivery, behaviour management, assessment, environment and an 'other' catergory).

Table 8. Number of comments relating to each category.

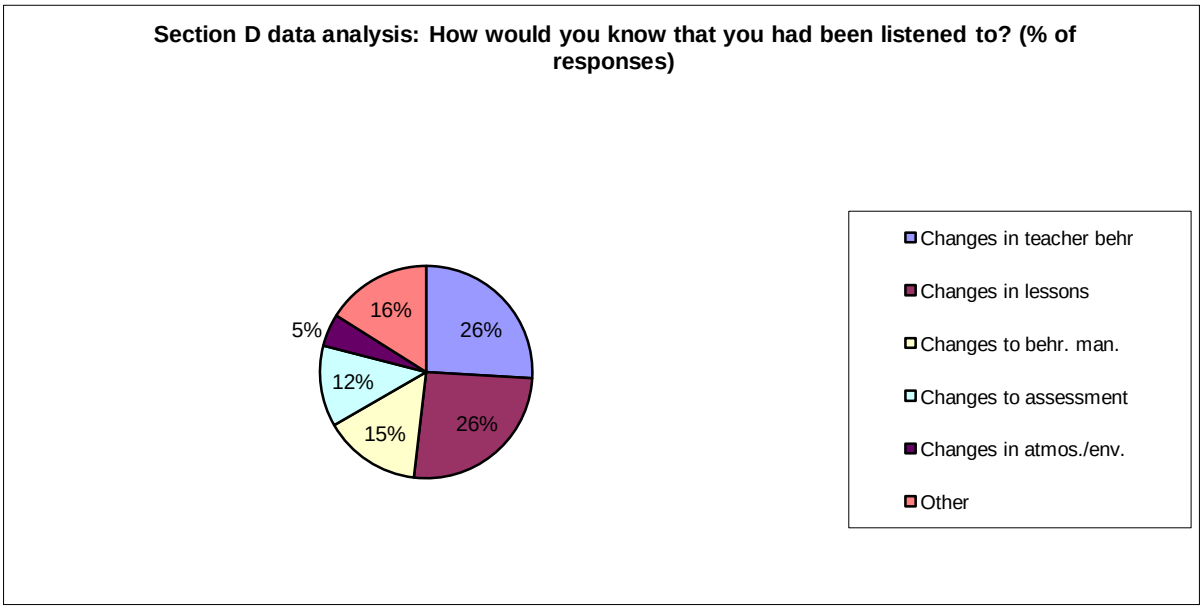
Section D data analysis: How would you know that you had been listened to?	
Theme	*Frequency*
Changes in teacher behaviour (e.g 'teachers be more approachable')	21
Changes in lessons (e.g. 'less written work, more interactive' and 'just the lessons being different, more interesting and fun')	21
Changes to behaviour management (e.g. 'the punishments made fairly')	12
Changes to assessment (e.g. 'we would have less assessment')	10
Changes in atmosphere/environment (e.g. 'environment in classes will change')	4
Other	13
Total (41 participants)	81

Table 8 above and Figure 12 overleaf suggest that for the research sample, the foremost factor that would show their views had been attended to related to a 'change' to current elements of teaching and learning. Pupil responses identified 'changes in teacher behaviour' and 'changes in lesson delivery' as evidence that their feedback had been taken seriously and acted upon; these two areas were identified in just over a quarter of responses given (26%).

Making up 16% of the total responses given, the 'other' category represents a number of miscellaneous responses that did not fit within the central themes. However, several responses given by the pupils are worthy of particular note as

they represent suggestions that identify how the process of ‘change’ may be achieved. These responses highlight specifically that pupils should have an active choice in their teaching and learning experiences: ‘a choice in how each subject is taught e.g. group work, interactive work, outdoor work’; ‘more choice in groups’; and/or ‘teachers allowing pupils to choose how the lesson is taught’.

Figure 12. Percentage responses relating to each category.



Discussion

The aim of the current research was to gather the views of pupils at a secondary school regarding what they considered were the most important factors to impact on their learning. The school staff aimed to use this information to inform their school improvement plan and impact positively on practices within the school. Within the remainder of the discussion, I shall summarise and discuss the key points to emerge from the study and, where possible, suggest implications for practice. To conclude the report, I will discuss how findings from the current study fit within the context of existing literature and consider the place of Pupil Voice initiatives in day-to-day practice for schools.

The most important factors that impact on teaching and learning

Overall, pupils’ views suggested that ‘teacher attributes’ and the ‘environment’ were the most important factors in encouraging learning in the school from the

Year 8 pupils' perspectives. Firstly, of the factors relating to 'teacher attributes', a significant number of participants indicated that a 'sense of humour', an 'approachable', 'helpful' approach and being a 'good listener' were particularly important characteristics. These findings are consistent with previous research which highlights the positive effects of pupil-teacher relationships in the classroom environment (Birch & Ladd, 1997), as well as the value of developing relationships that are caring (Pianta & Walsh, 1996) encouraging and supportive (Wang et al, 1994). The building of such relationships has been associated with positive pupil attitudes towards school and self-directed learning (Birch & Ladd, 1997). However, despite these findings, Ridley & Walther (1995) suggest that it is uncommon for secondary age pupils to report having a close relationship with a teacher.

Secondly, of the factors relating to the environment, a significant number of pupils suggested that the level of 'noise', 'temperature' and 'space' were the most important factors to support teaching and learning. This is consistent with research by Fraser (1998) whom found a pupil's learning environment to be a significant determinant of learning. Research by Flutter (2006) also found that the environment in which teaching takes place is one the most important factors affecting learning, in particular through less noise and distracting behaviour.

Both of these factors have important implications for schools. The importance of teacher attributes in teaching and learning suggests that teachers should perhaps be more aware of their personal attributes and style of delivery, and might possibly implicate the usefulness of more innovative pupil voice activities, such as involving pupils in interview panels for prospective teachers. However, this may not be straight forward, as difficulties in building relationships may persist due to limited pupil-teacher contact time in secondary schools, as well as pressures on teachers/schools to achieve good academic results (e.g. Rudduck and Flutter, 2007)

The recognition of the role of the school environment suggests that schools may need to pay more attention to physical space and practical aspects of the school setting. To further underline the link between student participation and effective learning, this practice may be facilitated in the design of new schools by allowing an opportunity for pupils to take part in school design.

Level of involvement in teaching and learning

When asked to reflect on their happiness with current levels/methods of participation, pupils generally reported that they were fairly happy with their level of involvement (representing a mean of 6.7 out of 10 and a mode of 7) in teaching and learning in their school. When asked how this could be improved, responses related mainly to changes to lesson delivery (such as more interesting and practical lessons) and teacher attributes (such as teachers listening and being more supportive). These findings are consistent with research by Dart et al (1999) which suggest that high levels of personalisation and participation in classrooms are associated with pupils engaging in learning in ways that enhance meaning and understanding.

How the pupils would know that they views have been listened to.

In the final part of the questionnaire, pupils were asked to reflect on how they would know if their view had been listened to. In general, pupils related their answers to the topics raised earlier in the questionnaire. Many of the pupils' responses related to changes in lesson delivery (such as more enjoyable, interactive, interesting and fun lessons and less written work) and teacher behaviour (being more approachable). The 'other' category became artificially inflated due to the need for a broad 'catch-all' heading under which to collate less significant answers. A significant finding of this part of the analysis was that pupils expected to see changes in practice.

Limitations

Before considering where the current research sits within existing research, a number of limitations need to be acknowledged. These focus mainly on the methodology chosen for the study and practical limitations of the subsequent research tactics and instruments. Where possible, I will discuss how these limitations were addressed within the study and ways that they may be addressed in the future. The main points are considered in Table 9 (overleaf).

Critical reflections

Whilst the practical/research element of this report represents a thorough and detailed Year 1 project, it is important that, given my current more advanced stage on the Professional Doctoral Training and as I now enter the profession of Educational Psychology, I reflect in detail and discuss the challenges within the design and implementation of this piece of research. My main reflections relate specifically to the methods employed within the project and the ways in which the research, given its emancipatory aims, attempted to change organisational culture within the setting school. Box 6 (overleaf) provides a platform for discussion of two significant points.

Conclusions

As the literature review suggests, interest in engaging with pupils has gathered momentum over the past decade and, although not applied universally, appears to be recognised as good practice for schools. This project gathered the 'pupils' voice' regarding teaching and learning. Findings gave important insight into the factors that

pupils deemed important to encourage learning in school, as well as informing an understanding of pupils' satisfaction with their involvement to date, and highlighting how pupils would recognise whether their views had been attended to.

Table 9: Limitations of the Pupil Voice investigation and implications/recommendations for future studies.

Limitations	Recommendations
Subjectivity of data analysis for all stages of data collection The subjective judgement applied in abstracting the themes and factors used within the questionnaire design and analysis is acknowledged. The process of analysis applied within the study, and wider qualitative research, is influenced by the interpretation of the researcher (See the hermeneutic cycle i.e. Gadamer, 1975). In the present study, both researchers coded and themed the data allowing a process of critical reflection. Subsequently, there was a high level of agreement between the researchers in the creation of the factors and themes, and verbal feedback from the pupils regarding the content of the questionnaire indicated that they felt that the list of factors/themes was comprehensive and that they were given the opportunity fully to give their views. The pupils also indicated that the questionnaire was not too difficult or easy to complete	• The analysis may be rendered more trustworthy by: - developing a robust iterative process in which my interpretations have been discussed, and validated with participants, prior to reporting. This could have been achieved using focus groups within the wider school population. - Including a critical friend, outside of the research process and skilled in qualitative research, within the data analysis process.
Findings are context-specific (Willig, 2008) The current research provides a specific insight into the chosen phenomenon in the specific context, at that time. Furthermore, due to the relative size of the sample (within the wider school population) and subjective nature of qualitative analysis, participants' accounts may not be seen as representative of the wider population and therefore should not be generalised.	• Validity of the findings may be improved by: - taking a longitudinal approach to the study in which participants are interviewed more than once, over a chosen period of time. - employing a larger research sample, within the year group and the wider school population.
Participants' accounts may be limited by their willingness to share information in the research context (Smith and Osborn, 2008). Applied research does not take place in a vacuum and as such participants' responses are likely to be influenced by the context in which the research takes place. Factors may include: participant position, researcher position, researcher-participant relationship, intentions of the research, intended audience, and participant's trust in processes of confidentiality and anonymity. In the current study, questions of anonymity within a context that asks pupils to reflect on the positives and negatives of school practice for the attention of senior management in the school may stifle pupil responses or affect pupil motivation.	• Future research should approach this by: - allowing participants to preview the interview questions prior to the interview process. It may also be prudent to allow a certain amount of time between this notice and the actual interviews so that participants can reflect on their experiences with the phenomena in depth and over time. - agreeing an iterative process prior to research in which participants get to see findings before reporting back to the senior management stakeholders.

Box 6: Critical reflections on the current PV collaborative project

1. More attention would be paid to including pupils as stakeholders within the research from the outset. On reflection, the pupils themselves should, in the ethos of PV, have been an integral part of discussion regarding the project design process. To achieve this, existing PV initiatives (such as the pupil councils or by forming focus groups) could have been utilised to allow open discussion about the aims and instruments to be used. In its current form, the project is largely adult-directed and intuitive which, although a pragmatic consideration given the time-frame, potentially falls into the traps discussed earlier about levels of participation (e.g. Fielding and Bragg, 2003; Hart, 1992).

2. Further attention would be given to the design of focus groups and subsequent process of data analysis as a separate empirical stage, rather than as an informative step for the questionnaire stage of the project. To achieve this, data would follow a similar method of analysis as the questionnaire data (See Box 4).

3. Given my subsequent experience of working at the school systems level and my increased knowledge of applied research, I understand that research does not take place within a vacuum. As such, there are many external/confounding pressures which impact on the research and how it is integrated into practice. As such, using the RADIO model (Timmins et al, 2003) as a guide, a greater proportion of time would be spent at the 'clarifying concern' stage; negotiating cultural and organisational challenges and unpicking factors that may inhibit/facilitate organisational change. This, in turn, would lead into the 'organisational change' stage and would influence how findings were processed with stakeholder (including the pupils) and how future actions would be agreed.

   This latter stage was neglected in the current study, due in part to external time constraints and conflicting pressures, but is a pivotal part of any action research and/or PV study. If not, schools' commitment to learning may not be harnessed, which risks forfitting the transformative potential for pedagogic and organisational systems. Furthermore, this would also ensure that the time spent by school is utilised effectively, since to 'waste' Educational Psychology agency time (including my own as a publicly funded student) and conscript students to a tokenistic consultation would have been unacceptable.

Collecting the pupils' views not only allows a school to evaluate effectiveness of its provisions, but is also considered to have benefits for participating pupils, teachers and the school (e.g. Ruddock, 2003) including the development of an agenda for improvement. However, as discussed earlier, the key to the effectiveness of Pupil Voice initiatives develops from a secondary process related to the school role and power dynamics, more specifically, the effort that professionals gathering these views take to integrate findings into practice. The key to the effectiveness of the current study (and where it fits against Hart's (1992) ladder of participation) is what was done following the study. Although results were fed back to stakeholders through a report and presentation, it remains unclear how much of the findings were integrated into practice and the

school improvement plan. Therefore, it is not possible to comment on whether the study represents an effective adult-initiated child-directed piece of research, or a simple tokenistic gesture as an administrative task.

Despite the published benefits and official guidance advocating the use of PV, in practice it appears there are a number of factors that need to be considered. Whilst thinking about the use of PV, schools should show caution and consider procedural issues, such as levels of participation, power balances, and giving due caution to distortions that might arise as a result of prevailing circumstances (Cooper, 1993), as well as systems to act upon and provide feedback to those consulted. As Rudduck (2006) posits, difficulties may arise if we encounter: a 'mile wide' promotion of pupil voice with only 'inch thick' understanding (p133). Without time/effort to consider why schools want to develop student consultation and the risks and benefits for them, PV may be seen as 'compliance' rather than 'opportunity'. The hope is that once pupil voice has become embedded in school staffs'/senior managements' way of thinking, a moment is reached when 'members of the school come to value critical reflection as a way of learning and are committed to building a climate of openness, trust and respect, in which review can be used and experienced as a constructive process rather than a 'top-down whiplash' (Rudduck et al, 2003, p140). As a result, PV then comes to serve 'collaborative' rather than 'managerial professionalism' (Whitty and Wisby (2007, p303).

To conclude, as Rudduck and Flutter (2004) suggest, 'the opportunity for developing more democratic and collaborative relationships can transform teaching and learning practices and perhaps, the whole education system for the better' (p XV). In support, Fielding and Bragg (2003) philosophise that:

> *'At its best and in the right circumstances, [PV] is a 'boundary practice', a practice that encourages us to break out of pre-existing moulds and shape the world together in ways that affirm what we wish to become…' (p55).*

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Appendix 1: Focus Group Planning/Structure

Introduction-purpose (5-10 mins)

Introduce ourselves (First names). We are here to help you and the other students to have a say in what goes on in your school.

Ask the children to introduce themselves (they should have a short extract to read about themselves).

The purpose of today is to find out what things you think are helpful in learning. The school hopes that this will lead to improvements in how they teach so that you can learn well. This is the first part of the work we'll be doing in school. We will use what you tell us today to develop some materials that help us to find out more about what helps you to learn best. You guys/girls are the lucky few who get to help shape what goes on in the school for you and the other students.

The school thinks that it is very important to make sure that what you say is listened to and will make a real change. One of the reasons that there are no teachers in the group is so that you feel free to say what you really feel. Whilst we will feedback what comes out of the group to the school, we will not be telling the school who said what.

We will ask you later how you will know that what 'you' tell us makes a difference.

Now, before we start a few housekeeping points: We're going to go on for about an hour. If anyone needs to go to the toilet please ask. Also, if anyone feels uncomfortable during the tasks and feels they can't carry on- please tell us.

To make sure we use the time as well as possible, we need to set some rules so that everyone can have say:

- Everyone's opinion is important – no right or wrong answers;
- Take turns to speak;
- Listen to each other
- Has anyone else got any ideas?

<u>Section 1- Teaching and Learning</u>:

Split into 2 smaller groups in order to facilitate discussion. Record on post-it notes. Place on flip chart under question headings. 10-12 minutes each.

Activity 1:Teaching:
I'm sure if we asked who your favourite teachers were you could give us some examples. *Perhaps give an example of a teacher we remember from our own schooling…?*
What we want you to think about is:

- <u>What makes that person a good teacher?</u>
- What do they do that makes them a good teacher?
- How do they act?
- What do they do that's different from a bad teacher?

- Why are they a good teacher?

Prompts: Friendliness, Strictness, Humour, Praise, and Interaction

Activity 2: Learning:
Tell me about a lesson when you have learnt lots? What happened in this lesson that helped your learning? What made this lesson stand out?

Prompts:
Physical Environment: (light, space, temperature, layout, size of class, time of day).
Fun: Variety, Games, Social Grouping, Humour, Competition, Friendliness, Activity.
Resources: Books, Computer, Whiteboard/Display
Feedback: Praise, Recap, Interaction, Rewards
Other: Pace, Relevant, Feedback, Expectations, Explanations, Goals, Plan, Individual/group work, Resources, Challenge, Length, Activity, Interaction, questions, variety.
Relevance: to real life, to grades/assessment,

Activity 3: Assessment:

In one larger group. The children feed into the flipchart as a whole. 10 mins.

- What do we mean by assessment?
- What kinds of assessment do you have at Langley?
- How do these types of assessment help you to learn?

Prompts:
Type: Exams, Written Work, Peer Assessment, Marking etc

Activity 4: Participation

In one larger group. The children feed into the flipchart as a whole. 10 mins.

How will you know that what we've been doing today has worked or being successful? What will happen? How will you know that the school has listened?

What next…? (5 mins)
- End on a positive (Praise/how important their work has been…)
- Invite questions
- Re-affirm uses of findings and confidentiality

Our next steps: After today we're going to take all the information that we've gathered through our discussions and hopefully come up with some materials that can help us understand what is most important about teaching and learning for you. You'll probably see us around school until March.

Appendix 2: Focus Group Data

NB: Numbers relate to how comments by participants fit against six broad themes: teacher attributes, lesson delivery, behaviour management, assessment, environment, personal feelings)

1st small group (all boys – one who declared he had dyslexia):

Activity 1

A Good Teacher:
1. Shows interest; 1. Enthusiastic; 1. Funny; 1. Gets enthusiastic when you do something right; 1. Is always positive; 1. A good teacher shows interest and listens to everyone; 1. Friendly (not teacher like); 1. Understands; 1. Does not change mood in class. An example was given where a teacher would shout and then tell a joke to "redeem them-self" One pupil suggested that he did not like teachers that make it sound like getting good marks is a life or death decision because this would "get you all worked up and stressed"; 1. Is someone you can go to for a problem, an example was given of going to a teacher about another teacher being too harsh and 1. Is someone you can talk to; 1. Pupils felt that teachers were different in class to when they are on their own. They felt that they were friendlier on a one-to-one basis. 1. The pupils felt that some of the teachers were on an ego/power trip. An example was given of a boy who fell off his chair and was given detention for it. The teacher wrote only three words to explain why a detention was given. This pupil felt that at least a whole sentence was required. 2. Is not "over the top". An example was given of when the pupil was sent to another teacher because he had not got his shirt tucked in at the back. The teacher refused to speak with him until he had his blazer on, and shouted. The pupil felt that this teacher did not expect anyone to answer back but he did; 2. One pupil felt that there is an unwritten rule that what teachers say is always right and the pupils have to conform to this. However, another pupil felt that this was not always the case; 2. Gives a 2nd chance; 3. Gets you involved such as playing games; 3. Plays music and gives ideas for songs; 3. Is someone who would 'do stuff instead of just writing", They felt that just writing was boring and that they would switch off;

Activity 2

What helps learning?
1. The knowledge that teachers arn't there just because they get paid. This pupil said that "teachers' won't remember me when I leave"; 3. All pupils felt that "when you just write stuff down you get bored and then switch off";

3. Pupils get bored if they write from textbooks; 3. The pupils did not like setting and would rather be grouped in terms of level of maturity; 3. When information is useful; 3. One pupil felt that he leant more from the internet than from school; 3. Interesting work; 3. Enjoyable class such as the use of role, drama, and ITC. One pupil felt that this helps you to pay attention; 3. A good lesson is one that "I'm interested in, teachers I like and people being mature in group work; 3. One pupil thought "being by your-self unless in music, drama and science in practicals" helps learning; 3. The pupils felt that they liked group work but it depended who it was with. 4. Homework that reflects what has been taught; 4. One pupil felt that he had difficulty with meeting English targets that were too difficult for him; 4. Pupils felt that there may be too much emphasis on tests and give the example of when a teacher informed them that they would no longer be undertaking SATs but to "not worry as they have another test that they can do instead"; 4. Pupils felt that there was too much emphasis on grades. An example was given where a teacher would give a detention for not achieving a grade 5. The pupils felt that the detention was a disguise for 'study-time' where they were required to do a retest until they reached the target; 4. One pupil felt that regular reports (every term compared to at the end of the year) are useful as they help pupils to know what they could improve on; 6. One pupil felt that there was not a good selection of vegetarian food at dinner times;

2nd small group (2 girls and 2 boys):

Activity 1

A Good Teacher:
1. Is friendly; 1. Has a sense of humour; 1. Understands if you have a problem; 1. Is helpful; 1. Is caring; 1. Is supportive in all ways; 1. Can make pupils laugh; 1. Is responsible; 1. Listens. An example was given of where one of the pupils was given detention for not doing homework when they had. The homework was in the front of a workbook and not the back of the book where the teacher had looked. The pupil felt that they were not given opportunity to explain this. However, the pupil told another teacher who listened and got them out of detention; 1. Lets you explain a problem. An example was given of a teacher not believing a reason why they were unable to do homework; 1. Doesn't makes you scared to get involved; 1. Is not biased. An example was given of a teacher giving different amounts of attention according to whether the teacher likes a pupil or not;

2. Gets a balance between being strict and getting work done;
2. Can make pupils do the work they have set;
2. Has a balance between having a sense of humour and not being too strict and actually getting the work done;
2. Is too picky or someone who tells you off for minor things;
2. Is not too strict;
3. Gets pupils involved. An example was given of teachers picking pupils rather than pupils putting their hands up;
4. Congratulates you.

Activity 2

What helps learning?
1. Good teacher; 1. A good teacher (a bad teacher does not help learning); 1. Cheerful; 2. Not too strict; 3. Setting as pupils with different abilities work at different speeds; 3. Use of electronic boards; 3. Rewards. An example was given of lollipops given for correct answers, pink slip sent home, gold stars; 3. Strict but fast time limit; 3. Pace suited to class abilities; 3. Fun. 3. Being involved; 3. Interesting. An example was given where teachers use examples of what pupils find interesting and makes jokes; 3. Enjoyable; 3. Interesting topics; 3. Use of electronic board; 4. Not too cramped/too many pupils; 5. Good environment/atmosphere; 5. Not too noisy; 5. Good temperature; 5. Everyone listening/quiet class. 6. One pupil felt that being in a better mood helps learning; 6. Not getting annoyed by the teacher;

`Appendix 3: Pupil Voice questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
Back in October, your school asked us to undertake some work that would look at what **you** think about the teaching and learning that goes on at Langley School.

To do this, we held some focus groups in the Autumn Term, in which we talked to some of your classmates to help us to find out the kind of things that you felt were important. The questions below have come out of this work.

Please take the time to carefully complete and **really think** about your answers. This is an excellent opportunity for you to really be listened to. We hope that your responses will help shape the things that happen in your school on a day-to-day basis and help you to learn.

Most of the questions follow the same structure. You are asked to pick the factors that are most important to you. Each question will say how many you need to tick.

Example Question: If you wanted to say which 3 things are the most important for a good weekend, you might think that seeing your friends was important along with playing on the computer and having a lay in.

Weekend **Your classmates told us what would happen in a good weekend. Please look at all of the factors below and tick (✓) the 3 that are most important to you.**	
Riding bike	
Going swimming	
Playing on computer (Xbox, DS, Wii)	✓
Sleeping in	✓
Reading	
Seeing friends	✓
Shopping	
Other (Please say) *Watching the football*	

This 'other' box gives you the chance to add something else that you feel is important. You can then put this as one of your most important choices if you wish.

Section A

1A. Teacher Attributes **Your classmates told us what a good teacher that helps you to learn would be like. Please look at all of the characteristics below and tick (✓) the 3 that are most important to you.**	
Approachable (makes you feel at ease to talk with them)	
Good listener (listens to what you say)	
Sense of Humour	
Supportive (i.e. encouraging)	
Empathetic (how the teacher understands your feelings)	
Consistent (teachers' behaviour does not change)	
Enthusiastic about the subject	
Helpful	
Interpersonal Skills (i.e. communicates clearly)	
Interested in you as a person	
Other (please say)	

2A. Lesson Delivery **Your classmates told us what would contribute to a lesson in which you learned a lot. Please look at all of the factors below and tick (✓) the 3 that are most important to you.**	
Interaction between you and the teacher	
Resources (i.e. books, whiteboard)	
Teaching method/style (the way the lesson is taught)	
Interesting content (makes the lesson interesting)	
Competition	
Clear objectives/expectations (knowing what is expected of you)	
Setting (ability)	
Relevance to the real world	
Grouping/independence (working on own or with classmates)	
Pace (how fast or slow you move onto new things)	
Variety (different activities)	
Fun (makes lessons enjoyable i.e. plays games)	
Other (please say)	

3A. Behaviour Management **Your classmates told us how they felt they wanted behaviour to be managed in order to learn the best. Please look at all of the factors below and tick (✓) the 3 that are most important to you.**	
Consistent (the same rules all the time)	
Fair (the teacher is the same to all pupils)	
Authoritative (tells you what to do)	
Strictness (a balance between controlling behaviour and having fun)	
Prejudice (the teacher does not judge you based on past behaviour)	
Realistic ('the punishment fits the crime')	
Other (please say)	

4A. Assessment **We asked your classmates about the kind of assessment that took place in school. Please look at the factors below and tick (✓) the 3 that are most important to help you to learn.**	
Feedback (on the work that you are doing/have done)	
Having rewards	
Type of assessment (i.e. exam, oral etc.)	
Assessment as you work (on-going assessment during work that helps you to see how you are getting on)	
Relevance (working towards a goal or outcome)	
Appropriate (whether you feel that these assessments follow on from what you're doing)	
Pressure (the importance of getting a good mark)	
Regularity of feedback/marking (how often your work is marked)	
Other (please say)	

5A. Environment **Your classmates told us what physical things affected how you learn. Please look at of the factors below and tick (✓) the 2 that are most important to you.**	
Space (how much room you have to work in)	
Temperature (hot or cold)	
Noise (background noise, loud/quiet)	
Displays (quality and relevance of displays)	
Other (please say)	

6A. Personal feelings **We would also like to find out what things about you affect your learning. Please look at the factors below and tick (✓) the 2 that are most important to you.**	
Health (tiredness, headache, cold etc.)	
Mood (angry, tired, happy etc.)	
Things at home	
Relationships with friends (falling out etc.)	
Motivation (long-term aims)	
Other (please say)	

Section B

Overall **In Section A you told us about what is most important to you to help you to learn. We would also like to know which of these themes you think is the most important. Please look at of the list of themes below and tick (✓) the 2 that are most important to you.**	
Teacher Attributes	
Lesson Delivery	
Behaviour management	
Assessment	
Environment	
Other (please say)	

Section C

How happy are you with your involvement in the teaching and learning at your school?

Please tick **(✓)** the most appropriate number.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Not at all happy

Very happy

Give 3 things that would make you happier with your involvement with teaching and learning.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Section D

How would you know that your views have been listened to? E.g. What would change in the school as a result of this work and how would you know that it had changed?

Thank you for taking part.

Appendix 4: Questionnaire Data

Each pupil was assigned a number to allow the data to be collated. The numbers in the 'Tally' column represent each pupil who selected the attribute/factor/theme.

Section A

1.A Teacher attributes	
Attributes	**Tally**
Approachable	1 2 3 5 9 11 12 17 20 21 22 24 25 28 30 31 33 37 39 40
Good listener	2 5 6 8 14 15 16 18 19 21 25 29 35 36 38 39 40 41
Sense of Humour	3 4 5 6 7 10 11 12 13 14 16 17 18 20 23 27 28 30 31 32 33 34 37 38 39 41
Supportive	1 4 7 15 22 24 27 29 38
Empathetic	2 9 17 21 35 36 37
Consistent	20 26 32 33 39
Enthusiastic	3 4 7 10 22 23 27 28 31 34
Helpful	1 8 9 11 12 13 14 15 16 18 19 26 29 30 32 34 35 36 40 41
Interpersonal Skills	8 13 19 24 25
Interested in you as a person	6 10 23
Other	26 Firm enough to control class but not too strict

2.A Lesson Delivery	
Attributes	**Tally**
Interaction	3 28 36
Resources	7 15 21 27 29 31 32 35 36 39
Teaching methods/style	2 4 5 6 10 11 16 18 21 22 26 29 30 37 38 39
Interesting content	1 4 7 8 13 14 15 19 25 28 33 34 37 39 40 41
Competition	10 12 17 19 20 24 39
Clear objectives/expectations	1 9 22 26 31 32 38
Setting	37
Relevance	4 6 14 38
Grouping/independence	1 2 3 5 8 11 12 13 15 16 18 23 25 29 30 39 40 41
Pace	9 17 21 23 24 27 34 35
Variety	3 16 20 26 32 33 39
Fun	2 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 17 18 19 20 22 23 24 25 27 28 30 31 33 34 35 36 39 40 41
Other	

3.A Behaviour Management	
Attributes	**Tally**
Consistent	1 6 8 12 14 16 18 21 23 27 29 30 31 32 33 41
Fair	2 3 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 15 16 17 18 21 22 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 33 34 35 36 38 39 40 41

Authoritative	4 15 31 32 37 38 41
Strictness	2 3 4 5 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 22 23 24 25 28 29 30 34 35 36 37 39
Prejudice	1 2 5 6 9 10 11 13 14 17 19 26 27 28 32 34 35 36 38 39 40
Realistic	1 4 7 12 13 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 33 37 40
Other	3 People with bad behaviours punishment does affect other people 20 If one person does something then all the class shouldn't get in trouble

4.A Assessment	
Attributes	**Tally**
Feedback	1 7 8 10 11 13 14 18 22 25 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 38 41
Having rewards	2 3 5 6 7 8 9 12 13 16 17 18 19 21 22 23 24 25 27 29 30 34 35 36 37 39 41
Type of assessment	4 9 11 20 38 39
Assessment as you work	3 6 10 21 24 31 32 33 36 37 38 40 41
Relevance	3 4 5 10 13 14 15 16 17 19 20 21 23 27 28 29 32 40
Appropriate	1 15 17 18 20 22 26 28 33 35 37
Pressure	2 4 6 9 12 16 26 36 39 40
Regularity of feedback	1 2 5 7 8 11 12 15 19 23 24 25 27 28 30 31 34
Other	14 No assessments (no stress for revising) 26 Not having them often (not having them every week)

5.A Environment	
Attributes	**Tally**
Space	1 3 5 6 11 12 13 14 15 18 20 21 23 24 25 26 29 31 36 37 41
Temperature	1 6 9 10 14 16 17 18 19 21 26 27 28 31 33 34 37 40 41
Noise	2 3 4 5 8 9 10 11 12 13 15 16 17 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 28 29 30 32 34 35 36 38 39 40
Displays	2 4 7 30 32 39
Other	7 How people behave in lessons 8 Concentration 22 Friends not talking to you during lessons 27 Being able to quietly talk while working 33 How many pupils in the class 35 Where you do it (outside, inside) 38 The people around me might not like me, so people to communicate

6.A Personal Feelings	
Attributes	**Tally**
Health	1 2 4 5 8 9 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 21 23 24 25 26 28 29 30 31 35 36 37 38 39 40 41
Mood	1 3 6 9 11 12 16 17 18 19 20 22 23 25 26 28 29 30 31 33 34 37 38 39 41
Things at home	2 5 10 13 21 22 27 35 36

Relationships with friends	3 6 7 10 21 24 27 32 33
Motivation	4 7 8 15 29 32 40
Other	14 School itself 20 People distracting you 34 People having chats behind

Section B

Overall	
Attributes	**Tally**
Teacher Attributes	1 3 4 5 8 9 10 13 15 16 17 19 20 22 23 24 27 30 31 33 34 37 39 40
Lesson Delivery	1 4 11 12 14 17 18 19 20 21 26 28 33 35 36 41
Behaviour Management	2 3 7 8 9 16 25 26 32 34 38 40 41
Assessment	6 24 29 36 37 39 41
Environment	2 5 6 7 10 11 12 14 15 18 22 23 25 27 28 29 30 31 32 35 38
Other	

Section C

Happy with involvement	
Rating	Pupil number
1	
2	14
3	
4	37
5	11 13 17 32 33 34
6	8 12 19 20 26 35 38 40 41
7	1 2 5 6 15 16 18 21 23 25 27 29
8	3 7 9 10 22 24 28 30 31
9	4
10	36 39

The number assigned to each pupil is given in the ‘pupil’ column. The comments made by each pupil are given in the ‘Comments’ column.

Pupil	Comments
1	Being able to work in groups and not just in classes or by yourself Be more confident Teachers to be more approachable
2	If people help me with methods of studying Learn that a teacher will not spread anything or laugh when I speak to them Learn not to be ashamed of finishing quicker than everyone else or when I know something
3	A sustainable timetable of homework

	More teacher pupil communication Enjoyable lessons e.g. more varying forms of learning
4	More humour Teachers are strict but not too strict Try and cut down background noise
5	Work in groups more The teachers aren't so strict He teachers listen to what you have got to say
6	Making stuff Chat with friend if you need help If the teacher don't shout about you in a form
7	Teacher punish children who mess around Funner lessons More interesting lessons (not all written work)
8	Working with class mates Enjoyable work
9	Less homework No too strict teachers
10	More lessons with fun and active objectives like debates More group work More interactive lessons
11	More practical lessons A teacher who comes and helps each person individually A teacher that talks to you like an equal, not a student
12	Work in groups Sit next to people you know Go to IT rooms for certain lessons
13	Fun lessons More interesting lessons A nice teacher
14	Less homework Later start and finish No breeze block walls- they're depressing
15	Teachers more supportive Teachers listen a bit more Share views in groups
16	Doing something fun Behaving properly Less assessments
17	More nicer teachers Teachers more approachable Making our views heard when we're being told off
18	Fun Keep temperature just right Approachable
19	Don't judge on past behaviour Sit next to people you know Work in groups
20	Teachers give the views of pupils The things e say should come true for a long time, not just a week Do more group work
21	If we had more to do with the lesson

	More rewards A better lesson plan
22	Maybe don't be strict about the uniform 24 hours a day Let us learn but have fun at the same time Let us have chewing in school
23	The teacher pays more attention to you The classroom isn't either quiet or loud but in between The class works together more
24	If teachers listened a bit more so they could help more Making sure everyone understands Behaviour in class is managed and under control
25	Being able to work in a group instead of on my own To be more confident so I can put my hand up more To get more help from the teacher instead of them just helping the same people all of the time
26	Not being forced to work with unfriendly people unless needed. Make sure we have a general idea of what the next lesson will be about Less homework
27	More encouragement More praise Working at a better pace
28	More fun it helps us to learn and enjoy learning (want to learn) Make it completely clear what we are doing (understandable) Teachers coming up to you asking if you understand of need help
29	I would like to understand things/subjects properly Have a bit of fun A little less noise sometimes
30	If there was a variety of lessons that we did e.g. fun If we got more feedback on the work that we are doing If teachers were more fair
31	Make the room quieter e.g. talking
32	Giving more ways to learn different subjects Less people in the class More active things so you are not just sitting in class
33	Less people in the class More ways of learning More help on projects
34	Having more active lessons To not have seating plans The teacher being more fun and not being really boring
35	If we don't have to work in a classroom all of the time The teachers were more kind and listen to you The time the school starts, the time the school finishes
36	Having more help Getting support in lessons Having more time
37	To be able to choose how the lesson is taught To be put into sets in English groups
38	Being able to communicate with people better No name calling and making people feel bad Be allowed to have your own image and saying
39	The teachers moods need to be constant

	There needs to be more varieties of teaching lessons
40	More activities Less writing Not as strict
41	Less work in class Work made fun but understandable Music twice per week

Section D

The number assigned to each pupil is given in the 'pupil' column. The comments made by each pupil are given in the 'Comments' column.

Pupil	Comments
1	Teachers be more approachable Atmosphere in rooms have changed Environment in classes will change
2	The teachers would be more understanding Teachers methods of learning would change I would feel less ashamed and less scared to speak out
3	The teachers would be more helpful Homework would be more spread out Activities in lessons would vary Punishments would not conflict with the innocent
4	That most teachers would try to put humour in and then notice that enough is enough and get on with the lesson
5	That we don't have so many tests The teachers make it more fun I would know if they had been listened to because I would see a change
6	That teacher get involved with children's gossip how that I know its going to change is teacher are nicer
7	Teachers are more enthusiastic and there are more visual learning rather than writing all the time. Also more class discussions and everyone is involved in the lesson.
8	Some people during lessons start messing about while test or revision (put the naughty students in a different group while test or revision)
9	No strict teachers
10	Lessons would be more active and possibly more group work Lessons would possibly more often in the computer rooms. This would make lesson more interactive.
11	A more positive feeling among classes during lessons and a more comfortable relation between teachers and pupils
12	Because the teachers give feedback to you so you know what level you're at.
13	The teachers would be less strict and do more fun things
14	Less homework Later start and finish Plastered walls Generally happier teachers
15	They would listen They would be supportive

16	Teachers would give us more activities to do We would have less assessment
17	A change in most of the teachers Lessons more enjoyable e.g. less written work, more interactive
18	The teacher will set more enjoyable lessons instead of just answering questions form a book and copying things off the board
19	The teachers aren't off with you because of past behaviour
20	Teachers respect pupils more and help them if they don't understand More group work where the pupil is the one that chooses what to do A choice in how each subject is taught e.g. group work, interactive work, outdoors work
21	If the lessons were more involving us How the teachers attitudes change The punishments made fairly And me happy and much better behaviour to learning
22	You would see people chewing gum Notices Feedback
23	I'm not really sure if the school would change but the teachers might. I'm not too sure if these views will be taken into account because children's views hardly ever are. I also think my views are different to many others. I'm not too bothered if my view isn't taken into account because I am happy now and will be in time to come.
24	I would know that my views had been listened to by the structure of each lesson changing slightly and school overall becoming more fun. I think that school would run better and there would be less problems with behaviour and motivation in class. It would also help a lot if teachers attitude changed towards class.
25	I would know that things have changed because everyone would be more relaxed and the behaviour would improve.
26	We will have warning about tests and lessons Unnecessary/unrelated homework not given More choice in groups
27	My German teacher moves on too fast and I very rarely learn anything, so if she slowed down, then that would be better. Being able to have a quiet chat while working
28	Just the lessons being different, more interesting and fun Teachers coming up to you more often and talking to you
29	-
30	If not every lesson was just writing and we had more fun. Also if more work was marked by teachers so we can see how we're doing.
31	The environment
32	There would be less people in the class and more active and fun things to do Making sure the teachers know you know what to do before starting
33	Lessons would be more fun and teachers would understand us better by helping more in lessons and made sure we understood the work before starting our own work
34	The lessons will be more fun and teachers will be more fair in class And we will enjoy the lessons
35	What the teachers do or where the lesson is (outside or inside)

36	Me getting more help and me understanding lessons
37	Set groups for most subjects Teachers allowing pupils to choose how the lesson is taught Classrooms under more control
38	I would know things have changed if people communicate better and be friendly no matter who or what religion/background you are Helping the school but not too many small rules, like what you wear in terms of coats and scarves/gloves I think it's not fair everything has to be black, I think we should be able to wear any colour for winter hats/coats etc. I think it would not effect our learning in anyway. If anything happens to take action, so it does not happen again
39	-
40	The teachers wouldn't be as strict
41	You would know when you have music twice per week

Appendix 5: Section C Analysis

Give 3 things that would make you happier with your involvement with teaching and learning.

Key:
1. Teacher attributes
2. Lesson delivery
3. Behaviour management
4. Assessment
5. Environment
6. Grouping
7. Other

Pupil	Coding	Comments
1	6 7 1	Being able to work in groups and not just in classes or by yourself Be more confident Teachers to be more approachable
2	2 1 7	If people help me with methods of studying Learn that a teacher will not spread anything or laugh when I speak to them Learn not to be ashamed of finishing quicker than everyone else or when I know something
3	7 1 2	A sustainable timetable of homework More teacher pupil communication Enjoyable lessons e.g. more varying forms of learning
4	1 3 5	More humour Teachers are strict but not too strict Try and cut down background noise
5	6 3 1	Work in groups more The teachers aren't so strict He teachers listen to what you have got to say
6	2 6 3	Making stuff Chat with friend if you need help If the teacher don't shout about you in a form
7	3 2 2	Teacher punish children who mess around Funner lessons More interesting lessons (not all written work)

8	6 2	Working with class mates Enjoyable work
9	7 3	Less homework No too strict teachers
10	2 6 2	More lessons with fun and active objectives like debates More group work More interactive lessons
11	2 1 1	More practical lessons A teacher who comes and helps each person individually A teacher that talks to you like an equal, not a student
12	6 6 2	Work in groups Sit next to people you know Go to IT rooms for certain lessons
13	2 2 1	Fun lessons More interesting lessons A nice teacher
14	7 7 5	Less homework Later start and finish No breeze block walls- they’re depressing
15	1 1 6	Teachers more supportive Teachers listen a bit more Share views in groups
16	2 3 4	Doing something fun Behaving properly Less assessments
17	1 1 3	More nicer teachers Teachers more approachable Making our views heard when we’re being told off
18	2 5 1	Fun Keep temperature just right Approachable
19	3 6 6	Don’t judge on past behaviour Sit next to people you know Work in groups

20	1 7 6	Teachers give the views of pupils The things e say should come true for a long time, not just a week Do more group work
21	7 3 2	If we had more to do with the lesson More rewards A better lesson plan
22	3 2 7	Maybe don't be strict about the uniform 24 hours a day Let us learn but have fun at the same time Let us have chewing in school
23	1 5 6	The teacher pays more attention to you The classroom isn't either quiet or loud but in between The class works together more
24	1 1 3	If teachers listened a bit more so they could help more Making sure everyone understands Behaviour in class is managed and under control
25	6 7 1	Being able to work in a group instead of on my own To be more confident so I can put my hand up more To get more help from the teacher instead of them just helping the same people all of the time
26	6 7 7	Not being forced to work with unfriendly people unless needed. Make sure we have a general idea of what the next lesson will be about Less homework
27	1 1 2	More encouragement More praise Working at a better pace
28	2 2 2	More fun it helps us to learn and enjoy learning (want to learn) Make it completely clear what we are doing (understandable) Teachers coming up to you asking if you understand of need help
29	2 2 5	I would like to understand things/subjects properly Have a bit of fun A little less noise sometimes
30	2 4 3	If there was a variety of lessons that we did e.g. fun If we got more feedback on the work that we are doing If teachers were more fair
31	5	Make the room quieter e.g. talking

32	2 7 2	Giving more ways to learn different subjects Less people in the class More active things so you are not just sitting in class
33	7 2 2	Less people in the class More ways of learning More help on projects
34	2 6 1	Having more active lessons To not have seating plans The teacher being more fun and not being really boring
35	5 1 7	If we don't have to work in a classroom all of the time The teachers were more kind and listen to you The time the school starts, the time the school finishes
36	1 1 7	Having more help Getting support in lessons Having more time
37	7 6	To be able to choose how the lesson is taught To be put into sets in English groups
38	1 7 3	Being able to communicate with people better No name calling and making people feel bad Be allowed to have your own image and saying
39	1 2	The teachers moods need to be constant There needs to be more varieties of teaching lessons
40	2 2 3	More activities Less writing Not as strict
41	7 2 7	Less work in class Work made fun but understandable Music twice per week

Appendix 6: Section D Analysis

How would you know that your views have been listened to? E.g. What would change in the school as a result of this work and how would you know that it had changed?

Pupil	Coding	Comments
1	1 5 5	Teachers be more approachable Atmosphere in rooms have changed Environment in classes will change
2	1 2 6	The teachers would be more understanding Teachers methods of learning would change I would feel less ashamed and less scared to speak out
3	1 4 2 3	The teachers would be more helpful Homework would be more spread out Activities in lessons would vary Punishments would not conflict with the innocent
4	1	That most teachers would try to put humour in and then notice that enough is enough and get on with the lesson
5	4 1 6	That we don't have so many tests The teachers make it more fun I would know if they had been listened to because I would see a change
6	1	That teacher get involved with children's gossip how that I know its going to change is teacher are nicer
7	1,2 2	Teachers are more enthusiastic and there are more visual learning rather than writing all the time. Also more class discussions and everyone is involved in the lesson.
8	3	Some people during lessons start messing about while test or revision (put the naughty students in a different group while test or revision)
9	3	No strict teachers
10	2 2	Lessons would be more active and possibly more group work Lessons would possibly more often in the computer rooms. This would make lesson more interactive.
11	1	A more positive feeling among classes during lessons and a more comfortable relation between teachers and pupils
12	4	Because the teachers give feedback to you so you know what level you're at.
13	2,4	The teachers would be less strict and do more fun things
14	4 6 5	Less homework Later start and finish Plastered walls

	1	Generally happier teachers
15	1 1	They would listen They would be supportive
16	2 4	Teachers would give us more activities to do We would have less assessment
17	1 2	A change in most of the teachers Lessons more enjoyable e.g. less written work, more interactive
18	2	The teacher will set more enjoyable lessons instead of just answering questions form a book and copying things off the board
19	3	The teachers aren't off with you because of past behaviour
20	1 2 6	Teachers respect pupils more and help them if they don't understand More group work where the pupil is the one that chooses what to do A choice in how each subject is taught e.g. group work, interactive work, outdoors work
21	2 1 3 6	If the lessons were more involving us How the teachers attitudes change The punishments made fairly And me happy and much better behaviour to learning
22	6 6 4	You would see people chewing gum Notices Feedback
23	1	I'm not really sure if the school would change but the teachers might. I'm not too sure if these views will be taken into account because children's views hardly ever are. I also think my views are different to many others. I'm not too bothered if my view isn't taken into account because I am happy now and will be in time to come.
24	2 3 1	I would know that my views had been listened to by the structure of each lesson changing slightly and school overall becoming more fun. I think that school would run better and there would be less problems with behaviour and motivation in class. It would also help a lot if teachers attitude changed towards class.
25	3	I would know that things have changed because everyone would be more relaxed and the behaviour would improve.
26	4 4 6	We will have warning about tests and lessons Unnecessary/unrelated homework not given More choice in groups
27	2 3	My German teacher moves on too fast and I very rarely learn anything, so if she slowed down, then that would be better. Being able to have a quiet chat while working

28	2 1	Just the lessons being different, more interesting and fun Teachers coming up to you more often and talking to you
29		-
30	2 4	If not every lesson was just writing and we had more fun. Also if more work was marked by teachers so we can see how we're doing.
31	5	The environment
32	6,2 1	There would be less people in the class and more active and fun things to do Making sure the teachers know you know what to do before starting
33	2,1	Lessons would be more fun and teachers would understand us better by helping more in lessons and made sure we understood the work before starting our own work
34	2, 3 2	The lessons will be more fun and teachers will be more fair in class And we will enjoy the lessons
35	1,2	What the teachers do or where the lesson is (outside or inside)
36	1	Me getting more help and me understanding lessons
37	6 6 3	Set groups for most subjects Teachers allowing pupils to choose how the lesson is taught Classrooms under more control
38	6 3	I would know things have changed if people communicate better and be friendly no matter who or what religion/background you are Helping the school but not too many small rules, like what you wear in terms of coats and scarves/gloves I think it's not fair everything has to be black, I think we should be able to wear any colour for winter hats/coats etc. I think it would not affect our learning in anyway. If anything happens to take action, so it does not happen again
39		-
40	3	The teachers wouldn't be as strict
41	6	You would know when you have music twice per week