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An Appreciative Inquiry of facilitative factors within educational provision perceived to support engagement of students attending a secondary school-based alternative provision unit

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Abstract

Rates of school exclusion continue to show annual increase in England (DfE, 2016; DfE, 2017a). Increasingly, there is an impetus to adopt a focus on 'what works' to promote educational success for students who experience, or who are 'at risk' of school exclusion (e.g. Hart, 2013). The importance of organisational intervention in the prevention of school exclusion is well-cited (e.g. Hallam & Castle, 2001) and gaining the views of students is seen as an essential component of this process (e.g. Cole, 2015).

The current study used Appreciative Inquiry (AI) within qualitative, case study methodology to explore how facilitative factors within an internal alternative provision unit in an East Midlands secondary school enables educational success for students who had experienced fixed-term exclusion, according to the views of groups of students, staff and parents.

Thematic Analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006) suggested that positive teacher-student relationships was perceived as the most prolific enabling factor cited by students, reflecting previous research (e.g. Michael & Frederickson, 2013). The importance of regular, respectful and balanced home-school communication and of supportive peer relationships was also noted by all participants. A nurture-based, non-judgemental ethos, underpinned by high expectations and equality, which seeks to empower students and prepare them for life was reported as facilitative. Participant groups concurred on factors that facilitated a conducive learning environment, including. systems underpinned by consistent boundaries, small class groups. A curriculum perceived by students as relevant, meaningful and practical, as well as engaging, accessible, well-differentiated lessons with high levels of learning support, was reported by all participant groups reported as essential to students' educational engagement. Students articulated their sense of safety, belonging, autonomy and competence within these educational experiences as facilitating their engagement, positive behaviour change and intrinsic motivation to succeed at school.

The AI process appeared to enable the surfacing of elements of best practice within the research setting, the elicitation of participants' visions to develop these and the generation of an action plan through which several of these ideas were realised. However, macro-systemic factors at a national level were described as current barriers to provision development for these students.

Positive actions that can be taken by schools, local and national policy-makers and EPs to address the issue of school exclusion are discussed within this paper. It is hoped that these outcomes can contribute to a growing knowledge base of 'what works' for students deemed 'at risk' of school exclusion to punctuate the cycles of exclusion currently perpetuated within the education system.

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Glossary of terms

AI: Appreciative Inquiry

EP: Educational Psychologist

EPS: Educational Psychology Service

FTE: Fixed-Term Exclusion

LA: Local Authority

TA: Thematic Analysis

TEP: Trainee Educational Psychologist

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and Rationale of the Current Research

This thesis was undertaken by the researcher, a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), as part of professional training for the Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology at the University of Nottingham. The study was conducted within a city Local Authority (LA) with high levels of deprivation within the East Midlands of England.

The issue of school exclusion is an ongoing matter of critical concern within this LA with rates of permanent exclusions continuing to show annual increases, reflecting national trends (DfE, 2017a). The LA is therefore a stakeholder in the current research, as it actively seeks to explore measures to punctuate this trend and support the successful education of its most vulnerable young people.

1.2 Personal and professional interest in the research area

The researcher views education as a cornerstone of society and has a passionate interest in supporting the inclusive education of vulnerable young people. As a TEP, the researcher has witnessed the profound adverse impact of school exclusion at multiple levels: on children, their families, schools, the LA and the wider education system. The researcher contends that the problem of school exclusion is indicative of wider socio-political issues which detrimentally impact society as a whole.

During TEP training, the researcher has been enthused by practice which seeks to hear the student voice and believes that young people can offer remarkable insight into their educational experiences and how these might be improved. The student voice will therefore be advocated in the current

study. The role of the Educational Psychologist (EP) in facilitating systemic and organisational change also inspired the researcher during TEP training and provided a stimulus for the current research.

1.3 Aims of the research

The researcher sought through this research study to link professional development with production of practice-based knowledge about the issue of school exclusion, aims which can be fulfilled through action research methodology (McNiff, 2013*).* The researcher subscribes to the view that scholars should engage in social activism such that they should work to prevent the pain of others (Sontag, 2004 in McNiff, 2013). The need within EP practice to work to discover ways to prevent the 'pain' of school exclusion thus provided the impetus for the current study.

Appreciative Inquiry has been described by Seligman (2002) as participatory action research based on positive psychology. This study therefore aims through Appreciative Inquiry (AI), as a strengths-focused action research methodology, to explore factors which enable the educational success of students deemed 'at risk' of secondary school exclusion. It was hoped that this inquiry would create knowledge and understanding to promote the successful educational outcomes of this group of students, while contributing to the related evidence base.

1.4 Overview of thesis structure

Chapter 2 (Literature Review) considers the issue of school exclusion in a socio-political context. Systemic responses to school exclusion are considered with respect to the EP role in organisational change. Issues in gathering stakeholder views, particularly the student voice, are noted. A Qualitative Research Synthesis (Savin-Baden & Major, 2010) of the literature is presented which explores the views of students who have experienced, or who are 'at risk' of, school exclusion of the factors which facilitate their

educational success. Rationale and research questions for the current study are summarised.

Chapter 3 (Methodology) provides an overview and rationale of the chosen epistemology, methodology, design, procedure and analysis for the current research. Consideration is made of action research and AI within qualitative, case study methodology as a systematic framework appropriate for the objectives of the current study. Ethical considerations, evaluation of quality and a critique and summary of the study's methodology are offered.

In Chapter 4 (Findings), the outcomes of AI within this study are presented to address each research question, as identified through thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) of the data gathered through student and parent interviews and staff focus groups.

Chapter 5 (Discussion) summarises and interprets the study's key findings in the context of previous research and psychological theory. An evaluation of the study's methodology, aims and original contribution is presented. Implications for EPs, schools and LAs and policy-makers are explored. The researcher's reflections on the research process are presented, along with concluding comments.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Chapter overview

This chapter will introduce the issue of school exclusion in a socio-political context. The issue of 'disruptive behaviour' in schools and links to school exclusion will be explored. Systemic responses to school exclusion will be considered with particular regard to the EP role in facilitating organisational change for prevention of school exclusion. The importance of gaining stakeholder views within this process, particularly with respect to the student voice, will also be considered. Following this, a Qualitative Research Synthesis (Savin-Baden & Major, 2010) of the literature is presented to explore what existing research has concluded about the views of students who have experienced, or are 'at risk' of, school exclusion about the factors which facilitate their educational success. An analysis, synthesis and interpretation of the reviewed studies is submitted. Finally, a rationale for the current study is offered and related Research Questions summarised.

2.2 The issue of school exclusion

2.2.1 School exclusion: an introduction

The issue of school exclusion in mainstream education continues to be a problem of major concern in the United Kingdom (Department for Education (DfE), 2017a; DfES, 2007; Vincent, Harris, Thompson & Toalster, 2007). The most recent government statistics indicate that rates of school exclusion continue to show annual increases in English state-funded schools (DfE, 2016a; DfE, 2017a). This trend has been described as symptomatic of a society which subscribes to the "communal neglect" of vulnerable young people (Parsons, 1999), while links have been drawn between school exclusion and social exclusion in general (Munn, Cullen & Lloyd, 2000).

There are two main forms of school exclusion: fixed-term exclusion (FTE), whereby the student is readmitted to the school after a certain time period and under provision of meeting certain terms; and permanent school exclusion, whereby the student is refused re-admittance to the school and is therefore required to seek alternative educational provision (DfE, 2017a; Munn, Cullen & Lloyd, 2000). According to government exclusion guidance (DfE, 2017b), a student can be excluded for one or more fixed periods up to a maximum of 45 school days in one academic year. However, the implications of unofficial and informal exclusion systems may also mean that "recorded exclusion figures could well present just 'the tip of the iceberg'" (Stirling, 1996, p.56), leading authors such as Cole (2015) to suggest caution in the interpretation of current exclusion figures.

In a report by the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) as part of their Schools Exclusion Inquiry, it was noted that students are typically excluded from school for a range of reasons. These include 'persistent disruptive behaviour', assault on staff and other students, possession of weapons, drug- and gang-related incidents and using offensive language (OCC, 2012; White, Lamont & Aston, 2013). The same report (OCC, 2012) cited a consensus among teachers and other educational professionals that permanent exclusion is seen as a 'last resort', implemented when a host of other approaches have been tried by the school and failed. However, participants also felt that exclusion from school was neither likely to benefit the young person nor positively modify their behaviour (OCC, 2012).

2.2.2 School exclusion as social exclusion

The "political economy of exclusion" is discussed by Ashurst and Venn (2014, p.1), who question why school exclusion continues to be the foremost response to challenging behaviour in English schools, despite widespread recognition that it is neither seen as successful nor cost-effective. They contend that the practice of school exclusion principally relates to a sector of the population who are disadvantaged, poor and troubled. They argue that a

long history of the interrelatedness between the issues of poverty and inequality with those of exclusion, poor achievement and criminality can be traced in society. They cite wealth and income inequality as a key predictor of poor educational achievement, and ultimately, unemployment and delinquency (Ashurst & Venn, 2014). Similarly, Parsons (2005) highlights the relationship between secondary school exclusion and incarceration rates within the prison system in England. However, the linearity of the 'school-to-prison pipeline' correlation has been criticised as under-theorised and as neglecting the complexity of associated social phenomena (McGrew, 2016).

Social problems, including educational failure and exclusion, have long been recognised as being more common among children experiencing socio-economic deprivation and as being characteristic of an unequal society (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). Indeed, is has been argued that nothing better exemplifies the current failure of social mobility in England than school exclusion (Gill, Quilter-Pinner & Swift, 2017). Furthermore, this inequality gap is acknowledged to be ever-widening at such a rate that it has prompted some observers to predict that some 25% of children in the UK will be living in poverty by 2020 (Brewer, Browne, Joyce & Payne, 2011). Rising exclusion rates have been linked to rising child poverty, such that this creates increased risk factors for children with 'complex needs' (Gill, Quilter-Pinner & Swift, 2017). Thus, school exclusion may be viewed within the context of vicious cycles of poverty, a phenomenon which can have a far-reaching detrimental impact from a social and economic perspective on society in general (Ashurst & Venn, 2014). This issue is therefore illustrative of the "unique interface" frequently shared by psychology and social policy (Gulliford & Miller, 2015, p. 229).

2.2.3 School exclusion: a political context

This issue of school exclusion has sat incongruously within a political educational landscape underpinned over the past two decades by an educationally and socially inclusive school system agenda (Vincent, Harris, Thompson & Toalster, 2007). The situation is arguably exacerbated within

contemporary education policy, exemplified in the Conservative government's (2010) manifesto which pledged to "end the bias towards the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream schools" (p.53) and authorises more rigorous Ofsted inspections targeted solely on areas relating to teaching and learning (The Conservative Manifesto, 2010).

The impact of this agenda on schools is illustrated within a recent study commissioned by the National Union of Teachers (NUT) which presents survey data of 7,922 teachers nationally and interview data from seven case study schools (Hutchings, 2015). Accountability measures, including Ofsted inspections and school performance tables, were noted as disproportionately impacting schools with below-average attainment, high proportions of disadvantaged students and students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) (Hutchings, 2015). Hutchings (2015) argues that evidence suggests that these pressures, exacerbated by an increasingly demanding and narrowing academic curriculum, is particularly creating disaffection for disadvantaged students. Further, teachers' testimonies report that Ofsted's approach is causing reluctance in schools to educate students who are likely to lower their attainment figures and note Ofsted's disregard for effective inclusion work to support social and emotional needs if it does not result in satisfactory attainment data (Hutchings, 2015).

Another key issue in the contemporary political context of school exclusion is that of academisation. Mainstream non-academy schools continue to significantly out-perform academies in terms of achievement of disadvantaged students (Hutchings & Francis, 2017). Due to the greater autonomy with which they operate, concerns have been raised about the possibility of strategic exclusion by academies of low-performing students (Machin & Sandi, 2018). However, using student data from national databases, an investigation of performance gains achieved by academies concludes that higher permanent exclusion rates appear to be rather as a consequence of tough discipline policies and procedures adopted by academies (Machin & Sandi, 2018).

As such, Armstrong (2014) asserts that contemporary government policy has created an incompatibility or “cognitive dissonance” within the education system, such that education practitioners are currently driven by performance-related agendas to the detriment of children’s best interests. This has been attributed to escalating rates of permanent school exclusion within mainstream settings (Armstrong & Hallett, 2012). It is argued that such agendas facilitate avoidance by schools of the need to foster attitudes within school culture essential to the realisation of inclusive educational practice (Pumfrey, 2010).

2.2.4 Risk factors for school exclusion

National trends over the past number of years indicate that risk factors for school exclusion demonstrate significant differences in gender, socio-economic status, age and ethnicity, such that male students, those in Year 9 or above, recipients of free school meals (FSM), and those from particular ethnic groups are disproportionately likely to experience school exclusion (DfE, 2016a; DfE, 2017a). Boys are currently three times more likely than girls to receive FTE or permanent exclusion, while students eligible for FSM are around four times more likely to be excluded than their peers. Secondary schools are by far the highest-excluding educational settings, accounting for 81% of the total number of permanent exclusions (DfE, 2017a). Over half of all school exclusions occur in Year 9 or above, while over a quarter of all permanent exclusions occur in pupils aged 14 years old, with this age-group also accounting for the highest rate of FTE and re-occurring school exclusion (DfE, 2016a; DfE, 2017a). In terms of vulnerabilities according to ethnicity, statistics have consistently shown that students from Roma/Gypsy and Irish Traveller heritage experience the highest rates of school exclusion, while Black Caribbean pupils are more than three times more likely than the general population to experience permanent school exclusion (DfE, 2017a).

More often than not, it is some of the most vulnerable young people in society who disproportionately experience school exclusion, including Looked After Children (LAC) (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003), those with

identified ‘social, emotional and behaviour difficulties’ (SEBD), and other SEN, as well as identified mental health difficulties (Department for Children Schools and Families (DSCF), 2008; Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2005; Heath et al., 2004; White, Lamont & Aston, 2013). Indeed, according to recent government statistics, students who receive SEN support experience the highest rates of permanent exclusion, accounting for over half of all school exclusions, and being over seven times more likely to experience permanent exclusion than students without identified SEN (DfE, 2017a).

The vulnerability of students who experience school exclusion is also acknowledged in a report by Taylor (2012) on Alternative Provision (AP) and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). The report estimates that 79% of students in AP have identified SEN and can often “come from the most deprived backgrounds…and chaotic homes” and experience such difficulties as family breakdown, parental mental health difficulties, drugs and alcohol abuse and domestic violence (Taylor, 2012, p.4).

Government policy on school exclusion dictates that schools must give special concern to ensuring the impartial and just treatment of students from particularly vulnerable groups (DfE, 2017b). However, the social inequality which exists in terms of risk factors for school exclusion is summarised by a stark statistic, highlighted by the School Exclusions Inquiry (OCC, 2012). In the UK in 2009-10, a Black Afro-Caribbean male student with SEN and receiving free school meals was 168 times more likely to experience permanent school exclusion from a state school than a white female student without SEN from a middle-class background.

2.2.5 Impact of school exclusion

The poor outcomes of students who experience permanent school exclusion are well-documented. The poor academic attainment of such students is noted in government strategy guidance (DCSF, 2008, 2009). The poor academic outcomes of the young people who attend AP is starkly exhibited in statistics that only 1.4% of these students achieve five or more GCSEs at

grades A*-C compared to 53.4% in the general population (Taylor, 2012). Taylor (2012) attributes several causative factors to this, including long-term academic failure due to behavioural difficulties, poor attendance, and SEN, as well as low expectations and a failure by mainstream and AP settings to address these difficulties.

The potential life course of young people who experience school exclusion is such that they are at increased risk of developing mental health difficulties (Cole, 2015; Parker & Ford, 2013; Parker et al., 2016), social isolation (Wright, Weekes, & McGlaughlin, 2000), and are four times more likely to be not in education, employment or training at the age of 19 compared to non-excluded peers (DfE, 2011). Links between school exclusion and criminality are also frequently cited (Parsons et al., 2001). A report on the backgrounds of prison populations stated that the majority of prisoners had experienced school exclusion (63% temporary exclusion, 42% permanent exclusion), with these prisoners showing higher re-conviction rates than others (Williams, Papadopoulou & Booth, 2012). Indeed, the Social Exclusion Unit (2002) has drawn links between rising re-conviction rates for offenders with rising rates of school exclusion, with their figures stating that prisoners are twenty times more likely to have been excluded from school than the general population. Though correlation does not denote causation and should be interpreted in the context of complex social risk factors (McGrew, 2016), this illustrates the severe and enduring adverse impact school exclusion may have for many.

As well as incalculable personal costs, it is argued that the societal penalty for this failure to provide the highest quality education for those with the greatest needs within the system is far-reaching social and economic losses (Evans, 2010; Gill, Quilter-Pinner & Swift, 2017; McCluskey, Riddell & Weedon, 2015; Parsons, 2009). On official exclusion rates, it is estimated that every year's cohort of permanently excluded young people costs the state £2.1 billion in additional education, benefits, healthcare and criminal justice costs (Gill, Quilter-Pinner & Swift, 2017).

2.3 Challenging behaviour in schools

2.3.1 Defining behaviour difficulties

Students who are identified as having behaviour difficulties have long been cited as presenting the greatest challenge to inclusive education policy (DfES, 2004; Heath et al., 2004). A wide range of terms pertain to this issue of "challenging behaviour" of young people, i.e. "emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD)" or "social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD)", a diversity which reflects the disparate nature of its presentation, assessment and prevention (Rees, Farrell & Rees, 2003). Indeed, Cole (2015) refers to the "overlapping definitions of 'Conduct Disorders', 'BESD', 'Challenging Behaviour' and 'Disaffection'" (p.14). Such terms have been defined as describing those difficulties in functioning which directly influence a pupil's school engagement and educational attainment (Cooper & Jacobs, 2010).

More recently, a conceptual shift to the term "Social Emotional and Mental Health" (SEMH), has acknowledged the presentation of behaviour problems may be because of underlying mental health issues (Evans, Harden & Thomas, 2004). Accordingly, recent government policy on school exclusion acknowledges that "Disruptive behaviour can be an indication of unmet needs" (DfE, 2017b, p.6). Indeed, Cole (2015) asserts that school exclusion is therefore a mental health issue, as well as a social, political and educational issue. Disruptive behaviour may also be symptomatic of student disaffection (Atkinson & Woods, 2003; Hartas, 2011), which can be mediated by multiple systemic factors, e.g. staff-student relationships, curriculum, school culture and family support (DSCF, 2009; Wilding, 2015)

Despite these insights, it has been argued that government guidance (e.g. DfE, 2010), paradoxically outlines challenging behaviour as a problem which can be solved by an emphasis on authoritarian disciplinary measures, a perspective denounced as anti-theoretical by authors such as Armstrong (2014).

2.3.2 'Disruptive' behaviour and school exclusion

"'Persistent disruptive behaviour' remains the most common reason cited for school exclusions in all state-funded educational settings (DfE, 2017a). This trend has remained consistent over the past two decades and indicates that interventions to address patterns of behaviour difficulties are not timely or sufficiently effective (Evans, 2010).

Gaining a consensus on defining 'persistent disruptive behaviour' is problematic, as schools tend to operate within interpretations of their own idiosyncratic exclusion policy (O'Regan, 2009). Indeed, government guidance authorises that the decision to permanently exclude a pupil can be taken by head teachers as a response to breaches of the school's individual behaviour policy (DfE, 2017b). Thus, the decision to exclude a student ultimately rests with the individual school. The rhetoric around students who experience exclusion often centres on the disruption they pose to their own education as well as that of others, which often provides the rationale given by schools for exclusion (DfE, 2017b; Hamill & Boyd, 2002; Ofsted, 2005).

The impact of behavioural issues in schools is well-documented and can have far-reaching systemic implications. Failure to successfully intervene with the hardest to reach students often has a "ripple effect" and a systemic impact on schools whereby their behaviour can escalate to crisis point, often resulting in exclusion (Nash & Schlösser, 2015). Numerous authors have cited the extensive and harmful impact of exclusion on an already vulnerable young person, their families, the school itself and wider society (e.g. Gulliford & Miller, 2015; Nash & Schlösser, 2015; Parsons, 1999). Exclusion is consequently often seen as a failure by those involved (Greene, 2009), occurring when it is 'too late' for positive behavioural change (White, Lamont & Aston, 2013).

2.3.3 Approaches to the management of challenging behaviour

Many interventions underpinned by broad theoretical approaches have been set forth to understand and support behaviour difficulties (Frederickson & Cline, 2009). Behavioural approaches are an effective and widely-used strategy for reducing disruptive behaviour, however positive effects of these approaches tend to be immediate and endure only for the intervention period (Evans, Harden and Thomas, 2004; Cooper, 2011). Similarly, the effectiveness of cognitive approaches, often combined with behavioural interventions, is supported but again shows variation in sustained, long-term effects (Evans, Harden and Thomas, 2004).

Humanistic approaches emphasise the therapeutic value of such factors as unconditional positive regard and empathy, with teachers' emotional warmth, for example, shown as predictive of students' social and academic engagement (Cooper, 2011). Psychodynamic approaches, most notably the attachment paradigm, understands challenging behaviour as an expression of young people's unresolved emotional needs and as an outcome of the impact of adverse and traumatic experiences on development (Bennathan & Boxall, 2000; Bombèr, 2007; Geddes, 2006; Nash & Schlösser, 2015; The Sutton Trust Report, 2014). Although this paradigm offers a significant contribution in understanding behaviour difficulties, it also risks a deterministic view being taken of a child's development (Gulliford & Miller, 2015). Further, the efficacy of interventions relating to this paradigm still require further evaluation (Evans, Harden and Thomas, 2004).

Frederickson and Cline (2009) contend that supporting the needs of students who display challenging behaviour in schools requires an interactional, systemic framework, which considers the complex interaction between students' individual needs and the appropriateness of their educational environment. Systemic interventions are heterogeneous and offer a combination of the other approaches to behaviour difficulties (Cooper, 2011). The efficacy of systemic approaches in predicting positive outcomes is

indicated by the success of whole-school behavioural interventions (e.g. Cooper & Jacobs, 2010; Gibbs & Powell, 2012)

The current failure to implement effective systemic responses to address challenging behaviour in schools is highlighted by Taylor (2012), who argues that the current spending patterns by schools on AP suggests that they do not have adequate behaviour management systems in place. Serious concerns have been raised about behaviour management systems in mainstream and AP settings, particularly concerning the use of punitive practices (McCluskey, Riddell & Weedon, 2015). These authors summarise that within the education system, “The implications for children’s rights are urgent and grave in this context” (p.604).

2.4 Systemic responses to school exclusion

2.4.1 Alternative Provision/EOTAS

AP is defined as “an organisation where pupils engage in timetabled, educational activities away from school and school staff” (Taylor, 2012, p.4). Difficulties exist in evaluating the effectiveness of provisions for excluded students who are educated other than at school (EOTAS) (McCluskey, Riddell & Weedon, 2015). These challenges include a lack of clear definition and a multiplicity of terminology pertaining to such provision across government guidance and statistics, as well as differences in features, e.g. different age-groups, full- and part-time provision. Further, no clear or common referral procedure exists for students to access such alternative provision (McCluskey, Riddell & Weedon, 2015).

In a national review of AP, conducted through scrutiny of government data and consultation with providers and LA representatives, Taylor (2012) further notes that frequently unsatisfactory planning and assessment around students in AP. High levels of variation at a local level, inconsistencies with implementation of a full educational curriculum, a lack of pastoral care and opportunities for re-integration to mainstream or progression to college, as

well as the use of punitive practice including restraint and isolation, were also seen as characteristic of the provision evaluated in this report (Taylor, 2012).

However, Taylor (2012) also asserts that several characteristics are found to be consistently present in good quality AP. These include a good understanding of local need, appropriate curriculum delivered by good quality staff to support students' progress and good links with external agencies, including EPs. The importance of rigorous initial assessment and ongoing monitoring of pupils' needs and progress, a focus on accessible literacy and numeracy and a goal of re-integration to mainstream education are also cited (op cit). This report concludes that children's experience of EOTAS is highly variable, such that at best, a flexible, creative approach which is achievement-focused and incorporates individual needs of students and families can be taken (Taylor, 2012).

Munn, Cullen and Lloyd (2000) describe that units or bases within a school's support or sanctions system offer another alternative to exclusion. They note the frequent failure of both off- and on-site units to reintegrate students into mainstream provision where a less flexible model of in-school unit is adopted. They cite Holland and Homerton (1994) to outline that the advantages of such an approach include the encouragement of the professional development of school staff, particularly regarding pastoral support, more focused support for the most challenging pupils, periods of reprieve for class teachers and a calm and flexible environment. However, the disadvantages of this approach may be the increased likelihood of mainstream staff disowning the issue, less dedicated support for the majority of students, the disproportionate skill set of a small number of staff who are less likely to be able to offer early intervention for difficulties and, as a result, the increased social marginalisation of students. In this way, such provision may be seen as carrying the risk of 'internal exclusion' for students. Thus, the need within such support centres to avoid the establishment of separate education provision away from schools and for careful consideration of maintaining links with the main school, regardless of the site of the provision, has been emphasised (Mortimore, Davies, Varlaam & West, 2018).

Regarding the literature exploring best practises in the area of 'alternative education' (AE), Thomson and Pennachia (2016) identify that the importance of several factors is frequently emphasised, including the formation of strong staff-student relationships, flexibility in curriculum offers, allowing students to give their views and ensuring the provision of support for students as required. They describe that AE is often surrounded by a relationship- or 'nurture'- based discourse which supports behaviour management of students by enabling them to become self-rationalising, which is framed within a behaviourist regime. In their study of 17 case studies of UK-based AE, they found that such factors as a calm, predictable routine, emphasis on small provision size and high staff presence was seen by staff and students as facilitating a more relaxed, humane environment (Thomson & Pennachia, 2016). However, the authors also draw a link between increased practices they observed in surveillance and charting of behaviour data as being related to the need to demonstrate effectiveness to systems of evidence and the need to maintain a regime of keeping order. They cite their concern that the dominance of behaviourist approaches within such a rigidly structured setting, although able to demonstrate progress, may not equip students with the initiative and social, political and cultural knowledge resources for employment and further education, which they argue contributes to a lack of social justice for these young people (Thomson & Pennachia, 2016). Malcolm (2018) cautions that this approach may undermine the importance of relational dynamics which seemingly underpins AP effectiveness. These issues will be revisited in Section 5.5.

2.4.2 Eco-systemic approaches to preventing school exclusion

Ecological systems theory (Bronfrenbrenner, 1979) views the educational setting as a series of inter-related systems, wherein the child is placed within a classroom ('microsystem'), contained within a whole-school agenda which is informed by national and governmental practice guidelines ('macrosystem') (Lewis and Norwich, 2005). A drive for the improvement of

systemic approaches to supporting students with behaviour difficulties in school has become increasingly predominant over the past two decades (Michael & Frederickson, 2013). It has been asserted that broad, holistic, eco-systemic approaches are necessary in responding to the needs of children at risk of exclusion (Cole, 2015; Hart, 2013). Thus, consideration of the characteristics of schools which create facilitative environments to promote positive outcomes for these students is crucial.

In an analysis of successful strategies to prevent school exclusion, Hallam and Castle (2001) conclude that an eco-systemic approach is necessary in order to promote lasting change in the prevention of school exclusion and that strategies are most effective where they have the involvement and commitment of the whole school staff, senior management, students and parents. The importance of an inclusive culture and an ethos where all students are valued equally and encouraged to accept responsibility for managing their own behaviour was also cited Hallam and Castle (2001). Cole (2015) likewise stresses the importance of whole-school approaches and ethos and identifies that mental health promotion and collectively-held inclusive values of school staff are characteristic of low-excluding schools, such that this filters down to behaviour policy, classroom practice and staff-student relationships. Taylor (2012) cites examples of schools which through adequate systemic approaches, including robust behaviour management systems, strong pastoral support and excellent teaching methods, have retained particularly challenging students within mainstream education. This view is supported in the wider literature, which suggests that school policies which provide predictable, consistent boundaries, structure and routines for young people can mitigate the impact of chaotic home lives, support their sense of security and emotional well-being in school, thereby supporting emotional regulation (e.g. Cole, 2015).

Many factors can be seen to influence schools' policy in this regard. In a study of the perceptions of teaching staff on their school's approach to exclusion, most teachers reported their view that schools' exclusion policy ranged from 'non-excluding' to 'zero tolerance', with most schools situated in

the middle of this spectrum (OCC, 2012). Teachers cited a number of factors as influencing schools' exclusion policy, including pressures from national performance indicators, financial implications of exclusion, the influence of parents and governors, as well as the school's reputation. Furthermore, Cooper, Drummond, Hart, Lovey and McLaughlin (2000) note the highly influential role of government policy in the facilitation and constraint of this work by school staff.

2.4.3 Facilitating systemic change to prevent school exclusion

There is a growing research base which demonstrates the EP role in facilitating organisational and systemic change in the prevention of school exclusion. The research base reflects diversity in this organisational change, perhaps demonstrating the multi-faceted and complex nature of this area. One such study (Rechten & Tweed, 2014) sought to assess the viability of a model which uses role-play to improve communication skills (Maguire & Pitceathly, 2002) in young people at risk of school exclusion and found that this had a largely positive reception from the school staff who worked these students. An example of curricular reform is seen in Ewen and Topping's (2012) account of a project to introduce flexible, individualised education for young people experiencing disaffection and behaviour difficulties, which was shown to have positive outcomes for students in terms of attendance, exclusion and achievement.

Diversity notwithstanding, the value of adopting a systemic approach is widely noted in the literature. This is demonstrated in a study of a project by an Educational Psychology Service (EPS) which introduced a whole-school intervention for positive behaviour management, aimed at supporting students at risk of exclusion in a failing school (Smith, Travell & Worton, 2004). This strategy was seen by key stakeholders and Ofsted to lead to positive improvements in student behaviour. A similar study (Timmins, Shepherd & Kelly, 2003) employed the use of the Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) model to evaluate a LA mainstream behaviour support initiative, which was also perceived to be effective in

reducing exclusions by all participating schools. Similarly, an action research case study (Standing, Fearon & Dee, 2012), which investigated the impact of a restorative justice approach on student with challenging behaviour, concluded that a whole-school shift to restorative practice is required to promote favourable outcomes for students and school.

Such authors as Hart (2013) have proclaimed the need to move away from 'within-child' models of understanding behaviour difficulties and towards systemic change in schools, most specifically through a positive focus on 'what works' for students who experience or who are 'at risk of' exclusion. Furthermore, Hart (2013) cites the need to seek the views of young people themselves as being key in this regard, a sentiment echoed by Cole (2015) and Michael and Frederickson (2013). Increasingly, action research is being used internationally to empower young people at risk of exclusion through such approaches as Appreciative Inquiry (e.g. Boyd, 2012; Martin, 2015; San Martin & Calabrese, 2011). In this way, young people are being assigned the role of experts of their own educational experiences, such that they are progressively afforded a voice about what enables them to be successful at school and thereby effect systemic change within their educational environments.

2.5 Stakeholder views

The importance of gaining the views of stakeholders within a system which aims to prevent school exclusion is noted in the literature. Exclusion literature has largely focused on the views of 'proxy informants', such as teachers, other professionals and, to a lesser degree, parents and carers (McCluskey, 2008). Miller and Todd (2002) have highlighted the salience of EPs seeking to discover the views of all actors operating in a psychosocial system through exploratory research.

2.5.1 School staff views

Much of the research seeking to address behavioural issues in schools has been concerned with views of school staff in this regard, e.g. teacher attributions of challenging behaviour (Lambert & Miller, 2010) and teacher views of strategies for reducing exclusion (Hallam, 2014). In a study which used focus groups to gain the views, attitudes and experiences of teachers (N=20) and non-teaching professionals (six LA staff and two national organisations) on school exclusion, a range of factors were identified as influencing permanent school exclusion (White, Lamont & Aston, 2013). These included systemic issues, including a scarcity of time and training by staff in managing challenging behaviour, a lack of support from external agencies, rigidity within systemic procedures and a perception that these students would receive better support in another provision. Conversely, participants identified such approaches as whole-school supportive approaches, specialist training, de-escalation strategies, keyworker or learning mentor support, restorative justice and parental involvement as being preventative measures to avoid school exclusion.

2.5.2 Parent views

The importance of involving parents is cited in the literature as crucial to improving schools and effective education, particularly for students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll & Russ, 2004). Similarly, it has been noted that only when the systems of child, home and school communicate positively together can the issue of school exclusion can be addressed (Loizidou, 2009). In their analysis of successful exclusion prevention strategies, Hallam and Castle (2001) note that parental involvement was secured from the outset in all successful projects. Parents in this study gave their view that they valued such strategies as regular review and support meetings, open and regular contact with school staff and setting of home and school targets/rewards, which they felt had enabled them as parents to feel fully informed and facilitated success and behaviour improvements for their children at school. Parents and carers

of excluded children in another study gave their view that positive relationships with committed school staff members enabled their children to feel valued and restore their trust in the education system (Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006). They felt that this had huge benefits for their children in terms of their self-esteem, improved relationships and increased motivation and engagement at home and school.

2.5.3 Student views: Hearing the Child Voice

The importance of protecting the child voice has long been enshrined in international legislation (UNICEF, 1989). The salience of listening to student views of their school experiences and enabling them to participate in the planning of services which affect them has been specified by recent government recommendations (DfE, 2014a). Furthermore, Ofsted inspections are required to report on the extent to which schools seek and act on pupil views (Ofsted, 2005).

Acquiring the confidence and competence to be involved requires practice through provision of increasing opportunities for children to participate in democratic decisions which affect their lives (Hart, 1992). This is particularly true of disadvantaged children in the struggle for equal rights (Hart, 1992). The benefits of child participation are numerous, including an increased sense of ownership, belonging and empathy (Shier, 2001) and the development of political self-determination, social competence and responsibility (Hart, 1992). The highest levels of child participation involve children sharing power and responsibility for decision-making power with adults (Shier, 2001) and child-initiated, shared decisions with adults (Hart, 1992). It was these levels of student participation to which the current study aspired. However, the notion of child participation cannot be considered without regard to power relations (Hart, 1992). The implications of this for the current study will be considered in Sections 3.4.3.2 and 5.3.4.

The value of seeking the views of students who experience school disengagement and exclusion has been well-cited as an essential component of successful change and reform processes (e.g. Cole, 2015;

Hart, 2013; Levin, 1999; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Riley & Docking, 2004). Indeed, recent government guidance on school exclusion has emphasised the importance of the student voice in addressing the issue (DfE, 2012). However, there continues to exist a dearth of investigation into the perceptions of young people with challenging behaviour about what could be done to make their school experience more positive (Hamill & Boyd, 2002). Some authors (e.g. Davies, 2005; Osler & Vincent, 2003; Thomas & Glenny, 2000) have contended that this lack of advocacy is due to the resistance of education professionals to listen to the views of this population, who they may see as underserving or unentitled to be thus empowered, or because they may perceive the views of these students on school and society as uncomfortable (Munn and Lloyd, 2005). Davies (2005) argues that this may be a perpetuating factor in their educational difficulties.

2.6 Systematic Research Synthesis

2.6.1 Introduction to systematic research synthesis

Increasingly, such authors as Hart (2013) have identified the need to gain the views of students who experience, or who are ‘at risk of’, exclusion about what enables their school success and engagement so as to facilitate systemic reform. To discover and explore in depth those studies which have sought to gather the views of students who experience, or who are at risk of, school exclusion about those factors which they perceive as positive and enabling about their school experience, the present researcher performed a systematic search and review of the literature. This review will now be discussed.

2.6.2 Defining research synthesis

A research synthesis is defined as a set of processes in which a number of studies are considered to ascertain what is known from existing research with respect to a given research question, as well as to appraise and assess the quality and relevance of this evidence (Gough, 2007). A systematic

review can therefore provide useful insights into what has been concluded thus far within the research base (Petticrew & Roberts, 2008). Furthermore, such a review can enable a researcher to ascertain the consistency of findings across different contexts, and support the decision-making process by enabling refinement of hypotheses and identifying pitfalls to be avoided (Mulrow, 1994). As previously noted, the literature base of child views is limited, especially regarding the views of young people who experience challenging behaviour. The current review aims to aggregate the current research available on the views of students who have experienced, or who are 'at risk' of, school exclusion to gain an insight into what existing research has concluded about their perceptions of factors that enable their educational success.

2.6.3 Qualitative Research in Systematic Research Synthesis

The question of how qualitative evidence can be most effectively accounted for has remained problematic for many years (Savin-Baden & Major, 2010), as systematic reviews are the traditional domain of quantitative research (Noyes, Popay, Pearson, Hannes & Booth, 2011). Consensus regarding the best methodology for critical appraisal and synthesis of qualitative findings has yet to be conclusively established (Petticrew & Roberts, 2008). However, the salience of transparent reporting within search and synthesis processes has been noted (Noyes, Popay, Pearson, Hannes & Booth , 2011). The current review will attempt to provide such transparency.

2.6.4 Qualitative Research Synthesis

2.6.4.1 Method Overview & Rationale

The term 'qualitative research synthesis' is an encompassing title which seeks to be inclusive of similar, related concepts, e.g. 'meta-synthesis', 'meta-ethnography' (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010). This method aims to facilitate a comprehensive view of the research through aggregation of the findings of qualitative studies to provide theory development, higher level

abstraction, and transferability to make qualitative findings more accessible for practice application (Zimmer, 2006).

The method is distinct from meta-analysis, which typically operates within positivist epistemology (Bondas, Hall, & Wikberg, 2013), and draws on the principles of meta-ethnography (Noblit & Hare, 1988). It has been recently gaining acknowledgement within education research (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015). The method pursues new understanding of the research area through more formalised interpretive analysis of existing findings through “third order interpretations” thereafter presented in a synthesis (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010; Zimmer, 2006).

The researcher hoped that this approach would provide a methodologically rigorous framework for the management and meaning-making of the findings of existing qualitative research in a way that would add to the development of theory and practice pertaining to the current research area (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010).

2.6.4.2 Advantages

Proponents of qualitative research synthesis affirm that it has a number of distinct advantages. Firstly, the method provides a means to synthesise and discover meaning to manage the current ‘information explosion’ seen in qualitative research (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010). It provides ways to advance theory and insights within a research area or phenomenon and to the lived experience of study participants. This was advantageous to the current review, concerned with exploring the experiences of a particularly vulnerable population. Furthermore, the method aims to inform the development of evidence-based practice, also seen as pertinent to the transformative aims of the current research study, further discussed in Chapter 3.

2.6.4.3 Limitations

The method, however, is not without constraints. Those conducting a qualitative research synthesis are restricted by the questions and potentially

sparse presentation of qualitative data in the literature (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010). This limitation is addressed within the current review's inclusion criteria (see below). It may also be argued that the study context, traditionally critical to qualitative research, can be undermined by the synthesis of studies. Care should therefore be taken by the synthesist in providing adequate contextual information regarding participant and setting information (Savin-Baden & Major, 2007). Rigorous reporting and reflection is required to counteract researcher bias within a synthesis, as is application of methods to establish the plausibility of interpretations (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010).

2.6.4.4 Review Question

A qualitative research synthesis was engaged to answer the following review question:

What does existing research conclude about the views of students who have experienced school exclusion about the factors which facilitate their success and engagement within education?

2.6.5 Synthesis Design

2.6.5.1 Search strategy

A key component of a qualitative research synthesis is that of a systematic search strategy (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010). A comprehensive search of the literature was carried out between 25/05/17 and 30/05/17 to discover a research base for the current review question, the aim of which was to locate the most relevant research studies for consideration (See Appendix A).

2.6.5.2 Exploratory Searches

Manual searches were conducted using internet search engines and university library databases (Google Scholar; Google; NuSearch) to explore some of the key concepts pertaining to the current review, using the following terms: school exclusion; student views. This informed the development of keyword terms for the purposes of the systematic database search.

2.6.5.3 Systematic Database Searches

Three databases were employed in this literature search: Web of Science (includes over 1 billion searchable, cited references); PsychInfo (OVID) (includes more than 1,300 journals related to the field of psychology and related disciplines); and ERIC (EBSCO) (contains more than 1 million abstracts of articles and documents related to education research). Searches of the "grey" literature in the area were conducted through EThOS (British Library resource for searching over 400,000 doctoral theses). This database was chosen because of its specific reference to the UK context, which is of concern to the current review.

These databases were searched using a range of search terms relating to school exclusion and student views. Synonyms were considered using Boolean operators to broaden the search and to allow for scope in differential terminology (e.g. "exclusion" OR "expulsion"). Similarly, different terms were used to try to capture the sample population in question (i.e. "disengag*" OR "at risk"). Search strategy and terms are outlined in Appendix A.

Bibliographic software was employed to manage and organise the saved articles of these search results. RefWorks was chosen because it allows direct export from the databases in an "abstract plus references" format which enabled organised and extensive searching (See Appendix A for full details). The researcher also performed hand-searches of the reference lists contained in relevant literature to attempt to locate the most relevant studies to the present review.

2.6.6 Inclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria applied when conducting the literature search are outlined in Table 2.1, below.

Table 2.1: Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria for literature search

Feature	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Country	UK studies	-Studies in countries outside of the UK
Sample	-Student views -Secondary aged students (Key Stage 3-4)/ (11-16 years old) -Students who have experienced or who are identified as being "at risk of" school exclusion -Students identified as having SEBD/SEMH needs	-Views of others (i.e. parents, school staff, other professionals, etc.) -Primary aged students (Key Stage 1-2)/(11 years old or less) -Students not identified as being "at risk of" or having experienced school exclusion -Students not identified as having SEBD/SEMH needs
Setting	-School or educational settings -Day (non-residential) educational provision	-Non-educational setting -Residential provision
Study focus	-Element of positive/strengths-based focus on perceived enablers in school experience	-Exclusive focus on deficits or barriers in school experience -Accounts of exclusion experiences or perceptions of circumstances leading to exclusion -Experiences after leaving educational settings
Research Design	-Qualitative design	-Quantitative design only
Data presentation	-Thick descriptions (quotations)	-Unsupported descriptions
Publication	-Peer-reviewed journals -Grey literature (theses/dissertations)	-Other publications (i.e. magazine articles, books, book review)

2.6.6.1 Rationale for inclusion/exclusion criteria

2.6.6.1.1 Country

Although many studies exist within the international literature regarding the views of students from populations relevant to the review question (e.g. Jahnukainen, 2001; McGregor, Mills, te Riele & Hayes, 2015), the researcher was aware that school exclusion and education systems vary widely between countries and therefore the experiences of students in other educational systems may not be comparable to the UK context. For this reason, only UK studies were included in the current review.

2.6.6.1.2 Participant Sample & Setting

The views of students were sought for the current review. As secondary school students represent the group within the UK education system who most frequently experience school exclusion (DfE, 2017a), studies which gathered the views of students within Key Stages 3-4 (aged 11-16 years old) were included in current review. Only studies that gathered the views of young people attending non-residential educational settings were sought for this review as this is representative of the type of setting attended by most young people in the UK. It has been noted that a dearth of research exists regarding the experiences of young people who have experienced school exclusion (e.g. Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Consequently, the above search returned a distinct lack of studies, particularly published research, carried out with young people at risk of exclusion in mainstream secondary schools.

As a result, the current researcher decided to extend this search to include research which addressed the positive experiences of young people with SEBD/SEMH needs and those who had previously experienced permanent school exclusion (i.e. students in PRUs and similar alternative provisions), as these were seen to be comparative sample groups. As PRUs are the main form of alternative education for students with SEBD/SEMH needs who, as a group, are more likely to be excluded from school (Michael & Frederickson, 2013), the views of these populations may therefore be seen as pertinent to

the current review question. In addition, many studies simultaneously address the views of young people attending differing educational settings (e.g. Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Loizidou, 2009). However, it is acknowledged that a limitation of including young people with a degree of variance in their school experience could mean that some of the identified themes may be peculiar to the circumstances of the particular group under consideration. Further limitations are discussed below.

2.6.6.1.3 Study Focus

Because the current review seeks to discover enabling and positive aspects of the experiences of this population, only studies that adopted a focus on some level on those factors that facilitate success for young people at school were sought for this review. Studies that exclusively focus on deficits or barriers in students' school experience or engagement, accounts of students' exclusion experiences and retrospective accounts of students' experiences after leaving educational settings were excluded for the purposes of this review.

2.6.6.1.4 Research Design

Because the present review is concerned with accounts of the lived experiences and perceptions of young people, only studies that contained at least some element of qualitative design were included for this review.

2.6.6.1.5 Data presentation

The need to include studies with rich qualitative data from the original study, which contains thick description and quotations, is noted in the qualitative research synthesis guidance (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010). Therefore, only studies which presented original data were included in the current review.

2.6.6.1.6 Publication

As well as peer-reviewed published articles, the present researcher took the decision to include grey literature in this review. The limitations of published literature have long been noted (e.g. Rosenthal, 1979), particularly regarding

publication bias for studies with significant results. Within qualitative research synthesis, there is particular justification for including 'grey literature', i.e. unpublished studies such as research theses, as these often include the rich, thick description frequently lacking in published articles which is required for this method (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010).

2.6.7 Study selection

Initial screening of the titles and abstracts yielded by the above search strategy through application of the inclusion criteria outlined above was carried out. Further screening of remaining full-text articles for relevance to the purpose of this review subsequently followed. This process is outlined in Figure 2.1, below. Details of excluded studies are contained in Appendix B. Thirteen studies were identified for the final selection for the current review.

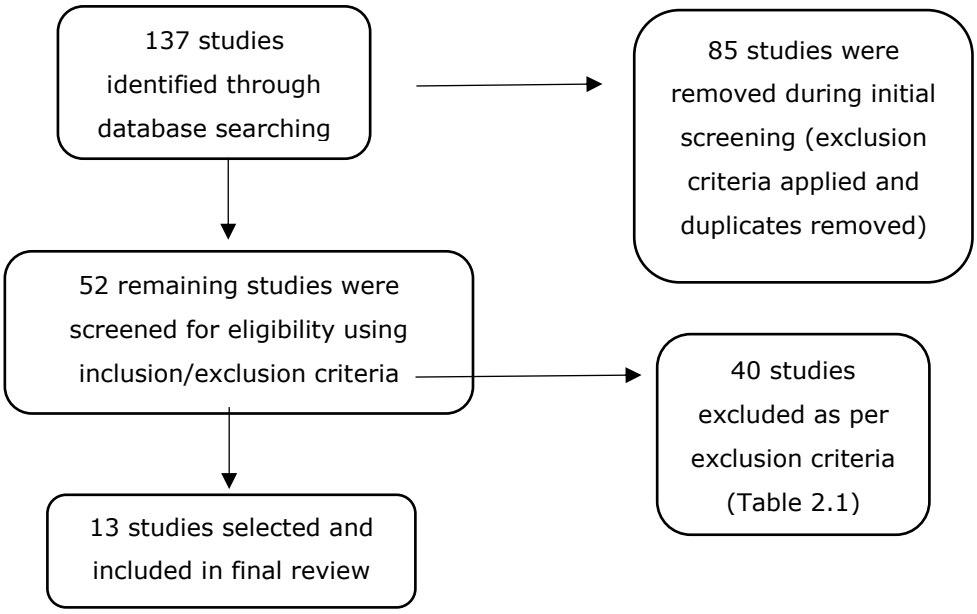


Figure 2.1: Study selection flow diagram for current Qualitative Research Synthesis

2.6.7.1 Included Studies Summary

A total of thirteen studies met the inclusion criteria for this review. An overview of the characteristics of the included studies is presented below.

2.6.7.1.1 Setting and Sample

All of the included studies sought the views of secondary school-aged young people (11-16 years). Students in included studies attended a range of educational provisions: mainstream secondary school (Boyd, 2012; Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Hawkins, 2011; Mann, 2014); in-school student support bases (Hamill & Boyd, 2002; McKeown, 2001; Preece & Timmins, 2004); Pupil Referral Units (Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson, 2013); EOTAS provisions (McCluskey, 2015); school for students experiencing SEBD (Sellman, 2009); or a combination of provisions (Gooding, 2014; Loizidou, 2009). This indicates that the population under consideration are not a homogenous group in terms of their educational experiences, which may be understood in the context of a host of external variables. However, almost all of the students in included studies had either experienced or were identified as being "at risk of" school exclusion, or they had received a statement of SEN classifying "BESD/SEMH" as their primary need (Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). Their views are therefore considered relevant to the current review.

2.6.7.1.2 Topic Relevant to Current Review

All of the included studies sought on some level to discover young people's views of positive and enabling factors of their educational experience. For some studies, this formed the primary focus of the research (e.g. Boyd, 2012; Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). In others, this perspective was positioned within a wider exploration of the young people's viewpoints of their provision (e.g. Hamill & Boyd, 2002).

2.6.7.1.3 Methodology/Data collection

A range of qualitative research methods were used in the selected studies. Semi-structured interview was the principal means of data collection, although some studies employed the use of focus groups, either as a supplementary method (e.g. Hamill & Boyd, 2002) or the primary method of data collection (e.g. Sellman, 2009).

2.6.7.1.4 Publication

Five of the included studies were found through searches of the 'grey literature' (Boyd, 2012; Gooding, 2014; Hawkins, 2011; Loizidou, 2009; Mann, 2014). The remaining nine were peer-reviewed journal articles.

2.6.8 Analysis and Synthesis Procedure

2.6.8.1 Situating the studies

Major and Savin-Baden (2010) propose different ways in which studies can be situated within qualitative research synthesis to facilitate comparison and enable the building of themes that most powerfully represent the dataset. Reciprocal translational analysis allows the researcher to identify key themes and concepts and makes judgements about how these translate across studies (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010). This approach was deemed most appropriate to the current review, as this would enable the capturing of concepts between studies to most adequately describe the phenomenon under consideration.

2.6.8.2 Identifying findings

Synthesists are advised to consider data that contains rich, thick descriptions that include quotations (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010). In comparing the studies, recording the details, setting, participants, validity and positioning of the researcher, as well as the main concepts identified in the studies, is also advised (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010). They also recommend that a tabulated summary be created to usefully compare the relative similarities between studies and to adjudge their coalescence. The study summary for the present synthesis is presented in Table 2.2, below.

2.6.8.3 Rigour of findings

Major and Savin-Baden (2010) recommend a rating schedule to establish the rigour of study findings contained in a qualitative research synthesis, reproduced in Figure 2.2, below. This provided the framework for assessing

the rigour of studies included in the present review, noted in Table 2.2. Studies deemed to be ‘unsupported’ in terms of data presented were not considered for this review, as per inclusion criteria above.

Unequivocal	Findings supported with clear, compelling evidence
Credible	Findings are plausible given the weight of evidence
Unsupported	Findings are suggested but are not supported by data

Figure 2.2. Rating schedule to establish rigour of study findings (reproduced from Major & Savin-Baden, 2010, p. 61

Table 2.2: Summary of included studies in current Qualitative Research Synthesis

Author/ Year/ Country/ Publication	Sample/Setting	Topic (Relevant to Review Question)	Methodology	Data collection	Main themes/concepts identified by authors	Quality/Rigour
Boyd, 2012 England Thesis	Young people (N=5) (11 – 14 years) from 2 different secondary schools at risk of permanent exclusion (based on perceptions of key members of school staff)	Young people's perceptions of what works well to support their behaviour at school and why these interventions are successful	Appreciative Inquiry Grounded theory	Individual interviews	• Learning (to behave) • Self-esteem • Environment • Feeling listened to • Control • Change of feelings	Unequivocal
Gooding, 2014 England Thesis	Students (N=6) in PRUs and secondary schools excluded from secondary school in KS3	Perspectives of young people into their experiences of support before and after their exclusion from secondary school	Mixed methods exploratory design	Semi-structured interviews	• Acceptance is key • Help targeted to my needs	Unequivocal
Hamill & Boyd, 2002 Scotland Journal article	11 comprehensive schools (In-school pupil support bases on site): 45 students who access the provision (14-16 years old)	Student views (and all stakeholders) of the effectiveness of provision	Ethnographic case study approach	Focus groups (4-5 students in each) Semi-structured interviews	• Curriculum • Exclusion: equality, fairness and rights • Learning difficulties (support) • Teachers	Unequivocal

Author/ Year/ Country/ Publication	Sample/Setting	Topic (Relevant to Review Question)	Methodology	Data collection	Main themes/concepts identified by authors	Quality/Rigour
Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006 England Journal article	14 pupils (Y7- Y11) in 7 schools: all experienced FTE or permanent exclusion. (11 students experienced 'managed move'; 3 had received Alternatives to Exclusion preventative support)	Perceptions and experiences students who had been permanently excluded/at risk of permanent exclusion/ identified as being disaffected	Case study /unclear	Individual interviews	• 'Fresh start' • New Relationships (peers, teachers) • The Effect of New Relationships – Self-Esteem • The learning environment	Unequivocal
Hart, 2013 UK Journal article	6 children (aged 9-13) based in a PRU (Outstanding OFSTED rating)	Potential protective factors of the PRU, as identified by children	Case study/ unclear	Semi-structured interviews	• Relationships • Teaching and learning • Expectations • Environment	Credible
Hawkins, 2011 England M. Dissertation	Mainstream secondary school students "at risk of school exclusion"/ "experiencing marginalisation"	Student views of potential enablers which could help to keep them in school	Case study	Student semi-structured interviews	• Teachers' attitudes • Engaging teaching • Teachers caring for young people in a pastoral way • Positive discipline system • Relevant/Meaningful/ Accessible curriculum	Unequivocal

Author/ Year/ Country/ Publication	Sample/Setting	Topic (Relevant to Review Question)	Methodology	Data collection	Main themes/concepts identified by authors	Quality/Rigour
Loizidou, 2009 England Thesis	Y8 – Y9 pupils 2 EOTAS, 1 mainstream secondary school. Group 1 (N=7) pupils had been permanently excluded; Group 2 (N=6) pupils at greatest risk of but who had managed to avoid permanent exclusion.	To ascertain critical factors that prevent exclusion from school by investigating pupils' narratives	Mixed methodological design	Semi-structured interviews	• Positive relationship with teachers • Positive Relations: Family Dynamics • Support for Accessing • Learning • Behaviour support systems	Unequivocal
Mann, 2014 England Thesis	Secondary school students (aged 11-18) at risk of permanent exclusion who succeed (N=8) (Participants screened for at-risk factors and their Y11 progress/post-16 destinations)	Understanding factors influencing the success of students at risk of permanent exclusion from school	Narrative inquiry Bricolage approach including elements of case study, thematic narrative inquiry and qualitative data collection	Interviews Focus groups	• Respect • Being listened to • Relationships with staff • Relationships with students • Being able to deal with emotions • Feeling cared for • Being taught well • Deciding to achieve • Being treated fairly • Positive parent and/or carer relationships developed • Drug regime	Credible

Author/ Year/ Country/ Publication	Sample/Setting	Topic (Relevant to Review Question)	Methodology	Data collection	Main themes/concepts identified by authors	Quality/Rigour
McCluskey , Riddell & Weedon 2015 UK (Wales) Journal article	Young people (N=48) (average age range 14-16) in 8 EOTAS settings	Young people's views of EOTAS	Case study	Interviewed individually, in pairs or small groups	• Being given time to talk • Non-judgemental staff • Positive school-home communication • Being treated 'like an adult' • Clear boundaries set • Teachers explain carefully • Pride about academic achievement	Unequivocal
McKeown, 2001 England Journal article	Students Y7- 8 (N=40) attending an "in-school" support centre for students whose challenging behaviour put them at risk of exclusion	Explore students' views of elements of the Support Centre facilities that students perceive have made a difference to their own personal development	Evaluative case study	Individual and small-group consultation	• Working environment • Teacher-student relationships • Individual targets • Counsellor • Place in which students can calm down, self-correct, sort out problems. • Happier atmosphere; humour	Credible
Michael & Frederickson, 2013 England Journal article	16 students: 6 students (aged 11–16) attending KS3 PRU; 10 students (aged 14–16) attending KS4 PRU in an inner London local authority	Investigate perceptions of young people who are attending PRUs due to exclusion from mainstream school of enablers of positive outcomes	Case study	Semi-structured interviews	• Relationships • Curriculum • Discipline • Learning environment: • Self: self-motivation and self-discipline	Unequivocal

Author/ Year/ Country/ Publication	Sample/Setting	Topic (Relevant to Review Question)	Methodology	Data collection	Main themes/concepts identified by authors	Quality/Rigour
Preece & Timmins, 2004 England Journal article	Students (N=12) attending an Inclusion Centre within a secondary school	Exploring student views of the benefits of the centre	Case study/ unclear	Semi-structured interview	• Perceived benefits on self • Centre environment • Perceptions of staff qualities	Unequivocal
Sheffield & Morgan, 2017 England Journal article	Students (N=9) aged 13–16 with SEN statement of BESD	Views of young people identified as having SEBD as their primary need of strengths they experience at school	Social constructionist grounded theory approach	Semi-structured interviews	• Acknowledging strengths • Motivators for success • Becoming a different person • Receiving support • Teacher–pupil relationships	Unequivocal
Sellman, 2009 England Journal article	Students (N=6) (aged 13-16) attending a school for boys experiencing SEBD	Explore the student research group's own perspectives on the behaviour management policy	Case study	Focus groups	• Positive regard for school/education • Rewards • Relationships	Unequivocal

2.6.9 Analysis

2.6.9.1 Developing First Order Themes/Codes

This phase of the qualitative synthesis involves examining studies' presented findings for the presence of themes (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010). The next stage of this process is to identify themes common to multiple included studies, while also acknowledging those findings that appear less frequently. This involves reading the data to locate cross-study concepts in order to move towards synthesis. First order themes/codes identified for the included studies are contained in Appendix C.

2.6.10 Synthesis

2.6.10.1 Developing Second Order Themes

The synthesis phase of the review includes the process of locating and combining pre-existing themes and categories across studies to develop composite themes. Identifying second-order themes, whereby articles are categorised in a structured format under emerging common, recurring themes, forms the next stage of this process. The development of second-order themes for studies in the current review is presented in Appendix C.

2.6.10.2 Synthesis Analysis

Each of these second-order themes will now be briefly discussed in turn.

2.6.10.2.1 Relationships & communication

This theme represented the greatest coalescence of the included studies' findings. Broadly speaking, this theme encompassed teacher-student relationships, peer relationships, and family relationships and support.

2.6.10.2.1.1 Teacher-student relationships

Teacher-student relationships was by far the most widely cited enabling and supportive factor discussed by the young people in these studies. There was much commonality evident in students' descriptions of the mechanisms of these positive relationships. The notion of teachers caring for students in a pastoral way (Hawkins, 2011) manifested across the data set, i.e. 'feeling listened to' (Boyd, 2012; Gooding, 2014; Mann, 2014; McKeown, 2001); 'teachers understanding students' personal problems' (Hamill & Boyd, 2002); 'caring and support' (Hart, 2013; Loizidou, 2009), 'being given time to talk' (McCluskey, 2015), 'helping to sort out problems' (McKeown, 2001; Preece & Timmins, 2004), and 'teachers providing emotional support' (Michael & Frederickson, 2013). The staff characteristics which students saw as promoting this relationship was also evident, e.g. 'non-judgemental attitudes of staff' (McCluskey, Riddell & Weeldon, 2015), 'being treated with genuine positive regard' (Gooding, 2014; Hamill & Boyd, 2002), students seeing teachers as a 'friend' (Hamill & Boyd 2002; McKeown, 2011) who made 'time to listen' to students (Hamill & Boyd 2002; McCluskey, Riddell & Weeldon, 2015; Preece & Timmins 2004). Similarly, the notion of teachers being 'respectful' towards students was a marked commonality amongst studies (Hamill & Boyd 2002; Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Hawkins, 2011; Mann, 2014; Preece & Timmins 2004), as was the concept of being 'treated as an adult' by staff (Hawkins, 2011; McCluskey, Riddell & Weeldon, 2015) and 'trust' (Hart, 2013). Students' perceptions of teachers were often of a 'kind', 'fun', 'humorous', 'relaxed' person (Hamill & Boyd, 2002; Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Hart, 2013; Hawkins, 2011), with whom students can share humour (Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Loizidou, 2009; Preece & Timmins 2004) and common interests (Hawkins, 2011; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017), but who also maintained appropriate boundaries (Hawkins, 2011). In this way, students saw teachers as 'strict but fun' and as treating students 'fairly' and 'equally' (Hamill & Boyd, 2002; Hart, 2013; Loizidou, 2009; Mann, 2014; Preece & Timmins 2004).

These relationships appeared to have a profound effect on the young people in that they felt teachers had ‘belief in them’ (Sheffield & Morgan, 2017) and that they felt ‘valued’ (Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Sellman, 2009) and ‘accepted’ by teachers (Gooding, 2014). Furthermore, descriptions of teachers’ positive communication skills, e.g. remaining ‘calm’ (Loizidou, 2009), ‘not shouting’ (Loizidou, 2009; McKeown, 2011; Preece & Timmins 2004), and ‘being in control of feelings and behaviour’ (Boyd, 2012). This modelling of positive communication by teachers, and also peers and parents, seemed to promote development of the students’ own communication skills and more positive behaviour (Boyd, 2012; McKeown, 2001).

2.6.10.2.1.2 Peer relationships

The importance of peer relationships was also apparent as an enabling factor for the young people in the included studies. Prosocial peer relationships and bonding was found to be fostered for young people through team work and support with social skills (Hart, 2013). This appeared to facilitate success for some students in a number of ways. Friendships were a motivator for school engagement and as promoting a sense of belonging for some young people (Hawkins, 2011). Positive relationships with peers were related to students’ feelings of reassurance and safety in their educational setting (Michael & Frederickson, 2013). There was a sense that students felt they needed peers to model positive behaviour (Boyd, 2012), while the development of ‘new relationships’ with peers for young people who had experienced a ‘managed move’ seemed to be related to their development of a new sense of identity and more positive behaviours (Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006).

2.6.10.2.1.3 Family relationships and support

Another prominent theme within the included studies was that of positive family relationships, support and engagement. Parental and familial support, guidance and encouragement was cited as being a motivator for students’ school attendance (Michael & Frederickson, 2013) and engagement and

success at school (Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). Positive school-home communication to share achievements were also cited as facilitative. Furthermore, evidence of family support was the most apparent distinguishing factor in one comparison study between a group of students who had managed to avoid school exclusion and their excluded counterparts (Loizidou, 2009).

2.6.10.2.2 Learning Environment: Systems, Structure & Ethos

This theme broadly incorporated a range of perceived enabling factors relating to the learning environment, as well as the systems, structures and ethos which underpin it.

2.6.10.2.2.1 Systems

Having a clearly defined and consistently applied behaviour policy was seen as enabling when implemented on a whole-school level (Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006). Clear and consistent boundaries, rules and expectations (Hart, 2013; Hawkins, 2011; McCluskey, Riddell & Weeldon, 2015) as well as well-understood systems for rewards (Boyd, 2012; Gooding, 2014; Hamill & Boyd, 2002; Hart, 2013; Sellman, 2009), positive discipline (Hawkins, 2011) and positive feedback (Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006) were prominent themes. Students in some studies (Hart, 2013; McKeown, 2001) also mentioned having individualised targets and linked rewards as a supportive factor, while a flexible interpretation of the behaviour policy according to the individual needs of the young person was similarly seen as enabling for young people attending an in-school pupil support provision (Gooding, 2014; Hamill & Boyd, 2002). Some students also referred to the specific systems as supporting the management of their problem behaviours, e.g. behaviour support systems such as an exit card (Gooding, 2014; Loizidou, 2009), a drug regime (Mann, 2014), access to a counsellor and a space for students to calm down (McKeown, 2001).

2.6.10.2.2.2 Structures

Regarding the supportive aspects of the physical learning environment, students often cited a calm, quiet working environment (Hart, 2013; McKeown, 2001; Preece & Timmins, 2004) which offered low-level sensory stimulation (Boyd, 2012). High staff-student ratios, which enabled staff availability to give time and attention to children and their needs, were also commonly mentioned (Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Hart, 2013; Sellman, 2009). Similarly, attending a provision that accommodated fewer children with small groups and class sizes was also seen as a positive factor for many students in promoting positive learning and behavioural outcomes (Hart, 2013; McKeown, 2001; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Preece & Timmins, 2004).

2.6.10.2.2.3 Ethos

There was a sense that a prevailing ethos of familiarity (Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006), nurture and support (Hamill & Boyd, 2002) underpinned provisions in the included studies. This type of learning environment seemed to provide students with a sense of 'safety' and 'security' (Hamill & Boyd 2002; Hart, 2013; Preece & Timmins, 2004), of having their 'fundamental needs met' (Boyd, 2012), of having 'order in their lives' (Sellman, 2009) and of 'promoting their social skills' (Preece & Timmins, 2004).

2.6.10.2.3 Curriculum/Teaching & Learning Support

A number of commonalities amongst studies were again apparent within this theme.

2.6.10.2.3.1 Help & Support with Learning

Almost all of the included studies noted that students perceived the support they received with learning as being a strong enabler of their success at school. Students frequently referred to the importance of having accessible, adequately differentiated work (Hamill & Boyd 2002; Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Hawkins, 2011; Michael & Frederickson 2013)

and achievable targets (Hart, 2013). They also frequently cited the availability of additional support to access learning as a strong enabling factor (Boyd, 2012; Gooding, 2014; Hamill & Boyd 2002; Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Loizidou, 2009; McCluskey, Riddell & Weeldon, 2015; McKeown, 2001; Preece & Timmins, 2004; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). This support seemed to take a number of forms, e.g. special lessons, small-group and individual tuition (Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006); receiving extra work and visual, practical aids (Loizidou, 2009). Students often expressed a sense of safety in accessing this support, such that they felt teachers did not belittle or embarrass them for seeking help, but rather explained carefully, repeated instructions until students felt confident and allowed them to learn at their own pace, which seemed to provide relief for some students from perceived social and academic pressures (McCluskey, Riddell & Weeldon, 2015; McKeown, 2001; Preece & Timmins, 2004).

2.6.10.2.3.2 Engaging Curriculum

Lessons perceived as ‘fun’, ‘interesting’, ‘engaging’, ‘practical’ and ‘creative’ were oft-cited as a positive factor for students in included studies (Hamill & Boyd 2002; Hart, 2013; Hawkins, 2011; Loizidou, 2009; Preece & Timmins 2004). Accessing a curriculum perceived as ‘relevant’ and ‘meaningful’, often where this had a life skills focus and involved the teaching of skills relevant to students’ planned careers, was also a salient factor in promoting student engagement and success (Hawkins, 2011; Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). There was also a sense in some cases of students being afforded a sense of ownership and active involvement in their learning and decision-making, while opportunities to access individualised learning were also mentioned by students (Gooding, 2014; Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson 2013). This diversity of opportunity for students was similarly reflected in their access to out of school alternatives and extra-curricular activities, which they saw as facilitative of their success (Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Michael & Frederickson, 2013).

2.6.10.2.4 Self

This theme captured students' reflections on their own role in enabling their perceived success and progress at school. Many of the students referred to their increasing feelings of control and self-efficacy within their educational provision (Boyd, 2012; Hamill & Boyd 2002; Loizidou, 2009; Preece & Timmins, 2004). In one study, this sense of control, as well as environmental and learning factors, was explicitly cited as leading to increased feelings of self-esteem for students (Boyd, 2012). Similarly, many other studies likewise mentioned the increased self-esteem, feelings of worth and confidence for young people owing to experiencing success, progress and pride in their behaviour and work (Gooding, 2014; Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Hart, 2013; McCluskey, Riddell & Weeldon, 2015; McKeown 2001; Preece & Timmins 2004; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017).

There was a sense that their educational experiences had brought about feelings of personal 'change' and a shift in 'identity' for the young people in some cases (Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Hart, 2013; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). Their experiences also seemed, in turn, to lead to feelings of 'self-motivation', 'self-discipline', 'hope for the future', 'a willingness to change' and 'deciding to achieve' (Gooding, 2014; Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Loizidou, 2009; Mann 2014; Michael & Frederickson 2013; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). The internal nature of this process, perhaps underpinned by external factors, was summarised in a study of young people with SEMH needs attending mainstream provision (Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). Though some students were apparently motivated to succeed by external factors such as exams, they fundamentally attributed this decision to an internal change which was of their own volition.

2.6.11 Interpreting Findings

2.6.11.1 Developing Third Order Interpretations

This phase involves reviewing patterns, themes and concepts, such that third order interpretations can emerge (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010). This requires

cross-study interpretation and the location of the reviewer in a transparent, wider cultural interpretation (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010). To this end, interpretations pertaining to the current review are contained in Appendix C.

2.6.12 Synthesis interpretation

2.6.12.1 Summary

The theme of relationships was the most widely-cited enabler of positive outcomes for young people in included studies. These relationships appear to provide young people with a sense of security, safety and connectedness in their school environment which enables them to access learning and emotional support, develop their social and communication skills and improve their behaviour. Similarly, learning environments and the structures, systems and ethos which underpin them seemingly have the effect of creating a consistent, structured and nurturing educational provision. The young people also seemed to experience a sense of safety, competence and empowerment in their learning of a curriculum which they frequently found accessible, engaging, relevant and meaningful. These factors appeared to have the effect of building the young people's resilience and enhance their self-esteem and self-efficacy in a way that served to increase their motivation, sense of competence, independence and autonomy.

2.6.12.2 Theoretical insights

This synthesis of findings from the reviewed studies was considered in the context of existing theoretical insights.

The notion of providing young people who experience emotional and behaviour difficulties with a 'secure base' within their school environment is one which is increasingly recognised (e.g. Bombèr, 2007; Geddes, 2006). This approach draws on attachment theory (e.g. Bowlby, 1969, 2005) and advocates the building of secure relationships by school staff as an 'additional attachment figure' with young people to meet their emotional needs such that they can feel sufficiently secure to access learning.

The concept of the fulfilment of basic needs in order to progress to higher-order needs is reflective of Maslow's (1943) 'theory of human motivation'. Within this theory, Maslow proposes that humans move through a hierarchy of motivation, such that when their basic 'physiological' and 'safety' needs are fulfilled, they then seek a sense of social 'belonging' and 'love', before they seek to fulfil their 'esteem' needs in feeling valued and respected by others and oneself and thereby move towards 'self-actualisation' (i.e. the need to accomplish that which one perceives as their own 'potential'). The relevance of Maslow's theory has been noted to the motivation of young people in PRUs (Solomon & Thomas, 2013) and to the promotion of well-being for secondary school students (NICE, 2009). The theory has also been expanded upon to create a 'Model of Human Needs' (Porter, 2014) with particular regard to the needs of students at risk of school exclusion.

This interpretation of the current review synthesis can also be understood in the context of another theory of human motivation, that of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This theory holds that contexts can support autonomous regulation in people by allowing them to fulfil three basic psychological needs: competence (the need to master and control our environment), relatedness (the need to interact with and be connected to others) and autonomy (the need to be causal agents). The application of this theory to the field of education is demonstrated in field research (Ryan & Grolnick, 1986; Ryan, Stiller & Lynch, 1994) which found that development of intrinsic motivation and internalisation of regulation for positive school-related behaviour in students is a function of their perceived autonomy, success in performing activities and secure connections to parents, teachers and peers (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

2.6.13 Appraisal

2.6.13.1 Establishing Plausibility

Major and Savin-Baden's (2010) guidelines for establishing the plausibility of a qualitative synthesis are now discussed in the context of the present review. As synthesists are advised to include articles which had similar

approaches to data collection and management, all of the included studies used interviews/focus groups. Regarding quality of the included studies, only those which provided thick description were included. However, description of methodology was not always explicit (e.g. Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006), therefore method application was difficult to ascertain in some cases. Similarly, the positioning of the researcher was rarely made explicit, excepting the grey literature (e.g. 'insider research' in Mann, 2014), therefore researcher biases were difficult to adjudge in the data set.

In consideration of 'validity' or 'trustworthiness' of a synthesis, a number of recommended strategies upheld within this review are shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Application of strategies to establish trustworthiness

Strategy	Application in current review
Conceptual framing	Synthesis interpretation considered within context of existing theory
Dense description of context	Description of studies' contexts provided
Dense description of findings	See Themes Table (Appendix C)
Dense description of methods	Description of study methods provided
Experience over time	Longitudinal review attempted: no time limit placed on systematic search
Researcher positionality	Use of reflective research diary

Regarding 'validity' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the current review has attempted to provide 'credibility' through transparent presentation of findings of a range of studies, while still acknowledging the multiple realities of the participants of this research. In terms of 'transferability', these findings indicate that there may be degrees of similarity through comparison of included studies from multiple contexts. 'Dependability' has been attempted as the researcher has

documented the context of research. The difficulties of 'confirmability', due to the interpretive nature of the synthesis, are fully acknowledged.

2.6.13.2 Limitations of research synthesis

It is acknowledged that the current researcher's biases, experiences and views have shaped this review process and interpretation through processes of personal and epistemological reflexivity (Willig, 2001). As only one reviewer was involved, member checking with original authors and peer examination was not possible due to time constraints. Furthermore, the extent of publication bias is unclear, due to the small number of included studies in this review.

2.7 Rationale for the current study

2.7.1 Summary of current literature

The need to listen to the views and voices of those at risk of exclusion from school is greater now than ever, as a failure to do so can be seen as perpetuating the issue of school exclusion (Davies, 2005; Gordon, 2001; OCC, 2012). As the above review demonstrates, such students have much enlightening insight to offer educational professionals and policy-makers about their experiences of school. However, studies involving the gathering of students' views remains a greatly under-researched area. Furthermore, much of the research which has aimed to gain the views of students deemed 'at risk' or those with identified 'social, emotional and mental health difficulties' has been carried out retrospectively with students who have already been excluded from mainstream settings, e.g. those in PRUs and other EOTAS provision (e.g. Loizidou, 2009; Martin, 2015; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; San Martin & Calabrese, 2011). Many of these studies investigate the consequences and students' experience of exclusion (e.g. Brown, 2007; Gordon, 2001), or student views of exclusion policies (e.g. Knipe, Reynolds & Milner, 2007; McCluskey, 2008). Arguably, these studies are often an investigation of the negative, deficit-focused school experiences of students who experience school exclusion (e.g. Cefai & Cooper, 2010).

Increasingly, there is an impetus within school exclusion research to adopt a positive focus on 'what works' and factors which promote success and resilience within these students' school experiences (Coleman, 2015; Gill, Quilter-Pinner & Swift, 2017; Hart, 2013). The need to look at organisational, eco-systemic intervention in the prevention of school exclusion is equally well-cited (e.g. Hallam & Castle, 2001; Cole, 2015; Hart, 2013). Though research to facilitate organisational change for the prevention of exclusion, particularly by EPs, is evident in the literature (e.g. Smith, Travell & Worton, 2004; Timmins, Shepherd & Kelly, 2003), a recent review of the SEBD inclusion literature noted the glaring lack of participatory action research done in this area (Willmann & Seeliger, 2016). Furthermore, existing examples of such research have been carried out with those students who have already been excluded from school (e.g. Martin, 2015; San Martin & Calabrese, 2011; Pomeroy, 1999; Whitehead & Clough, 2004).

Thus, discovering the views of students in educational settings deemed 'at risk' of school exclusion regarding those factors which they perceive as enabling them to be successful and retained within their school environment remains a greatly under-researched area. Some identified next steps for research in this area include the exploration of student views within mainstream educational settings and involvement of a broader range of stakeholders, including parents and school management representatives, with a view to facilitating systemic change as a result of this process (e.g. Boyd, 2012; San Martin & Calabrese, 2011).

2.7.2 Objectives and unique contribution of the current study

This therefore provides the focus for the current proposed research, the aim of which is to discover strengths-based, positive and supportive factors, perceived by students who have previously experienced FTE, their parents, and school staff as enabling their success in a secondary school setting. This is of particular relevance owing to the researcher's current placement in a Local Authority (LA) which is experiencing high rates of secondary school exclusion. Owing to the remarkably poor outcomes associated with young people who experience school exclusion (e.g. Gill, Quilter-Pinner & Swift,

2017), as well as the importance attributed to systemic approaches to preventing exclusion (e.g. Hallam & Castle, 2001), this study aims to explore ways in which exclusion can be prevented at a systemic level through discovering solution-orientated strategies to punctuate the cycles of exclusion currently perpetuated within the education system.

2.7.3 Research Questions

Thus, the research questions (RQs) for the current study are:

RQ1: What facilitative factors within educational provision are perceived to support engagement of students who have experienced FTE within an alternative provision unit in secondary school:

(a) according to the views of students?
(b) according to the views of school staff?
(c) according to the views of parents?

RQ2: How is Appreciative Inquiry successful in effecting organisational change in schools for students who have experienced FTE?

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction to Methodology

Within this chapter, the researcher will provide an overview and rationale for the chosen methodology to address the expressed current study's aims and questions. Details of the current study epistemology, methodology, design and analysis will be presented. Consideration is made of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) within qualitative, case study methodology as a systematic framework appropriate for the objectives of the current research. Details are given of the study design, implementation of AI procedures and application of Thematic Analysis within the current study. The quality of the current research is explored, before a brief critique and summary of the current methodology concludes the chapter.

3.2 Methodological orientation

3.2.1 Overview

The current research aims to discover how facilitative factors within a secondary school setting enable students who have previously experienced FTE to be successful at school. It also aims to explore how these enabling practices might be developed within the educational provision to support positive outcomes for students. In order to demonstrate the suitability of the chosen methodology for the current research aims, the epistemological and ontological orientation of the research will now be considered.

3.2.2 Major research paradigms

Guba and Lincoln (2005) classify four basic belief systems in research, characterised by the beliefs and assumptions which underpin them: Post-Positivism; Constructivism; Transformative; Pragmatic. Mertens' (2010) assessment of the differences between these paradigms is outlined below.

3.2.2.1 Post-Positivism

Post-positivism emphasises the importance of objectivity and generalisability in research and acknowledges the existence of one knowable reality, but on the basis of probability rather than certainty. To this end, it adopts primarily quantitative approaches to systematic inquiry.

3.2.2.2 Pragmatism

Pragmatism similarly recognises the existence of a single reality, of which individuals have their own interpretation, and rejects the notion of social scientific inquiry requiring a single scientific method. Rather, methods are matched to specific research questions and purposes, often using mixed method approaches.

3.2.2.3 Constructivism

Constructivism rejects the notion of an objective reality and holds that multiple, socially-constructed realities exist. The researcher's objective is, therefore, to understand these social constructions of meaning through exploration of people's lived experience from their own perspective. This is predominantly done through qualitative methodology, and the interactive link between researcher and participants is emphasised.

3.2.2.4 Transformative paradigm

The transformative paradigm emerged due to a frustration with the limitations of the traditional research paradigms, as expressed by advocates of social justice and groups who have experienced oppression and discrimination. The constructivist paradigm has been criticised by those within the transformative paradigm as needing to situate research more within a social justice agenda. To this end, the transformative paradigm seeks to address politics in research by confronting social oppression.

The transformative paradigm's epistemological assumption considers that 'legitimate knowledge' is determined and defined through a cultural lens. It acknowledges the interactive researcher-participant relationship and

emphasises that this relationship should be empowering to those with less power.

"Transformative researchers consciously and explicitly position themselves side by side with the less powerful in a joint effort to bring about social transformation" (Mertens, 2010, p.21)

Four characteristics are common to perspectives within the transformative paradigm, which mark it as distinctive from post-positivist and constructivist paradigms (Mertens, Farley, Madison & Singleton, 1994).

1. It places central importance on the experiences of diverse, traditionally marginalised groups
2. It analyses how and why inequality is reflected in asymmetric power relationships
3. It examines how results of social inquiry are linked to political and social action
4. It uses a transformative theory to develop the program theory (a set of beliefs about the way a program works or why a problem occurs)

3.2.3 Epistemology within the current study

The current study is concerned with understanding the views and lived experiences of young people who have experienced school exclusion, as well as those of their parents and school staff who work with them. It acknowledges and seeks to discover the multiple, socially-constructed realities of these individuals from their own perspectives. From this point of view, the current research is perhaps most closely aligned to a constructivist paradigm. However, the aims and agenda of the current proposed study are also such that it seeks to promote positive systemic change through engaging a marginalised and powerless group as active collaborators in the process.

Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson (2003) explain that some researchers claim knowledge through an advocacy/participatory position which is concerned with emancipatory processes in research, in that it is

political, collaborative and change-oriented. As such, it seeks to address problems perceived in society and empower those constrained by unjust structures through creation of discussion with a political agenda to promote change. Furthermore, Creswell and colleagues (ibid) also identify that inquiry conducted from the advocacy/participatory position is inherently collaborative, seeking to do research "with" others, whereby participants' voice becomes a voice for reform. The epistemological assumptions of the transformative paradigm are evident in such participatory approaches to research (Mertens, 2010).

From this perspective, this advocacy position based on transformative participatory research principles is congruent with the aims of the current research. Thus, the researcher identifies that it is the transformative paradigm and worldview to which the current study most accurately subscribes.

3.2.4 Axiology

Mertens (2010) identifies that transparency and reciprocity are core values within the transformative axiological position, such that an explicit link is made between the research outcomes and furtherance of a social justice agenda. The importance of provision of access of the research outcomes to the community who provided the data as a means to improve practice or influence policy is also emphasised.

In this way, a key aspiration of the current research was to assign the young people participating in the current study to the highest level of child participation, as described in Shier's (2001) model, such that they would "share power and responsibility for decision-making with adults" (Shier, 2001, p.115). Offering feedback on the research outcomes to the school community as a means to develop practices to support positive outcomes for students was also an expressed key aim of the current study.

3.2.5 Ontology

In considering the ontology, i.e. assumptions about the nature of reality, which underpins the methodology, the proposed research adopts a relativist position such that it seeks to acknowledge the multi-faceted nature of a phenomenon as being differentially constructed by the individuals involved (Robson, 2011).

As in the constructivist paradigm, the transformative paradigm recognises the multiple versions of what is perceived to be “real”. However, it emphasises the importance of social, political and cultural lenses in constructions of reality, to avoid perpetuating oppressive social structures and policies. Therefore, versions of reality within the transformative paradigm are required to be considered through an ideological critique (Mertens, 2010).

3.2.6 Methodology within the transformative paradigm

Mertens (1995) identifies three distinctive characteristics of the transformative paradigm which have methodological and ethical implications.

1. Traditionally silenced voices must be included to ensure they are equally heard in the research process.
2. Equitable distribution of resources must be ensured in the planning, implementation and reporting of the research.
3. The research results should be linked to social action, with those who are least powerful at the centre of these plans to empower them to effect change.

Mertens (2010) notes that transformative methodology is exemplified through a focus on methods which afford opportunities for systemic transformation and which adopt a cyclical model for the research process.

3.3 Current Research Design

3.3.1 Action Research

Action research refers to a theoretical framework to guide collaborative learning to enable understanding and action to improve practice and situations (NcNiff, 2013). Within action research, flexible cycles of action and inquiry/reflection evolve to bring about positive change and address the gap which often occurs with the integration of 'knowing' and 'acting' in applied research (Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Somekh, 2006). A key aim of action research is to generate learning and knowledge for social and environmental benefit (McNiff, 2013). Action research is a living, emergent, value-oriented process, characterised by practices which pursue practical solutions to issues faced by people within organisations and communities (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). The current study is seen as 'second-person action research' such that it sought to enquire with others about how issues of mutual concern can be addressed (McNiff, 2013, Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

A primary purpose of action research, therefore, is to produce useful and practical knowledge and outcomes for people through engagement with participants in collaborative relationships, thereby empowering them in the process (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). For this reason, the researcher took the decision early on in the research process to adopt an action research-oriented approach to the current study.

3.3.2 Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry (AI), is an approach for organisational renewal, originally developed by Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987). AI can be used as a generative form of action research and a process of collective learning (Ludema & Fry, 2008). A central premise of AI is that 'knowing' is socially constructed such that it occurs through interactions within a social system (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008). AI is based on the premise that every system possesses a hidden and under-exploited 'positive core' of strengths which, when revealed, provides energy for organisational

transformation (Ludema & Fry, 2008). This is consistent with the transformative paradigm adopted for the present study. AI has therefore been described as social constructionism with a positive slant (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). From this perspective, AI differs somewhat from traditional action research in that it seeks to focus on the discoverable positives and ideals within a situation, rather than deficits (Elliott, 1999).

AI seeks to generate positive change through the act of inquiry itself (Hammond, 1998). AI differs from a traditional problem-solving approach, such that doing more of what works is the focus for AI, rather than doing less of what does not (Hammond, 1998). An organisation thus has a “solution to be embraced”, rather than a ‘problem to be solved’” (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008, p.5). AI facilitates a vision for the future rooted in the best of what currently is, or has been, such that this vision guides the progression of the organisation (Hayes, 2006).

3.3.3 Appreciative Inquiry Process

It has been noted that the AI approach is inherently progressive and temporal in its design owing to its transformative aims (Cozens, 2014). AI is operationalised by an overarching framework characterised by four distinct phases, referred to as the "4-D" cycle (Coghlan, Preskill & Catsambas, 2003; Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008). The 4-D cycle is presented in Figure 3.1, below.

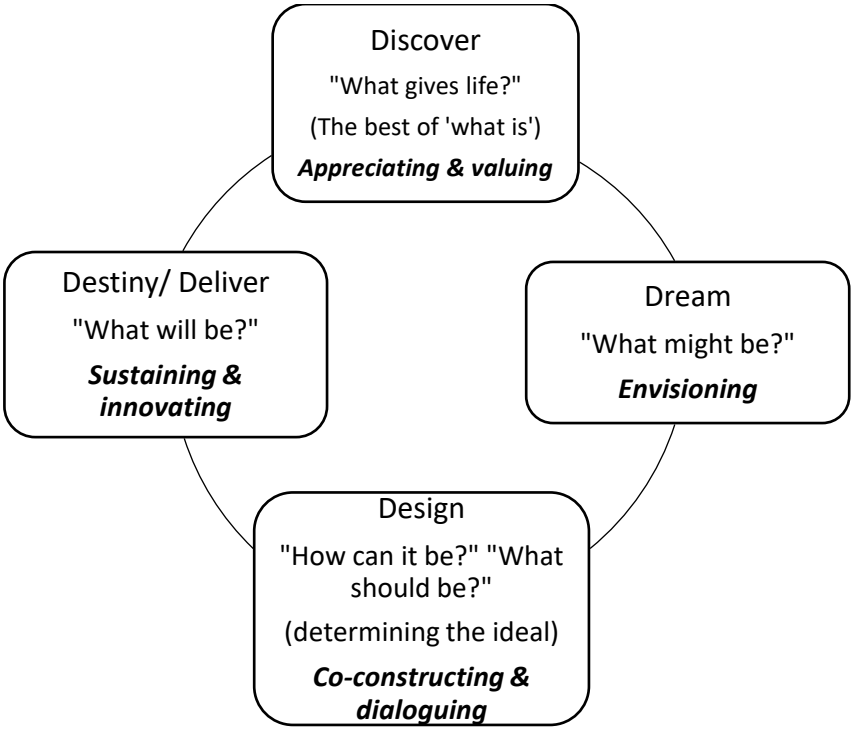


Figure 3.1 Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle (adapted from Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008, p.34 and Hammond, 1998, p.24)

Within the 'Discover' phase, the primary task is to identify the 'best of what is' through exploration of peak experiences of the organisation at its most effective and the factors which made these possible (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008). Within this phase, every question is unconditionally positive to elicit stories of accomplishments and the most valuable aspects of the organisation's history to empower the organisation's capacity to develop.

The purpose of the 'Dream' phase is to amplify this positive core and thereby envision a more valued future for the organisation. The Dream phase can be understood as simultaneously practical, such that it is rooted in the organisation's past strengths, and generative, such that it seeks to extend the organisation's future potential. It is this concept of a vision for the future emerging from substantiated examples from the organisation's history which differentiates AI from other vision and planning approaches (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008). This grounding in reality enables group members to connect to the process and become inspired to do more of what works (Hammond, 1998).

The ‘Design’ phase involves the creation of ‘provocative propositions’, symbolic statements which describe an ideal set of circumstances to cultivate a climate to do more of what is best about the organisation (Hammond, 1998). These statements should ideally integrate the Discovery and Dream ideals and thus support the organisation to move towards positive action and results (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008).

Within the ‘Deliver’ (or ‘Destiny’) phase, the organisation delivers on these visions of the future, sustained by a shared sense of purpose and momentum (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008). This involves planning and commitment by groups and individuals to actions which they can carry out to contribute to the realisation of the organisational dream.

3.3.4 Other Action Research approaches considered

Co-operative inquiry was also considered for the purposes of the current study. This is an action-oriented and participatory approach, characterised by cycles of action and reflection in which participants are seen as co-researchers (Reason, 1999). This approach was seen as potentially suitable for the current study in terms of its transformative and emancipatory aims, particularly for those usually excluded from decision-making processes (Tee & Lathlean, 2004).

However, “co-operative inquiry does not explicitly address power relations and the potential transformative effects of the research” (Mertens, 2005, p.243). Furthermore, the approach does not make explicit consideration of knowledge as situated (Mertens, 2005).

In evaluating the fit for purpose of the current study of methodology within the transformative paradigm, it was noted that although co-operative inquiry offered many of the core elements of collaborative action research but without the key positive and strengths-focused underpinnings which afford AI a distinguished dimension.

3.3.5 Rationale for AI in current research study

There were a number of reasons why an AI approach was deemed particularly appropriate to the aims and purposes of the current study.

Al aims to empower all participants as co-contributors within their situation (Nicholson & Barnes, 2013). This was particularly salient to the participatory and advocacy position of the current study. AI is seen an inherently collaborative approach which overcomes issues of power (Reed, 2006), making it advantageous to the current research.

“Inquiry is intervention” (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008, p.9) and therefore AI offered congruence with the study’s aims to promote positive change within a system. The current study sought to discover factors which enable success for young people who have experienced school exclusion. Therefore, it was apposite to seek an approach which provides a focus on what works within a system. The power of positive imagery is expressed as a key principle of AI, such that the capacities of organisations, as human constructions, are cued and shaped by positive perception which, in turn, creates positive relational pathways (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008

The researcher was therefore hopeful that AI would offer a process to facilitate positive systemic change for those involved at the micro-level, illustrated through previous use of Al within educational settings (e.g. Martin, 2015; San Martin & Calabrese, 2010).Further, it was hoped that a focus on positive factors would be an enriching experience for the vulnerable young people involved, such that by bringing strengths into awareness, it would foster their resilience and empowerment.

Finally, it was felt that a positively-oriented AI approach would offer a novel view on the typically problem-focused issue of school exclusion. It was hoped that this would present a non-confrontational approach to participants, thereby engaging them in discussions about this contentious issue, enabling capacity-building by illuminating the system’s proficiencies in creating success for these students and building on elements of best practice.

The adoption of an AI approach was therefore deemed congruent with advocacy/participatory epistemology and emancipatory, transformative aims of the current study. AI offered a systematic framework appropriate for the expressed objectives, purposes and questions of the research study.

3.3.6 Case Study Methodology

Case study design offers a means of an in-depth, empirical investigation of a phenomenon within a specific context to "contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organisational, social, political and related phenomena", within real-life events (Yin, 2009, p.4). An exploratory, embedded single-case study design with different units of analysis (Yin, 2009) within an AI framework was seen offering a strengths-based focus on participants' positive experiences within the current research.

A frequent critique of case study methodology is the lack of rigour applied by investigators (Yin, 2009). This issue will be addressed by the current researcher in section 3.6 below. Use of case study protocol offers a means of increasing reliability and maintaining focus on the topic of the case study (Yin, 2009). A protocol for the current research is contained in Appendix D. Another cited criticism of case studies is their lack of basis for generalisation (Yin, 2009). However, Yin (ibid) argues that the aim of case studies is to expand and generalise theoretical propositions, not to generalise to populations or to catalogue frequencies. Again, this is congruent with the purposes of the current research.

3.3.7 Qualitative Research

Willig (2001) argues that qualitative research can aim to provide a voice to those whose views are marginalised, capturing the subjectivity of the experience of an individual or group of people. Participatory data-gathering strategies tend to be more congruent with qualitative approaches (Mertens, 2010). Furthermore, Neuman (1994) suggests that qualitative research is more concerned with depth of understanding of complex phenomena within a

particular context, rather than breadth of conclusions. From this perspective, qualitative methodology was deemed most appropriate for the current research, as it attempts to develop in-depth understanding of the complex phenomenon of school exclusion using a participatory approach.

Within the realm of action research within qualitative methodology, the researcher's position as an active agent within the process is recognised, such that they are the author rather than the witness of the research (Willig, 2001). This is a position which is made explicit within the current research.

3.3.8 Research Participants & Setting

3.3.8.1 Sampling

Participants were identified to participate in the current study through purposive sampling (Sarantakos, 2005) using the inclusion criteria and recruitment procedures outlined below.

3.3.8.2 Inclusion criteria

Owing to the study aims, it was necessary that this research would involve participants from a secondary school where students were currently experiencing school exclusion. A willingness by school management to engage with the study was also essential, owing to the participatory nature of the research.

The researcher was aware that identifying students ‘at risk’ of school exclusion required careful, sensitive consideration, as labelling students in this way is in itself a contribution to their risk factors (Kerka, 2003). Experiencing FTE is the greatest predictor of permanent exclusion (Strand & Fletcher, 2011). It was therefore decided to focus solely on factual description within the sampling process through reference to student's previous experience of FTE. This facilitated ready identification of students by their school while remaining sensitive to risks of labelling.

The inclusion criteria for participant selection is outlined in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for participant selection across groups

Participant Group	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Students	Student has previously received FTE Good school attendance (more than 90%) No active safeguarding concerns	Student has not previously been excluded from school Poor school attendance (less than 90%) Looked After Child (due to potential instability of educational placement)
Staff	Works within the research setting	Does not work within the research setting
Parents	Parent of/person who identifies as having parental responsibility for a student attending the research setting	Not a parent of a student attending the research setting

3.3.8.3 Participant recruitment procedure

Discussion with Senior LA managers and published exclusion data was used to identify a potentially suitable school for the purposes of this study.

Following ethics approval (see section 3.6), senior management within the secondary school were directly contacted by the researcher via email to explain the proposed study's approach and objectives. Through this contact, staff members were asked to provide an expression of interest in participation in the study and advised that this response would not put them under any further obligation (See Appendix E for school recruitment email).

Following receipt of an expression of interest from staff of the school, a meeting was held between the researcher and members of senior management to formally discuss the study's aims, proposed procedure and participant inclusion criteria. Following agreement by senior management to participate in the study, participant information and consent forms were provided to them to distribute and discuss with potential student, parent and

staff participants who met the inclusion criteria. Judgement of school management staff with responsibility for this recruitment process was exercised as to which potential student and parent participants were approached for invitation to participate in the study, based on the likelihood of their willingness to engage with the research study and researcher interviews. Parent participants were particularly recruited by staff members based on parents' regular attendance at progress review days at the provision, when parent interviews for the study were agreed to take place.

3.3.8.4 Research Setting

3.3.8.4.1 Importance of Context in Action Research

McNiff (2013) notes the particularly political nature of action research and identifies that external pressures, along with factors such as government policies and cultures of control and managerialism, present barriers to the endeavours of action researchers. The familiarity of the status quo to stakeholders offers them a sense of security which can make organisational change processes threatening to some within the system and therefore difficult to influence, particularly by those from outside the organisation (McNiff, 2013).

Action research guidance (McNiff, 2013, Townsend, 2013) thus emphasises the importance of action researchers' awareness of social, economic, political, historical contexts in which the research occurs. McNiff (2013) particularly notes the importance of researchers' awareness of the politically-constructed nature of contexts and the influence of powerful institutional voices in closing off the possibility of further development. This is particularly the case within the dynamic influences and ever-changing policies of educational settings (McNiff, 2013; Towsend, 2013). Townsend (2013) further highlights the possible tensions between centralised policy mandates and the processes of action research as presenting a challenge to the scope and rate of change as an outcome.

It follows that those undertaking action research are advised to exercise reflexivity in being sensitive to the diversity of the research context and the

mutual influences of context and stakeholders (Townsend, 2013) and be open to possible shifts in focus, therein avoiding the setting of specific objectives but retaining a broad outline of criteria for effectiveness of quality of the action research (McNiff, 2013). The researcher strived to maintain awareness of these issues within the current study.

3.3.8.4.2 Research Setting Context

The current study took place in an internal alternative educational provision, established within the mainstream school site of a larger-than-average-sized secondary school located within a city in the East Midlands of England. The provision had been developed with the expressed aim of retaining students 'at risk' of permanent exclusion within the school without recourse to external alternative provision. The profile of students attending this provision therefore by definition fit the inclusion criteria for participation in the current study. Exploration of this provision's effectiveness in meeting students' needs was seen as a current priority for the school's management.

Regarding the wider school context, the school's most recent Ofsted report outlines that the school population is characterised by a higher than average proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and a well-above average proportion of disadvantaged students (as measured through Pupil Premium and eligibility for Free School Meals). The school catchment area is also listed within geographical areas worst affected nationally by 'Extreme Levels of Multiple Deprivation' (Department of Communities & Local Government, 2015).

During the evolution of the action research study, several crucial macrosystemic features of the research setting became apparent. The wider school context was undergoing significant transition in the form of impending academisation. Further, stakeholders were anticipating imminent Ofsted inspection. The uncertainty seemingly held by stakeholders about the future of the research setting in the context of these events became apparent during the AI process. Furthermore, the perceived incongruence of current local and national policy with the aims of the research study were elucidated

in discussions with members of the school SLT. These structural and political contextual features arguably presented threats to the action research processes of the current study. These issues will be revisited in Section 5.3.

3.3.8.5 Participant Details

3.3.8.5.1 Student Participants

A total of eight students (six males, two females) participated in individual interviews as part of the 'Discover' phase of this study. All students within the research setting provision (N=24) participated in the 'Dream' phase of the study. Students ranged in age from 12-16 years old and were in Years 7-11. All students attended the school's internal alternative educational provision.

3.3.8.5.2 Parent Participants

Five parents took part in this study, all of whom were parents of students attending the study setting.

3.3.8.5.3 Staff Participants

Eight staff members participated in the study. Staff participants held various roles within the provision, including teaching assistant, subject teacher and management roles. All of the staff participants worked directly with the student participants on a daily basis.

3.3.9 Stakeholder Involvement

Approval for this study was received from the researcher's host Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and from the Directors of Education within the LA, as high school exclusion rates are seen as a current area of high priority across education services.

Within the field of Al it has been described that young people themselves are seen as stakeholders in this process (e.g. San Martin & Calabrese, 2011). From this perspective, it was essential that this notion of student involvement was carefully and explicitly introduced to prospective participants, as including the student voice can be difficult for both teachers and students

due to potential issues relating to power dynamics (Willoughby & Tosey, 2007). Full, dedicated school commitment to student involvement in the AI process was sought from the outset through detailed briefing and consent-gaining processes.

In order for this study to constitute action research, it was also essential to have school representatives committed to the project as stakeholders. The involvement of school staff as stakeholders increases the likelihood of the outcomes of the AI being embraced and implemented (Bevington, 2015). Furthermore, it was felt that this would capitalise on the power of AI to create a platform for systemic reform at the micro-level, while fostering a sense of community and collaboration.

Previous research, similar in aims to the current study, has found that family/parental involvement is the greatest predictor of positive outcomes relating to prevention of school exclusion (Loizidou, 2009). Parent participants were therefore seen as key stakeholders in the current study.

As this research was undertaken as part of the researcher's completion of the Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology at the University of Nottingham, the university is also seen as a stakeholder in the process.

3.4 Procedure

3.4.1 AI Cycle within the current study

Previous studies similar in nature to the current research have noted the emergence of AI phases over several months, allowing for reflection and analysis of each stage in the interim (e.g. Cozens, 2014), the outcomes of which can then inform the next phase. Details of AI phases (timelines, content and researcher facilitation) within the current study are outlined in Appendix F and in Figure 3.2 below.

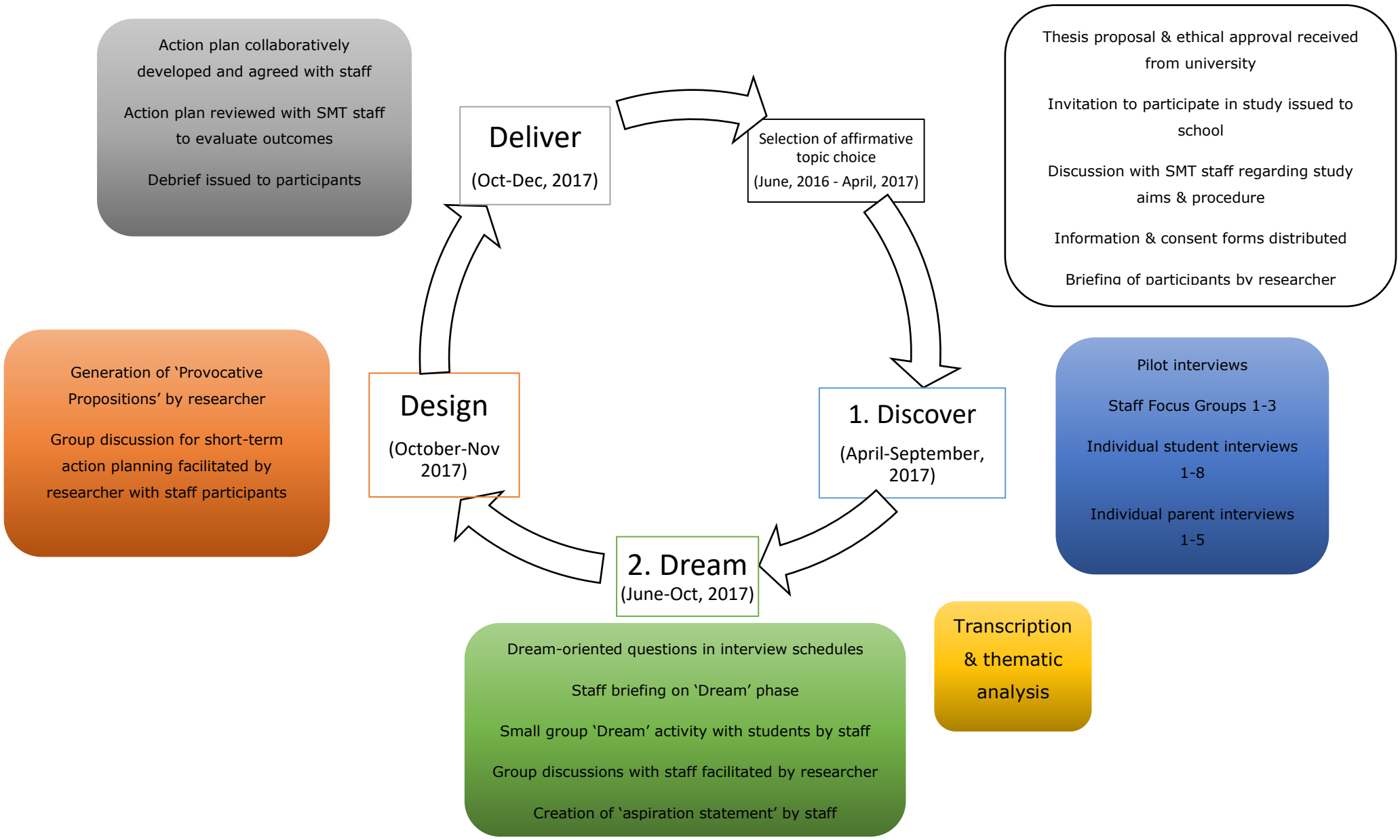


Figure 3.2: Implementation of AI phases in the current study

3.4.2 Discover Phase

3.4.2.1 Data gathering approaches

3.4.2.1.1 Interview schedule development

Semi-structured interview schedules, based on the principles of AI interviews (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008; Hammond, 1998) were devised for each respective participant group (See Appendix G). Semi-structured schedules and use of open-ended questions enable salient but unforeseen issues to surface and facilitate a focus on unique perceptions and issues pertinent to research participants. This acknowledges the perception of 'truth' as relative and the existence of multiple perspectives (Barbour, 2008; Silverman, 2015).

3.4.2.1.2 Semi-structured interviews

One of the most important sources of information within case studies is interview (Yin, 2009). Within the "Discover" phase, individual interviews were conducted with students and parents to gather their views. One-to-one interviews were deemed the most appropriate means of eliciting details of participants' individual, contextualised history (Barbour, 2008).

Conducting individual student interviews was deemed most appropriate, owing to previous findings which indicated that young people may be inhibited to express themselves in a group (e.g. Morgan, 1997). Furthermore, as focus group research with students from different peer groups can cause the views of participants in lower status groups to be muted, separate interviews with individual students are advisable (Michell, 1999).

Semi-structured interviews were also felt to be an appropriate means of gaining parents' views, for similar reasons of possible participant inhibition, as well practical considerations in facilitating convenience for parents' participation.

3.4.2.1.3 Focus Groups

Researcher facilitation of focus group discussions was decided as the most useful means of data gathering with staff participants. Focus groups are an appropriate research strategy where a researcher is concerned with how individuals collectively construct a schema of an issue (Mertens, 2010). Focus groups can encourage greater candour in participants, thereby affording insight into group processes and public discourses within organisations and allowing the researcher to explore intra-group comparisons (Barbour, 2008). In this way, focus groups lend themselves to an action research approach. Thus, it was hoped that focus groups would generate energetic discussion and collaborative meaning-making by staff, enhancing the ecological validity of the study by facilitating greater understanding of the school context.

Limitations of focus groups are acknowledged and strategies to offset these were applied. In order to ensure that all participant voices could be heard, semi-structured interview questions were used to stimulate discussion initially in pairs and small groups before participants then shared views with the wider group, consistent with AI guidance (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008; Hammond, 1998). These processes supported the researcher's aims of seeking group interaction and subsequent analysis of group meanings and norms, a distinctive feature of focus groups (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas & Robson, 2001).

3.4.2.1.4 Combining data gathering methods

Endorsement of a combination of focus groups and individual interviews is noted in the literature, such that both approaches stem from similar epistemological origins, can act as complementary methods and therefore offer added value in exploring a phenomenon from numerous angles (Barbour, 2008). Analysis of data gathered through different methods can also extend a researcher's analysis and may offer interpretative support (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas & Robson, 2001).

Though holding discussion with separate groups can inhibit the AI process (Elliott, 1999), in the interests of protecting confidentiality and anonymity and treating the data sensitively, working with separate groups was therefore deemed most appropriate for information gathering.

3.4.2.2 Pilot Study

An initial pilot phase was conducted to enhance the reliability of interviews (Silverman, 2015). At the inception of the "Discover" phase, pilot interviews using the semi-structured interview schedule (See Appendix G) with one student, one staff and one parent participant were carried out to ensure the wording and content of questions was understood and elicited the required information. No changes were required to the interview schedules following this, however the researcher noted prompt questions which appeared to elicit the most detailed responses and integrated these into the formalised interview schedule. Therefore, all participants were asked the same questions in a similar way.

3.4.2.3 Data Collection

Student and parent interviews took place in a private room within the research setting which could be viewed from outside. One interview was held with each participant which lasted no more than one hour. Staff focus group sessions took place in a classroom outside of teaching hours.

Audio recording of all interviews and discussions within each phase of the AI was carried out for transcription and analysis purposes.

Notes were taken by the researcher throughout each interview and focus group regarding the key ideas which emerged, which were then shared and checked for accuracy with participants at the conclusion of each interview. Interview Summary Sheets, advised in AI guidance as a means to interpret and confirm meanings with interviewees (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008), were employed to support this process (see Appendix H).

3.4.2.4 Researcher as facilitator

Facilitation of focus groups involved sensitive management by the researcher of group dynamics to avoid dominance by certain individuals (Bloor, 2001). The process was supported by the collaborative setting of ground rules with the group at the outset, which were reiterated at the beginning of each subsequent session. In particular, the researcher sought to highlight and validate differences between participants' views and experiences (Morgan, 1992), by noting this within the ground rules and through making frequent checks during the discussions regarding the agreement or otherwise of participants with one another's views.

Guidance for conducting AI interviews was also applied. Participant briefings were used to explain the positive, strengths-based emphasis of AI to interviewees (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008). The researcher also employed strategies such as selective active listening to capture description of 'life-giving forces' within participants' narratives and noting down key ideas and themes for subsequent member review and analysis. The researcher sought to manage any negative data offered by participants through strategies such as allowing sufficient space for these views to be expressed and heard, postponing the issue for later discussion or reframing it within an affirmative narrative with the participant. Consistent with the AI approach, these views were assumed to represent the lack of an ideal, which could be explored with the participant and utilised to stimulate dialogue within the 'Dream' phase (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008).

Guidance on the conducting of interviews with children (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) was also adhered to through such strategies as maintaining a sensitive and empathic approach, using active listening, allowing sufficient time to answer and providing clarification where needed.

3.4.2.5 Conclusion of Discover Phase

As per AI guidance, the researcher sought to organise and make sense of the data gathered and identify themes identified by participants about 'life-

giving' factors and ideas for the future. Thematic Analysis was carried out on collected data to this end (described in section 3.5 below).

Key themes and concepts, as discovered through Thematic Analysis, were subsequently presented to staff participants to conclude the Discover phase. Through discussion with staff, elements of feedback which resonated with them most strongly were identified. This process was seen as an additional means of 'member validation' to ascertain participants' recognition of the researcher's analysis. These messages were presented in a subsequent session with staff participants to stimulate the Dream phase with a summary of 'the best of what is' in order to "bring the spirit of the original inquiry into the room" (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008, p.131).

3.4.3 Dream Phase

3.4.3.1 Dream phase within interviews

The Dream phase initially involved using 'magic wand' and 'miracle' questions to conclude each individual student and parent interview and final focus group interview, for example: *If you had a magic wand and could make the school be however you want, what would it be like?* (See Appendix G for interview schedules). Analysis of this data took place as part of the Thematic Analysis process (See Section 3.5) and a collated list of dreams of each participant group was created. A collated list of all participant groups' wishes and dreams for the future from this activity were presented anonymously to staff participants at the beginning of the Dream phase to stimulate this phase of the AI (see Section 4.6.1).

3.4.3.2 Dream phase within small group activity

Within this phase, the aim was co-construction of ideals and steps for action between participants, thereby facilitating their ownership. To this end, staff participants sought to gain the views of the wider student population of the research setting of their dream for the provision in order to capture the views of all students and to raise the profile of the student voice, a key aim of this research study. The information was gathered as part of a small group

activity, conducted by staff as part of the pupils' usual tutor provision, whereby students were asked to draw their ideas with peers.

This decision was taken when perceived difficulties by staff in potentially obtaining signed consent for all students within the setting to participate in researcher-led Dream activities became apparent. By enabling staff who had experienced and received training on the Dream phase to instead cascade this activity across the setting as part of usual tutor/PSHE provision, this decision ensured that all student voices could be heard. It is acknowledged that effectively assigning staff the role of researchers to gather student views in this way may have presented a threat to the quality assurance of the process and may have potentially served to inadvertently silence some of the student voices within the activity. However, it was felt that affording ownership of this activity to staff and students could also begin to embed the practice of staff advocating for and hearing the student voice within the provision, which could ideally endure beyond the research study.

To ensure uniformity and heighten the quality assurance of this process, a common set of questions was used by all staff facilitators, following briefing from the researcher. Staff participants then presented the outcomes of the dream activity to the researcher using the graphic created by each respective student group (See Appendix I for example) and a group discussion with the staff group about these outcomes was facilitated. This session was audio-recorded and thematic analysis was carried out on transcribed data by the researcher. This analysis was then used, along with themes derived in the 'Discover' phase, to inform the provocative propositions of the 'Design' phase (See Section 4.4.1).

These levels of student participation enabled students to be consulted, informed and have their views taken seriously within an adult-led project (Hart, 1992), thereby empowering them to improve provision (Shier, 2001). However, students were not directly involved in the decision-making process, which represents a limitation of the current AI. This reflection will be further enhanced in Section 5.3.4.

3.4.3.3 Aspiration statement

The Dream phase activity provides team members with "the opportunity to summarise key success factors collectively" within an 'aspiration statement' for the future (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008, p.133). A group discussion of common themes and threads in all participants' dreams was facilitated with staff by the researcher, following which staff participants crafted an 'aspiration statement' to summarise the Dream phase (See Section 4.6.1.4.)

3.4.4. Design Phase

3.4.4.1 Provocative Propositions

To support an effective, comprehensive process in the 'Design' phase, a series of affirmative statements or 'provocative propositions' was generated by the researcher in light of the outcomes of the Discover and Dream phases (See Section 4.6.2.1). The provocative propositions were created using AI guidance (Hammond, 1998), which advises finding evidence of best practice, envisioning an ideal future as though it were already happening and writing related, affirmative present-tense statements which incorporate these common themes. These propositions should stretch, challenge and innovate, be grounded in examples and related to the group's desires (Hammond, 1998). Due to constraints of time, feasibility, and systemic complexities, student and parent participants were not actively involved in the action planning stage. However, the researcher endeavoured to capture and represent their views, wishes and dreams through these propositions. As such, the researcher used overarching themes derived from thematic analysis to generate these provocative propositions. This analysis was carried out on the transcribed audio-recorded data obtained during interviews in the Discover phase and during subsequent sessions with staff participants in which they shared with the researcher the outcomes of the Dream phase activities with students. Propositions were shared in advance of an action planning meeting with staff participants, with the emphasis that they

contained key ideas from the action research thus far and the caveat that the researcher did not wish to impose any actions on staff.

3.4.4.2 Action Planning Meeting

These provocative propositions were presented in a PowerPoint presentation format to staff participants within an action planning meeting. Feedback from the group about their applicability for group action planning was invited by the researcher. Participants shared their concurrence with the presented propositions as reflecting current priorities for provision development as outcomes of the AI. In-depth discussion with staff was subsequently facilitated by the researcher in order to support the group to reach collaborative agreement on how best to proceed with actions relating to each of the ideas presented within each provocative proposition.

3.4.5 Deliver Phase

3.4.5.1 Action Plan

A range of corresponding actions for each provocative proposition were planned and agreed through group discussion with staff participants and an action plan accordingly drawn up (see Section 4.7.1). Details were recorded by the researcher of each agreed action, person or people who assumed responsibility thereof and an agreed timeline within which these should be achieved. This written record was subsequently shared with the group for their reference. In light of contextual and systemic issues, it was decided within this action planning meeting to adopt a focus on achievable, short-term goals which remain as part of the organisation's core objectives, regardless of possible future changes.

3.4.5.2 Action Plan Review

This action plan was later reviewed with staff to evaluate outcomes and discuss related organisational and systemic factors.

3.4.6 Procedure of Evaluation of AI in the current study

In responding to RQ2, formal exploration of participant experiences of the AI was not conducted as part of this study. However, analysis of incidental participant reflections on the AI process was carried out within the Thematic Analysis during coding of transcribed audio-recorded data pertaining to the Discover, Dream and Design phases of the AI (See next Section 3.5 for description of analysis procedure). As the feedback and outcomes of each of these phases were directly shared and discussed with staff participants, it follows that much of this data related to their reflections as a participant group, as opposed to student or parent participants. Reflections by SLT on receiving feedback of the AI process are also noted in consideration of RQ2 (See Section 4.7.2 on evaluative commentary). Reporting of the outcomes of the phases of the AI process, enacted in the 'Deliver' phase' (See Section 4.7.1) also comprised part of the response to RQ2. Further discussion and evaluation of the AI process within the current study is offered in Section 5.3.

3.5 Analysis Procedure

3.5.1 Rationale for Thematic Analysis in the current study

Thematic analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2017) was conducted on transcribed interview and focus group data as a means of discovering repeated patterns, i.e. themes, of meaning across the data set with regard to the study's research questions. TA was chosen for the current study for a number of reasons.

A unique feature of TA is its flexibility in terms of application to research paradigms and questions, and because it is unconstrained by theoretical commitments unlike other qualitative approaches, e.g. IPA (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

TA can provide a rich and complex analysis of qualitative data and can be used to identify patterns in data pertaining to 'experiential research', i.e.

people's lived experiences, views and practices (Clarke & Braun, 2017). This made the approach particularly appropriate to the current study.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that TA is a useful method for participatory research and note that its results are generally accessible to the public. Thematic analysis also facilitates social interpretation of the data, which can support policy development, all necessities within the action-oriented nature of the current study. TA has also been the preferred means of analysis in other recent AI studies similar to the current research (e.g. Cozens, 2014; Martin, 2015).

The inductive approach which TA offers was judged to best suit the exploratory and context-specific nature of the present research, in that it allowed the range of experiences and meanings within the setting to be explored.

3.5.2 Coding

The aim of TA is to identify and interpret key features of the data, guided by a research question. Codes provide a mechanism to build themes, i.e. larger patterns of meaning, which offer a framework for organising and reporting the researcher's analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017).

Codes are labels which assign symbolic meaning to information collected in research (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). The researcher adopted an eclectic approach to coding in the current analysis, using a combination of *in vivo*, descriptive, and emotion coding, as defined by Saldaña (2015). These aligned well with the worldview adopted, honoured the participant voice and befit action and educational research with young people (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014; Saldaña, 2015).

3.5.3 Data Analysis Software (NVivo)

The use of NVivo (2012), a qualitative data analysis software, was employed in the study for the purposes of data management and analysis. The use of such software is advocated as a means to support storage, coding,

searching, data linking, memoing, data display and analysis in qualitative research (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014).

3.5.4 Thematic Analysis stages

The current study analysis followed the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), outlined in Table 3.2 below. This analysis took a "bottom-up", data-driven, inductive approach, the aim of which was to remain as close to the data as possible. This process also enabled sharing themes with participants as they were identified, facilitating the action-oriented approach of AI and enabling co-construction of research outcomes with stakeholders. An audit trail for this process is presented in Appendix J.

Table 3.2 Stages of Thematic Analysis with actions implemented in current study

Stage	Purpose	Process
Transcription & familiarisation	Familiarisation of data to begin to generate meaning	Use of summary sheets completed at the end of each interview, outlining key details, salient points and main issues arising (themes) Verbatim transcription of all recorded speech within interview and focus group data, including interrupted speech and indications of agreement by other group members (Bloor, 2001) Reading of transcriptions while re-listening to audio recordings to ensure accuracy
Initial code generation	Data condensation	Inductive coding of data using NVivo software

Stage	Purpose	Process
		Data coded with surrounding text to remain contextualised; sections of data were occasionally attributed more than one code depending on their content (Newby, 2010). Creation and naming of 'nodes' and 'memos' in NVivo to store, locate and retrieve data relating to codes (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013)
Theme search	Thematic network display to assess goodness of fit	Analysis of codes and their relationships to consider how they may combine to form overarching themes Organisation of 'nodes' into a hierarchical structure of categories and subcategories (i.e. themes and subthemes) to enable conceptual clarity and pattern identification (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013)
Theme review and definition	Drawing conclusions, verifying patterns and themes	Cross-referencing of themes with coded extracts and whole set to assess coherence Naming of each theme; reflection of the 'story' each theme tells Creation of thematic 'mindmap' in NVivo to represent key ideas of analysis

Stage	Purpose	Process
		Inter-rater checks
Reporting	Written account of themes	Selection of illustrative data excerpts Presentation of thematic analysis outcomes to staff participants Scholarly reporting of final themes with an analytic narrative; relation of analysis to RQs and literature (in Chapters 4 & 5 of this report)

3.5.5. Limitations of Thematic Analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) note a number of limitations of TA, including difficulty in narrowing focus within the data set due to flexibility of the approach. They note a lack of power for linguistic analysis as in other approaches (e.g. Discourse Analysis). The potentially limited interpretative power of TA without a theoretical base within which to affix analytical claims is also observed. This latter point will attempt to be addressed in this paper through analytic narrative and relation of analysis to theory and literature in Chapters 4 and 5. The researcher also referenced the checklist of criteria for rigour in TA provided by Braun and Clarke (2006, p.96) to ensure quality in the current analysis.

Ultimately, it was felt by the researcher that TA offered the most suitable means of analysis of participants' experiences and views and that it would provide a useful summary of key ideas contained within the large data set in a way that would be accessible to all stakeholders.

3.6 Evaluation of Research Quality in the current study

3.6.1 Reflexivity: Researcher position in the current study

The personal and epistemological reflexivity of the researcher, i.e. their capacity to reflect on their role in the research as a person and theorist, is an important feature of qualitative research (Willig, 2008). The current methodology acknowledges the active role of the researcher, such that the research is viewed as a collaborative process. As such, the researcher acknowledges the subjectivity of the data collected and recognises the influence of her beliefs, professional skills and experiences on the study's conception, process and structure. The researcher takes Parker's (1994) view that this is an asset rather than problematic aspect of the research process. A detailed research diary was kept by the researcher for the duration of the study to record and reflect upon decision points as well as observations made regarding the school context, participant responses and the role of the researcher throughout the process. Excerpts of this are shown in Appendix K. Further actions taken by the researcher to enhance the quality of the research are presented below.

3.6.2 Reliability and validity in flexible designs

Robson (2011) outlines three main issues in threats to reliability and validity in flexible designs: those of reactivity; respondent bias; and researcher bias. These are considered with regard to the current study in Appendix L.

3.6.3 Reliability & validity in current study methodology

Mertens (2010) draws on Guba and Lincoln (1989) to outline key criteria for judging quality in qualitative research, including standards within the transformative paradigm. These are considered in Table 3.3 below.

Robson (2011) notes that a case study design heightens ecological validity, as greater consideration can be made of the context of the organisation being explored. Within case study methodology, approaches to achieving greater integrity and validity have been identified (Yin, 2009). These are also considered in respect of the current study within Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3 Criteria for judging quality in qualitative research and application within the current study (adapted from Mertens, 2010; Yin, 2009)

Criteria	Description	Process within current study
Credibility (internal validity)	Adequate measures used for concepts being explored	Member checks with participants ('key informants') to ensure accuracy of interpretation and construction by the researcher (Bloor, 2001; Mertens, 2010; Yin, 2009) Use of research diary to monitor 'progressive subjectivity' of researcher's constructions and to document process of change (Mertens, 2010) Use of multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2009) Semi-structured interview schedules informed by literature relevant to topic under investigation and AI guidance to reduce subjectivity; Systematic process for data recording, transcription and analysis (Yin, 2009) Pilot interviews carried out to assess fitness for purpose in

Criteria	Description	Process within current study
		measuring concepts being explored Discussion of research with 'peer debriefers' (i.e. research supervisor, fellow TEP) and conduction of inter-rater checks on analysis (Mertens, 2010) Multiple sessions with participants and prolonged engagement with the research setting due to action research cycles
Transferability (external validity)	Enables readers of the research to determine similarity between study setting and receiving context	'Thick description' of place and context and of the research setting provided (Mertens, 2010) Links between analysis of case study to existing theories provided (Yin, 2009) (see Chapter 6 of this report)
Dependability (reliability)	Degree to which study can be tracked and publicly inspectable	Detailed study procedures presented to enhance integrity of case study research Use of case study protocol (Yin, 2009)
Confirmability (objectivity)	Degree of certainty of others that research was conducted in the way it is described	Research data, process, reports and analysis reviewed and audited by research supervisor to determine whether conclusions were supported by data (Mertens, 2010)

Criteria	Description	Process within current study
		Maintenance of a record of data collection (research diary, case study protocol) to establish a chain of evidence (Mertens, 2010, Yin, 2009)
Transformative	Concerns for social justice	Seeking the voice of those who are marginalised through collaborative student participation in action research and AI process Emphasis placed on the equal status of all participants' contributions Open negotiation with staff participants about agenda for actions, as outcomes of the research Ontological authenticity through member checks with participants Research took place within a community where the research outcomes could be linked to positive action Catalytic authenticity: exploration of the extent to which action was stimulated by the inquiry was conducted as a follow-up within the 'Deliver' phase of the AI (Mertens, 2010)

3.6.4 Inter-rater reliability

To support inter-rater reliability, the researcher enlisted a fellow final year TEP to analyse an anonymised section of the data set to compare her interpretation with that of the researcher. The TEP initially coded a full student interview and provided labels for themes which she felt were present. Most inter-rater interpretations were closely synonymous with the researcher's codes (e.g. "scaffolded teaching" where the researcher had coded "teachers scaffolding support"). A number of key themes reflected in the researcher's thematic analysis were also noted in the inter-rater analysis (e.g. autonomy, intrinsic motivation, feeling safe). Where novel ideas were presented, these were then incorporated to enhance existing theme descriptions (e.g. practical subjects cater to areas of strength, noted in addition to lessons seen as relevant to students) (See Appendix M).

3.6.5 Member checking

To further support the reliability and validity of the researcher's interpretation, member checks were carried out at the conclusion of each interview and focus group session to ensure that participants' views had been accurately captured. This was particularly important to offset the risk of misrepresentation of the young people's voice by the researcher (Barker & Weller, 2003). Interpretations of the data were presented to staff participants following each reflection phase of the AI cycle to gain their views and inform subsequent action phases.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

As this study involved a group of vulnerable young people, a number of key ethical considerations were required and an overview of these is provided below. Ethical approval was received for the study in line with the University of Nottingham requirements in March 2017 and again in November 2017 (See Appendix N) relating to variations involving parental opt-out consent for the small group 'Dream' activity, described above and outlined below.

3.6.1. Informed consent

Informed and written consent was obtained from school staff, students and parents who participated in interviews following provision of information sheets (See Appendix O). At the point of issuing consent forms, school staff were asked to discuss the proposed research with students and parents to ensure their full understanding of the process.

The inclusion criteria for invitation to participate in the study i.e. student having previously received FTE, was explicitly communicated to participants in the information sheet to ensure fully informed consent.

At the outset of interviews and focus groups, participants were briefed using a short presentation about the purposes, aims and process of the study and the nature of the AI to ensure participants' full understanding of the research and to answer any questions held by those involved.

Parental consent for the sharing of anonymous data with the researcher by school staff from the small-group 'Dream' activity was gained through 'opt-out' consent (See Appendix O). The rationale for this was that students involved had no direct face-to-face contact with the researcher, students completed the activity as part of usual tutor/PSHE lesson, and data was recorded and anonymised by staff.

3.6.2 Ensuring participant anonymity & confidentiality

Student participants were identified prior to the study commencement by school managers using data routinely available to them. School staff were asked to seek student and parental for students who met the inclusion criteria using the respective consent forms (See Appendix O). No participant names were disclosed during participant recruitment, transcription or analysis processes (pseudonyms used) to ensure anonymity.

It was made clear to all participants that all information provided would be held confidentially unless any safeguarding concerns were raised that would require school and LA safeguarding protocols to be followed. Throughout the

action research cycles, data extracts and quotations were shared generically and anonymously and not attributed to any individual participant.

3.6.3 Right to withdraw

The right to withdraw was communicated to all participants on the information and consent forms provided, with reminders that this would not affect their access to EPS or other LA services. Verbal reminders of the right to withdraw or stop the interview were also issued to participants at the beginning of each interview and focus group discussion.

3.6.4 Data storage

Data was recorded using two portable recording devices (Dictaphone and laptop) in case of the failure of one or the other. The digital audio files were uploaded to an encrypted external storage device, where they were securely stored in order to facilitate transcription by the researcher and checks by the research supervisor. These files will be deleted following seven years beyond the study completion, as per University of Nottingham guidelines.

3.6.5 Offsetting possible detrimental effects of research

Timings of the interview and focus group meetings were agreed with school staff and students to minimise disruption to class schedules. As AI promotes a focus on the positive factors of participants' experience, it was hoped that the experience would not be unduly aversive or stressful for participants. However, the researcher ensured that a member of staff with responsibility for pastoral support was available in the event of any participant distress.

The researcher is trained in active listening skills through Doctorate training and professional experience. The semi-structured nature of the interview enabled the researcher to appropriately respond to any issues as they arose.

Signposting to external agencies from which student participants or parents could seek support was detailed in the information sheets and debrief forms. Staff members were directed on their information forms to contact the link EP for the school should they require additional external support.

The establishment of ground rules regarding the sharing of information on sensitive issues was facilitated by the researcher as a collaborative exercise with participants at the outset of group sessions (e.g. respecting others' views and maintaining confidentiality within the group).

The researcher was mindful of the need to manage expectations regarding how actions may or not be informed by participants' contributions within the AI process of the study. It was explained to participants in the briefing process that the research sought to gain and advocate for their views and hopefully facilitate change, but that such change could not be assured by the researcher.

3.6.6 Debriefing

An individual summary of discovered positive factors was shared with students who participated in interviews in a personalised letter as part of debrief procedure. A generic debrief letter was also issued to all participants at the conclusion of the study to summarise key outcomes (See Appendix P).

3.7 Critique of methodology

It is important to maintain awareness of the limitations of the proposed approach. In particular, the criticism of Al as an oxymoron in its combination of appreciation and evaluation (e.g. Grant & Humphries, 2006) is heeded by the researcher. An oft-cited criticism of AI is its focus on the positive to the exclusion of problem areas (Fitzgerald, Oliver & Hoxsey, 2010; Mertens, 2010). This creates a risk of invalidating the negative experiences of participants, supressing salient points which may need to be made and preventing a discussion which truly represents reality for those involved (Pratt, 2002). From this perspective, an interpretation of all issues as an 'opportunity' can appear naïve (Burgoyne, 2009).

However, it has been acknowledged that the asset-focused nature of AI facilitates honesty by participants such that barriers are simultaneously identified with resources to overcome them (Bevington, 2015). In this way, it enables constructive action for a positive future which is built on strengths (Mertens, 2010) and a forum for generative action through the appreciation and exploration of both positive and negative experiences (Johnson, 2007).

Further reflections on the limitations and criticisms of the AI approach will be discussed and returned to in Chapter 5.

3.8 Summary of methodology

This chapter has outlined the chosen methodology of the current study and provided justification for the researcher's decision to employ AI as a positively-oriented action research approach which supports the transformative aims of the study. The researcher hoped that an AI approach would help to account for the inherently complex and idiosyncratic context of working within a dynamic educational setting and provide a platform for systemic change at the micro-level to support positive outcomes for young people who have experienced school exclusion. However, the researcher also seeks to avoid any facile conclusions and acknowledges the challenges created in research which seeks to involve the student voice.

4. Findings

4.1 Chapter overview

Within this chapter, outcomes of each of the AI phases will be presented. Each research question is addressed as follows:

- *RQ1:* outcomes of the Discover phase are presented in Sections 4.2–4.5 below. Each participant group is considered in turn within overarching themes (see Figures 4.1, 4.3, 4.5) and subthemes (see Figures 4.2, 4.4, 4.6) identified through thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) of data obtained from interviews and focus groups.

- *RQ2:* outcomes from Dream, Design and Deliver phases of AI presented in Sections 4.6 and 4.7 below.

4.2 Discover Phase: Student views

RQ1(a) What facilitative factors within educational provision are perceived to support engagement of students who have experienced FTE within an alternative provision unit in secondary school according to the views of students?

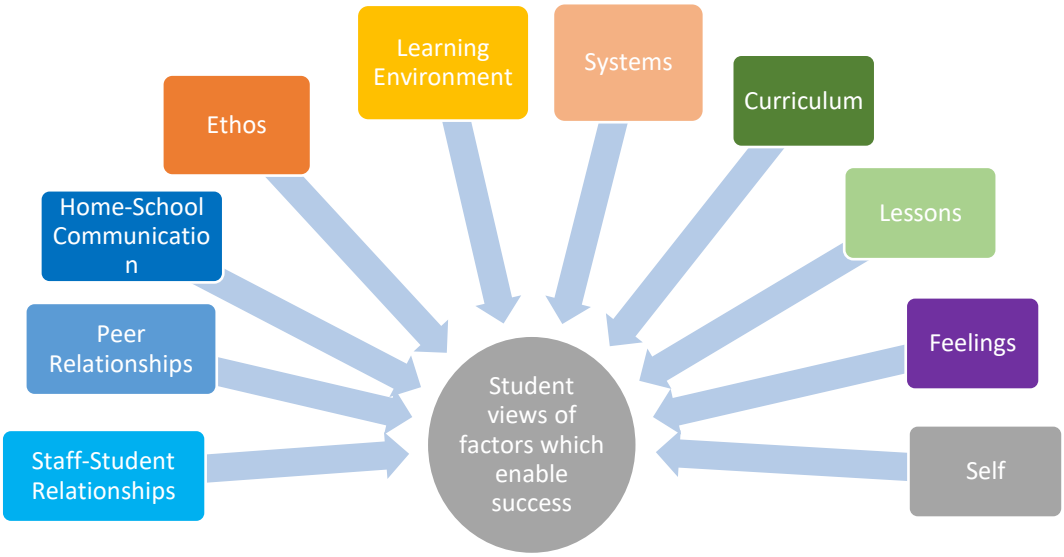


Figure 4.1: Overarching themes of students' views of positive factors which enable their success at school

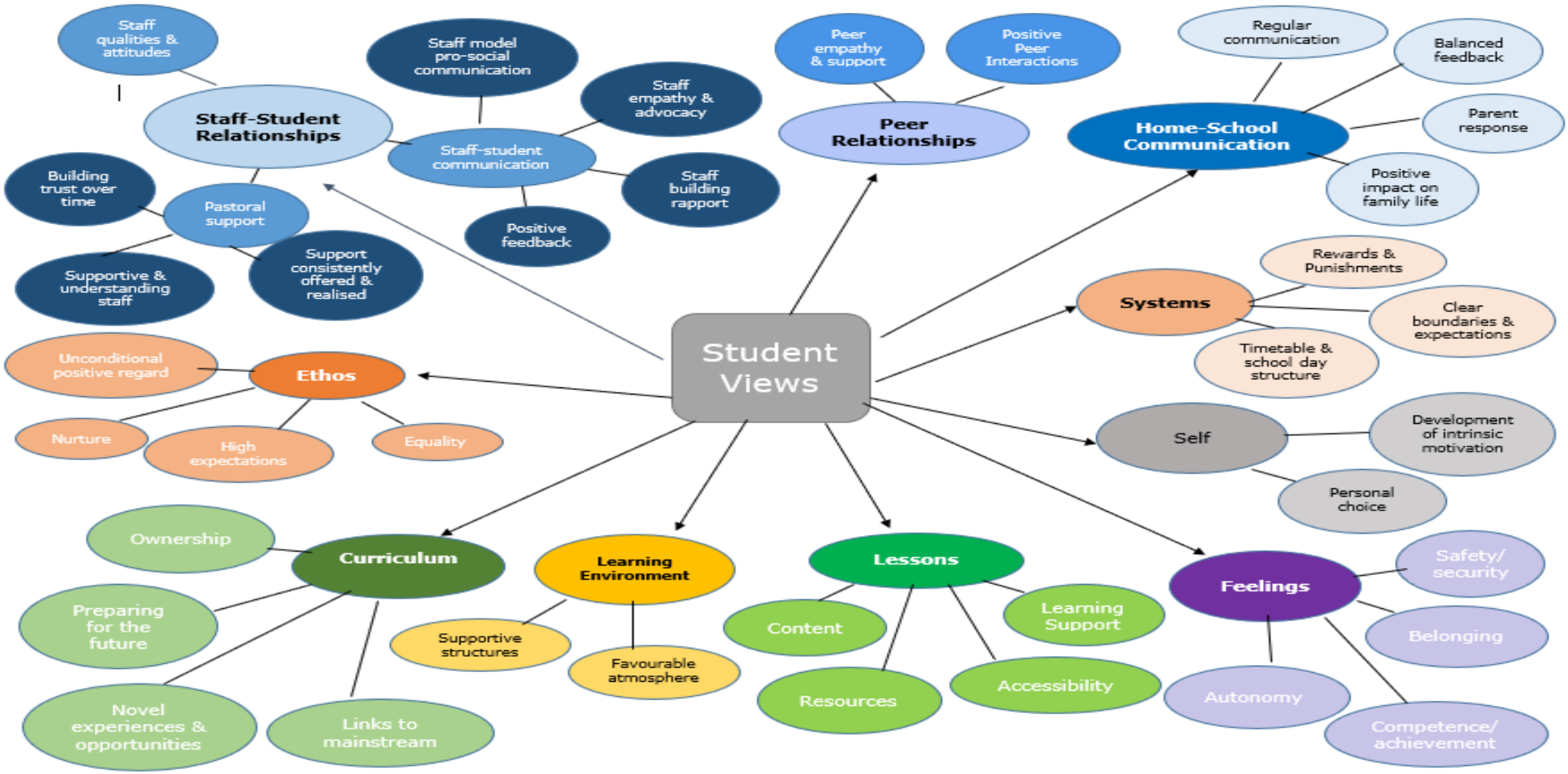


Figure 4.2: Subtheme map of students' views of positive factors which enable their success at school

4.2.1 Staff-Student Relationships

This theme was the mostly prolific and widely-cited aspect of students' accounts of their positive experiences at school.

4.2.1.1 Staff qualities & attitudes

Students described staff as positive and enjoyable to work with and acknowledged that teachers promote a pleasant and positive educational experience for students.

> *They want us to learn but have fun at the same time (Jason)*

> *… you really want to get out of bed and come in here every morning…the fact that you know teachers are going to be positive, it just puts me in a better mind… (Mia)*

> *You've always got teachers to entertain you (Brandon)*

Students seemed confident in staff ability to manage and respond to difficulties which promoted a sense of safety.

> *so they're just always expectin' it but not makin' it obvious… if summat does happen, they're always there to help, to listen, just be there for us (Mia)*

Students offered a feeling that teachers want the best for them.

> *they all do just want the best for us…some kids don't really want the best for themselves so…the teachers try to bring it out in them… even if we do mess about, they're still trying to get the best out of us (Mia)*

Students shared examples of when they felt that teachers had made a special effort to support them.

> *she actually took time out…to help me…I feel like she showed me that she wants the best (Mia)*

> *he likes to give us chances…he gives us second and third chances…(Sophie)*

4.2.1.2 Staff-student communication

4.2.1.2.1 Staff empathy & advocacy

Students offered their sense that teachers empathise with student views and act as advocates for them.

> *I think they just like think about your opinion the most…and then try to work on that (David)*

> *…Whatever situation we're in, he looks at us as he's in the situation, as he's in our actions (Sophie)*

4.2.1.2.2 Staff model pro-social communication

Teachers were seen as modelling pro-social communication skills, calm and measured responses to difficulties and restorative approaches.

> *They're always happy and not in a mood…they don't walk in and start shouting they just nicely say 'hello' and be polite… (Kieran)*

> *… I know when the teacher listens cos she's looked at us and nodding her head (Jason)*

> *They try not to shout first like and then they resolve things…they try and listen (Mia)*

> *if someone's done something bad, he would turn 'round and say, 'go and apologise' (Sophie)*

Students described feeling treated on an adult level, which had the effect of creating a mutually respectful, communicative environment.

> *It's just how they like talk to you... like you're a grown man, like you're talking to adults…they don't talk to you like a little kid…if they talk to you like an adult, you can both get your point across… (Brandon)*

4.2.1.2.3 Staff building rapport

Students described teachers as building rapport with students through informal interactions, which supported positive relationships.

I get on well with all the teachers very well… they just try and interact with us…they'll like join in our conversations …they just try and have fun and try to get to know us (Mia)

Students described not feeling pressured or challenged by teachers.

you don't get…teachers pressuring you…and challenging you…(they) give you your space … Brandon)

4.2.1.2.4 Positive feedback

Students spoke of constant praise and encouragement, constructive feedback from teachers.

She'll never like make us feel upset… she'll always praise us…they'll never like give us bad feedback, they'll just give us like a little bit of a nudge saying be better next lesson, or make sure you put more in this paragraph… (Sophie)

4.2.1.3 Pastoral support

This subtheme comprised a particularly salient aspect of young people's descriptions of their positive school experiences.

4.2.1.3.1 Supportive & understanding staff

Students shared their perceptions of teachers as being highly supportive, of feeling listened to and understood in a way that was effective and helpful.

…if I have a problem, then I feel like I can tell a teacher down here and then… they're going to support me in the right way…All the teachers in here are supportive (David)

they always listen to us… if we were upset, or if we wanted to tell them something, they would stop and they would listen… whatever it is, they'll always listen to what we have to say (Sophie)

the teachers just listen to me… you always get maximum support in here (Brandon)

4.2.1.3.2 Support consistently offered & realised

This support was seen as consistently and readily available from teachers, who were prepared to listen, do their best for students and follow through with support.

> *I know they're there cos... I tell 'em and then...they always sort it so then I obviously know that they have listened to me (David)*

> *Cos they write (views) down and…make sure it happens (Kieran)*

> *…whenever I've asked to speak to the teacher… I've always turned up and they've always been there (Sophie)*

4.2.1.3.3 Building trust over time

A feeling that students can rely on staff, who are approachable, dependable and trustworthy was noted, creating a sense of security and trust over time.

> *…because I've talked to them in the past and…then the problem has gone, it's sorted…and it's been all fine…I was happy because I knew that if there was anything else in the future I wanted to go and tell her, I knew it was somebody I could talk to about it (David)*

> *I know Ms X and Ms Y won't talk about my business… in here they keep it one on one (Brandon)*

Students relayed a feeling that teachers know them personally and provide individualised support, further providing a sense of security and relatedness.

> *cos they just spend a lot more time just one to one or there are few of us, they've got to know us…so they understand how to help…I think it's just cos they've got to know us so well so they know what gets to us and what doesn't and how to resolve it… (Mia)*

> *in here they know how you are … if I come in here they'll know straight up I'm in a mood…(they) make sure I don't go in a lesson that gets me annoyed worse (Brandon)*

4.2.2 Peer Relationships

4.2.2.1 Positive Peer Interactions

Students described the positivity of their interactions and relationships with peers as supporting their school experience.

No one is horrible to anyone… it's a bit of like banter... Everyone gets on… (Sophie)

I like to come to school to see…everyone in here (Sophie)

All the lads have a laugh together…we play football and make jokes and everything (Brandon)

…we just all get on well with one another (Kieran)

Facilitators of positive peer interaction were seen as occurring through informal and formal opportunities to interact.

We all hang around with each other after school and at school… (Brandon)

Lessons were seen as facilitating positive peer interaction through group participation and activities.

The lessons... the teachers try and get everyone involved… everyone gets friendly and then it just increases (Sophie)

They try to do stuff all together so everyone gets more engaged (Mia)

4.2.2.2 Peer empathy & support

Students described a shared sense of history and experiences with peers, and increased understanding and empathy with them as result.

…we've all been kicked out of mainstream… everyone's the same… we all know...what everyone is going through so we can all just be mates so we can cheer one another up…You just know where everyone is coming from (Brandon)

Students perceived peers as supportive and encouraging.

Friendship… teamwork… everyone helps everyone (Sophie)

When you get stuck on a question, they help you (Kieran)

There was a sense of this culture of peer support perpetuating through cycles.

When I first started, everyone was kind to me… if someone's done that to me, I'll do it to someone else, and then they'll do it to whoever comes in next… (Sophie)

This was also seen as creating role models, which promoted pro-social behaviour.

…the little ones look up to the older ones and that's their...role model (Sophie)

…that's why I'm not like bad or anything, everyone looks up to me… (Brandon)

4.2.3 Home-School Communication

4.2.3.1 Regular communication

Students reported strong collaboration between home and school through regular communication, which students and parents felt empowered to request.

he always speaks to my parents…and informs them about how I'm doing (David)

normally if people ask like 'Can you tell my dad I've had a good day'… they do that for you all the time to be honest (Brandon)

4.2.3.2 Balanced feedback

Communication was characterised as giving a balanced range of feedback from staff to parents.

…if we've been like really good and we've got a high level, then they'll ring home…instead of bad phone calls… (Sophie)

4.2.3.3 Parent responses

Students perceived their parents as experiencing positive feelings as a result of this communication, which they felt was a contrast to previous experiences.

I think they're happy with it and proud of where I've come from over there… (David)

they tell her I'm being good …It's good because my Mum's proud (Kieran)

It was felt that effort and achievement by students was acknowledged and thus encouraged by staff and parents.

my mum will just be like…you're doin' really good in your grades…like carry on and that… (Mia)

…if you've been like really, really good… they'll call home…my Mum gets really happy… (Sophie)

4.2.3.4 Positive impact on family life

Students indicated that rewards linked to school feedback positively impacted on their home life.

often like I get more treats and everything at home… we start going to like zoos and that… (Brandon)

…sometimes if I've like really good (grades) we'll go out for food or just like a little reward… it's quite nice (Mia)

4.2.4 Ethos

This theme described student perceptions of the philosophy and approach taken by staff in the provision.

4.2.4.1 Nurture

Students' accounts depicted a nurture- and relationships-based approach within the provision.

… in mainstream all you did was get moaned at cos you didn't like understand the work…But in here…you have to tell 'em...and…they'll help you through it basically (Brandon)

…they do take time for us… I just feel like they see more of us than teachers in a mainstream do (Mia)

Students offered reflection on how the positive and supportive ethos impacted on their education.

… I don't think I'd be in mainstream right now, I think I would have been permanently excluded (Brandon)

4.2.4.2 Unconditional positive regard

Students acknowledged staff members' unconditional positive regard, non-judgemental approach and belief in students.

they're being like positive and like helping us to see the positivity they see… what they like expect of us and they think we can come out with, they're trying to show us that we can do it (Mia)

they see us in a different light…just as kids being kids really…even though they expect the best they also know that we're gonna have our moments… (Mia)

4.2.4.3 High expectations

The high expectations and standards set by teachers were seen as encouraging and nurturing aspirations (see quotes in competence)

If I don't want to do the work, they'll keep saying to you like 'Do it and you'll get better GCSEs'… I understand why...cos they want me to do better (Jason)

4.2.4.4 Equality

Students' accounts also evoked an ethos of fairness and equality by staff, characterised by fresh starts, thereby creating a sense of safety for students.

we get treated the same (Jason)

…the teacher wouldn't just start like shouting, they would start from like zero…It would be equal (Sophie)

4.2.5 Learning Environment

Students' descriptions within this theme highlighted factors supportive of a conducive learning environment.

4.2.5.1 Favourable atmosphere

Students described a calm, pleasant environment, which was seen to support attendance.

In here, it's quite peaceful (Brandon)

I wanna come in cos it's fun and relaxed (Mia)

4.2.5.2 Supportive structures

The provision size was seen to be facilitative of a conducive learning environment, supporting emotional well-being and engagement.

I prefer being in a small group…I feel safe in here (Brandon)

I get more work done than in a bigger class... the teacher can keep an eye on everyone (Sophie)

This was also perceived to facilitate positive relationships between peers and staff, who could offer more individual support to students as a result.

… cos there's not many of us we tend to spend time with one another so we get to know each other (Mia)

They do one on one … it's not like as crowded (Brandon)

…they've got time for everybody in the class (Kieran)

4.2.6 Systems

4.2.6.1 Rewards & Punishments

Students were aware of rewards systems, which afforded them choice and encouraged pro-social behaviour and engagement.

…if we're good and we complete the work we get to have ten minutes…we just play football…I like it (Jason)

…it just helps us, it lets us know that they're watchin' out for us…they do want better for us and they're tryin' to encourage more of it (Mia)

Rewards seemed to provide extrinsic motivation, particularly for younger students.

…it's what we do like golden time so you don't want to be naughty (Kieran)

Students also described compliance with rules to avoid punishments.

… I have to cos otherwise I'll get excluded (Callum)

4.2.6.2 Clear boundaries and expectations

Students described valuing the boundaries set by staff which seemed to equip them with a sense of predictability and security.

He's funny but he is a bit strict as well… if you're going too far he tells you to stop…it's good that he's a bit strict (Kieran)

At least we know what's gonna come (Jason)

Students perceived a sense of fairness, equality and merit in these rules and expectations.

… they're not easy to follow but they're not too hard…no swearing…cos when you're older you can't swear all the time (Kieran)

She treats everyone equal so she doesn't tell the same people off every time…I think it's equal, because the teacher always…treats us the same. (Sophie)

4.2.6.3 Timetable & school day structure

The school day timing and preferred activities on their timetable were factors seen as supporting engagement and attendance.

… it's the time that we leave and the time that we come to school (Kieran)

Cos it's the allotment and I know it's something fun (Kieran)

Structures in the school day for pastoral support and designated time for support by key adults was also valued by students, again offering a sense of security for them.

if I have a problem I can always talk to my tutor teacher in tutor time… then it can...get resolved…I know that I have got some part of the day if I do have any problems, I can speak to somebody (David)

4.2.6.4 Supportive systems

Students described their appreciation of the feedback which supported their sense of achievement and competence.

An achievement…Probably my…levels…we've had little mini tests…. It's been going up. (Sophie)

I've been doing alright in tests…they give you your test after and show you how much marks you got…they tell you like you should be proud of yourself… (Brandon)

…when we have like parents evening…my mum will just be like…you're doin' really good… (Mia)

4.2.7 Curriculum

4.2.7.1 Novel experiences & opportunities

Students perceived better opportunities compared to their previous educational experience, enjoyment of novel subjects and life experiences, and of personal strengths and new skills as a result.

…the experiences, I went and work with motor vehicle. I couldn't do that in mainstream (Brandon)

I never wanted to do art but … I'm actually enjoying it a lot more than I thought I would (Mia)

We went on a trip...to Birmingham... It was good...I'd never been to Birmingham (Jason)

4.2.7.2 Preparing for the future

Students perceived the curriculum as meaningful and relevant to their future life and adulthood.

I'm doing a course where I get a diploma in motor vehicle…so it's something good…that I can take away from being in here (David)

… helps you so you know what to do when you grow up (Callum)

4.2.7.3 Ownership

Students described choosing to work on their interests, with opportunities for additional qualifications related to these facilitated by staff.

…I chose to be in there and I then I get a diploma so I'm happy I chose it in the end (David)

…I got an option to do what I wanted to do for GCSE… I asked if I could do (PE) and they said that she's already got a PE teacher to teach us (Jason)

There was a sense of this creating mutual commitment, joint investment and engagement from students and staff.

I just I just get on with it and crack down and try to do my best…so I achieve my diploma…and I think that he sees that as well and he sees that I that I am focused… (David)

4.2.7.4 Links to mainstream

Students offered an appreciation of curriculum links to mainstream.

the PE teacher's been coming a lot more in the lessons…and that's what people wanted… (Jason)

4.2.8 Lessons

4.2.8.1 Content

Students experienced their lessons as engaging, stimulating and enjoyable.

they want you to have fun in the lessons…and you do (Jason)

… I don't have no boring lesson, it's always summat fun… (Brandon)

Students described enjoying practical lesson activities which they saw as engaging and relevant.

I enjoy doing things…the practical (David)

… you get to do like fun jobs …I like getting my hands dirty (Kieran)

4.2.8.2 Resources

Use of visual aids and revision lessons to support engagement, comprehension and retention were resources exemplified by students.

when it's on the board, I get it…a PowerPoint or…something that we can see…it's having a visual...I think it helps me more (Jason)

we revise…we always do like a catch up lesson just before the test…and I remember it and I do alright in the test (Brandon)

Students demonstrated satisfaction with the quality of resources and teacher knowledge.

it's got two cars in there, it's got plenty of tools and a proper teacher (David)

4.2.8.3 Accessibility

Students described lessons as characterised by appropriate differentiation and levels of challenge, where teachers sought to extend their attainment and build mastery.

I like it cos it's like challenging… I feel like it's not too simple and it's not hard so it's alright (Kieran)

She like assigns me little things on the side…she wants me to do other things so I can get higher… (Mia)

4.2.8.4 Learning Support

Students described feeling empowered to ask for help in lessons, Linked to a sense of their teacher's awareness and readiness to support with difficulties.

…often I say I need help (Jason)

… if she is explaining something then…I can't understand it, I tell her about it and then she always …goes in... more detail about it (David)

… the teacher knows…if we're stuck or not (Sophie)

They just try and like help you more and explain it you more (David)

Students articulated experiencing effective teaching strategies and support from teachers which created a sense of fairness, safety and equality in learning.

the teacher is always supportive…she tells me things in detail so I always know how to do them and it's always helpful the way she teaches it (David)

first of all, they show you how to do it and if you don't get it, they'll do it like an easier or simpler way… you end up getting it in the end (Brandon)

… the teacher doesn't move on…until everyone's done…. she'll check everyone's work (Sophie)

… she goes around to help everyone… that's like good to know cos then people aren't missing out what they're doing… (Kieran)

4.2.9 Feelings

A range of powerful, positive feelings were described by students.

4.2.9.1 Feelings of competence/achievement

Students noted feelings of pride, competence, achievement and a sense of self-belief.

…I know that I'm good at them…teachers say I'm good (Kieran)

I feel like I'm catching up quite fast to be honest…when I'm always in my lesson like I do all my work… (Brandon)

...you just feel more like you're achieving summat…not failing all the time…you actually feel like you're gonna pass from it, you're not gonna fail it (Brandon)

… in here I actually listen, I actually feel proud that I can know how to do it…I actually know what I'm doing (Brandon)

4.2.9.2 Feelings of belonging

Student accounts evoked the feelings of self-worth and belonging they experienced through positive student-teacher relationships.

it just shows that…you're kinda wanted basically…it makes you feel like…you actually matter to someone I guess (Mia)

The quality of peer relationships was powerfully exemplified by students as being like 'family', which further evoked a sense of belonging and relatedness.

I'd say we're like one family really (Mia)

Everyone treats everyone like a family (Sophie)

…you can just be yourself …just how easy everyone is to get to know…I could just say somethin' and they'll just respond (Mia)

…just fitting in really… I feel like I belong here because…. I don't feel uncomfortable around the people…and confident (Sophie)

4.2.9.3 Feelings of safety and security

Students described their feelings of security in the provision environment, their relationships with teachers and their learning.

I feel safe in here… even though the rooms are small, there's not that many of us in here so it's not like worrying… (Brandon)

(Teacher) was like 'if you ever need someone, I'll be there for you'… that's why I feel more safe with these… teachers… (Brandon)

It's fun because you learn different ways of doing it so you know you won't struggle again (Kieran)

I think it's a good feeling cos I know that if I get like hard work I know I can tell the teacher and then...the teacher is going to come and help me the best they can (David)

You don't get like proper moaned at when you get something wrong (Callum)

4.2.9.4 Feelings of autonomy

Students described experiences in which they were given freedoms, opportunities to pursue their aspirations and a sense of being able to effect control.

I chose to be in there and I then I get a diploma so I'm happy I chose it in the end (David)

the teachers never force us to do anything…he'll try and get us out more... It… gives us a bit of freedom… (Sophie)

Yesterday that teacher...lent my mate a tenner until break time to trust him…and I didn't know a teacher could do that…it just proves that he can trust us…(it feels) good… more things like that they didn't trust me with before…I can prove it to them (Jason)

4.2.10 Self

4.2.10.1 Personal choice

Students offered a reflection of improved behaviour and self-regulation as being self-directed, an outcome of individual choice and as a personal success.

it's which path you choose (Mia)

I just...behave how I am… I just walk into school and I guess...I just be good (Jason)

my behaviour…I've more knuckled down from like when I was in mainstream (Brandon)

4.2.10.2 Development of intrinsic motivation

Students reflected that the opportunities offered to them facilitate positive experiences and feelings, which in turn develop their intrinsic motivation and resilience.

> *… now I'm going to be taking higher diploma level…when I first came… I was like always in trouble… but then…I had something to behave for so then everything got more smoother… I just get on with it and crack down and try to do my best…so I achieve my diploma (David)*

Students also noted that external factors support their motivation.

> *… now I've realised how close I am to my real exams… I need to just start catching up more (Brandon)*

Students' accounts also noted that teachers' positive feedback and encouragement supported their intrinsic motivation, building self-esteem and self-belief.

> *(Teacher) is always telling me that … I have the potential...to get a dead good grade… if I just carry on as I am now so that's something obviously I'm happy about… I'm proud of it...so I just try to do the best I can to get that good grade…It's something to work for (David)*

> *…it makes me like I feel like I'm more capable…she's pushing me to the best that I've got…so it just makes me want to work for it…I just want to get the best education I can (Mia)*

4.3 Discover Phase: Staff views

RQ1(b) What facilitative factors within educational provision are perceived to support engagement of students who have experienced FTE within an alternative provision unit in secondary school according to the views of school staff*?*

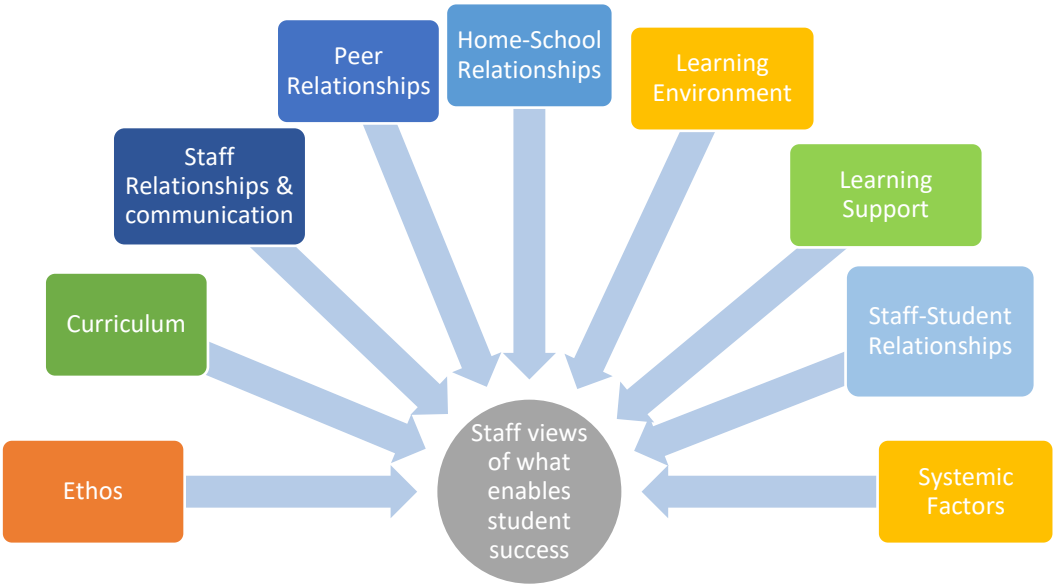


Figure 4.3: Overarching themes of staff views of positive factors which enable students' success at school

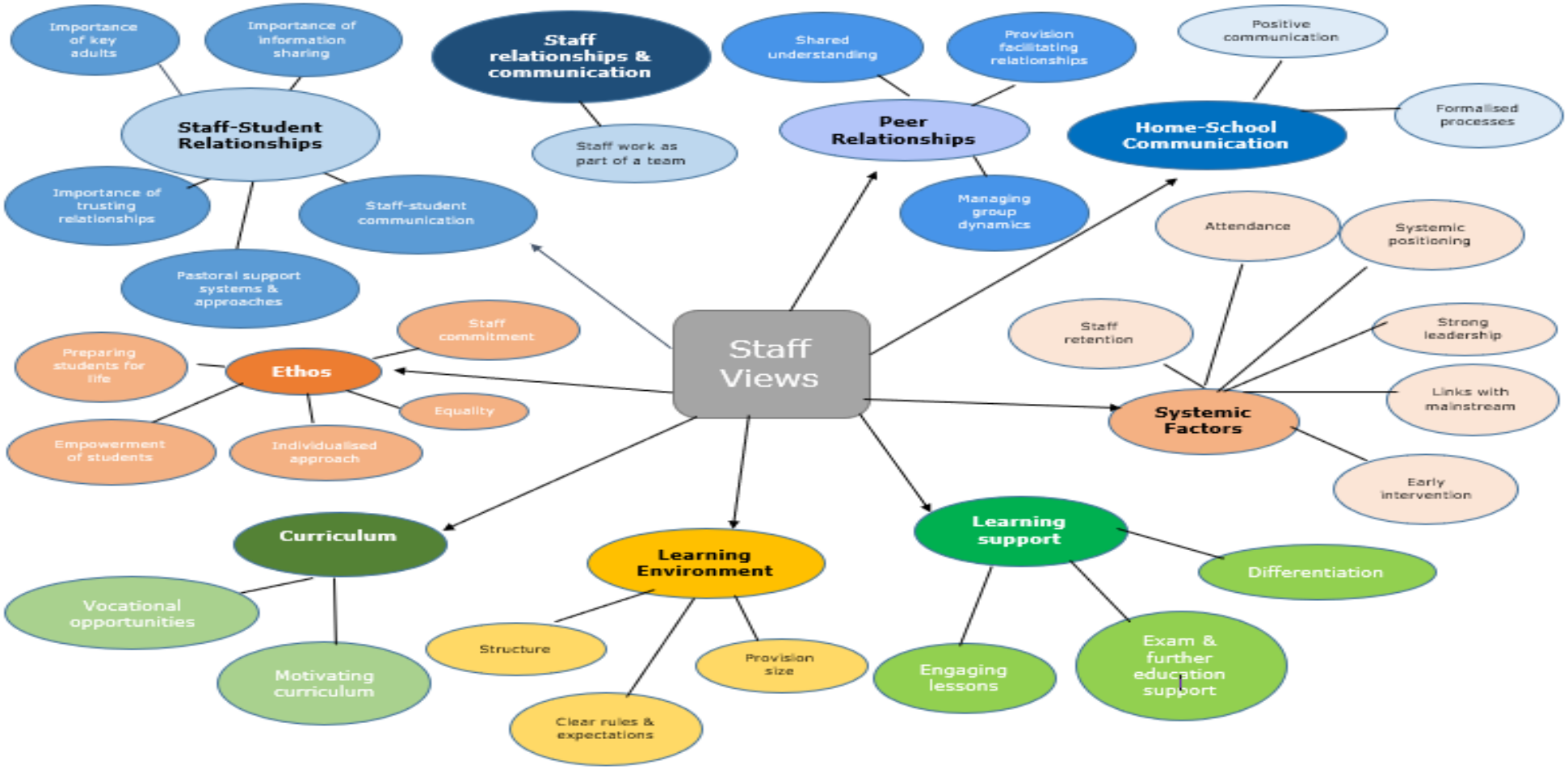


Figure 4.4: Subtheme map of staff views of positive factors which enable students' success at school

4.3.1 Ethos

4.3.1.1 High expectations

High expectations, reflective of those of a mainstream environment, were viewed by staff as enabling students' success.

> *I think higher expectations, more GCSEs have been put in place… more strict with uniform ... more like mainstream school…for the kids (Staff Participant 3)*

> *…establishing an environment for learning… has improved behaviour and attendance and engagement …behaviour and learning are intrinsic (Staff Participant 3)*

4.3.1.2 Equality

Employing a fair, equitable, consistent approach, as well as fresh starts, was seen as promoting a sense of fairness and respectful relationships.

> *forget what's happened previous, we start afresh (Staff Participant 5)*

> *…I think if children see you being fair…then you gain their respect… by being consistent… and they do tend to listen to you if they respect you (Staff Participant 4)*

4.3.1.3 Staff commitment

Staff accounts reflected a desire for students to achieve and gave a sense of going above and beyond to support this.

> *…we really want them to achieve… not to have left school feeling worthless… (Staff Participant 4)*

> *There's nothing better than seeing these kids happy… it's up to us to make them feel that they're safe and valued and listened to (Staff Participant 4)*

> *… going out to collect people for their GCSEs…knocking on doors… getting them out of bed… (Staff Participant 8)*

4.3.1.4 Empowerment of students

Staff trust was seen as giving students a sense of autonomy, working with

them as part of a team and assigning them an equal status.

> *we empowered the students… we explained it thoroughly to the students that…we trust you and respect you…and they responded exceptionally well … I think if you explain that and they appreciate that …they level with you…I think the pupils sensed that and they felt part of the team it wasn't almost a teacher-pupil scenario, it was almost working together (Staff Participant 2)*

4.3.1.5 Preparing students for life

Staff emphasised the moral and holistic development of students in preparation for life.

> *it's about churning out well-rounded individuals (Staff Participant 2)*

> *if you can get them to understand right from wrong and give them some confidence and skills to help build relationships I think that to me is more important… (Staff Participant 1)*

> *student engagement activities…bring in learning that looks very different… the fire service…the sexual health clinic …trying to make the student a rounded person (Staff Participant 3)*

> *… trying to teach them what is right behaviour and why…without the correct behaviour, they're not going to succeed in society in the future… trying to give them as much information as we can about future life...(Staff Participant 4)*

4.3.1.6 Individualised approach

Staff reflected on the importance of getting to know students as individuals as a way of ascertaining potential motivators and nurturing self-belief.

> *it's tapping into those areas where you're getting to know them as a person…'what is going to help this boy's confidence grow, his self-esteem'… it's having the time to reflect and look at them all as individuals (Staff Participant 8)*

> *it's finding something they're good at and it builds their confidence (Staff Participant 6)*

> *you're talking about an holistic view... where you're getting people to where they want to be in life (Staff Participant 2)*

4.3.2 Curriculum

4.3.2.1 Motivating curriculum

Staff noted that offering subjects and qualifications which students find personally relevant facilitates commitment and engagement.

> *… having subjects that they are now committed to more…helped them settle …they're hopefully seeing that they are going to leave here with…qualifications… (Staff Participant 5)*

4.3.2.2 Vocational opportunities

Individualised opportunities for vocational preparation were observed as motivating for students by staff.

> *…they get access to vocational subjects…they've got a lot more opportunities bespoke for them… children who would probably be en route for permanent exclusion are actually leaving with level 1 qualifications…it's motivating them to take a different course in their lives (Staff Participant 6)*

4.3.3 Staff relationships & communication

4.3.3.1 Staff work as part of a team

Colleagues were viewed as supporting one another, valuing a culture of sharing positives and communicating to manage potential issues.

> *we're an excellent team…you've got to be able to see when one another is stressed and jump in… (Staff Participant 4)*

> *having like an offload at the end of…every day…a positive offload…and a well done and a slap on the back…I think having the positives rather than the negatives highlighted between us…does help… (Staff Participant 1)*

> *we have a meeting once a week … we're always communicating things, try and tell each other everything...constantly monitoring… (Staff Participant 4)*

4.3.4 Peer Relationships

4.3.4.1 Shared understanding

Staff perceived shared understanding and experiences as facilitative of positive peer relationships and role models.

> *…it's keeping them as kind of role models…they have been through the same …been kicked out of mainstream …on the verge of perm ex…and they… have managed to stay in and…complete their education … they've got a goal, they've got an ambition now and they know what they need to do to get there… (Staff Participant 5)*

4.3.4.2 Provision facilitating relationships

Factors such as small provision size and large group activities were viewed as facilitating peer friendships and positive interaction.

> *there are very positive peer groups in here…there's some lovely relationships…because it's such a small unit, they do tend to form friendship groups (Staff Participant 4)*

> *…PE…works better when we get 'em all together… they interact better, it's a better game… afterwards they leave site happy together… (Staff Participant 2)*

4.3.4.3 Managing group dynamics

Staff management of peer dynamics was perceived as valuable.

> *I think monitoring the dynamics with the children has been a crucial way to work with behaviour cos if you put the wrong people together then the behaviour is going to erupt… (Staff Participant 4)*

4.3.5 Home-School Relationships

4.3.5.1 Positive communication

Staff recognised the importance of respectful, honest and positive communication to build trust with parents.

… I just think they like to talk to a human being level… not lecturing them… on their terms and their language… (Staff Participant 2)

I think that's important just ring for the positive as well…so that builds up the trust then for them to believe you when there's a negative…you form a relationship with the parents… if you're doing the whole picture… (Staff Participant 4)

4.3.5.2 Formalised processes

Staff noted parents' appreciation of regular home-school communication and saw a benefit of this as positivity permeating the system.

…the parents feel the communication has got better…they like the weekly phone calls…regular progress days, regular opportunities to speak to parents in person…giving parents more opportunity to see work that's been done and showcasing different things (Staff Participant 3)

…we get it back from the kids, they say, 'You spoke to my mum and my mum said' so we know it's going right down the line and back up the line…which is quite refreshing… it's an absolute chain of information which I think is working really well (Staff Participant 2)

4.3.6 Learning Environment

4.3.6.1 Structure

Staff described the importance of well-structured learning environment and lessons for students, while also allowing flexibility in system to respond to individual needs.

they…know the structure of the day, which keeps them calmer (Staff Participant 4)

I think we've found ways of dealing with those individuals that need that extra time to sort of fit in the timetable around them more so if they are struggling, there is more flexibility (Staff Participant 5)

you've got to have a structure … we've been breaking the lessons down…a starter…working for half an hour…something cool at the end … (Staff Participant 4)

… it's about the lesson structure…get up and move them about…carouseling… short activities…and engaging rather than longer pieces of work (Staff Participant 3)

4.3.6.2 Clear Rules and Expectations

Clear and consistent rules and expectations were perceived by staff as supporting positive behaviour and relationships.

…if you plan and have structure…routine…boundaries… the students' behaviour will become better… (Staff Participant 3)

I think the students feel settled when it's consistent…that really helps them to feel secure and they know what's coming there's no surprises (Staff Participant 6)

…guidelines and very strict routine… supports positive relationships because they know… it's one rule for everybody and…the kids in here thrive on that… they need that boundary… (Staff Participant 3)

4.3.6.3 Provision size

Staff acknowledged the smaller provision supported student engagement, success and feelings of safety, security and ownership of the environment.

This is their safe haven… (Staff Participant 4)

…smaller groups… much quieter...not as chaotic… they find there aren't so many distractions (Staff Participant 6)

…they've got a bit of ownership of this place… how small it is … a place that they can call their own (Staff Participant 5)

4.3.7 Learning Support

4.3.7.1 Differentiation

Staff noted the importance of scaffolding learning, of appropriate differentiation and challenge delivered sensitively.

… differentiating the work…as subtly as possible so they don't get crushed… making sure that the work is at their level… then pushing it just a tiny bit … you can't just keep giving them baby stuff…they get bored…or if it's that tiny bit too hard they say, 'I can't do it' (Staff Participant 4)

4.3.7.2 Engaging lessons

Staff emphasised quality first teaching, visual supports and verbal communication as facilitating student engagement.

> *If you plan…good lessons which engage the students…behaviour will become better…it's about putting the classroom teaching first… at the heart of what we we're doing… (Staff participant 3)*

> *…she gets them to speak … instead of asking them … to write it down…she'll discuss it throughout the lesson…and keeps them engaged in that way ... anything that's visual is a good lesson really (Staff Participant 4)*

> *visual lessons are really good and things that are choppy …small attention span things seem to stimulate them (Staff Participant 4)*

4.3.7.3 Exam & further education support

Staff also highlighted their support for students with exams and further education.

> *…we talk to the colleges…if somebody can't read or write, they probably need .. a reader/writer… so they've managed to put that in place (Staff Participant 4)*

4.3.8 Staff-Student Relationships

4.3.8.1 Importance of key adults

Staff explained the formation of bonds with certain students, such that staff mentor students and employ individualised strategies to engage them.

> *we all have our different ones that we work with (Staff Participant 1)*

> *You naturally bond with different ones… or they come to you… you keywork the children... you get to know the kids and… how best to approach them…we just mentor them (Staff Participant 4)*

The presence of key adults was perceived as crucial in avoiding permanent exclusion.

> *It's the relationships you have with the children that seems to help calm them down…and stops them from going that*

one step further where they're permanently excluded…(Staff Participant 4)

4.3.8.2 Importance of trusting relationships

Staff highlighted the importance of building of trusting relationships over time, and of staff as people to whom students can relate.

…they see us as humans (Staff Participant 5)

talking…being honest and over time to build trust with them… trying to get in there and see what they're about and let them know that they're safe down here (Staff Participant 4)

Staff reflected the impact of this on students' emotional well-being and learning.

it works if they have someone that they can trust and they know is gonna be there for them, to go to the ends, to give them a bit of time, they feel safe… something happens within them and they start to learn…things happen within their brain and they can retain (Staff Participant 6)

…certain students take a trust in somebody… (manager) recognises that and then just gives us time with them…if they form a link with us, then we allow that…to happen to help them feel safe and to have freedom in their minds to learn… it's reducing their stress levels for them so that they can be free to learn…(Staff Participant 4)

4.3.8.3 Pastoral Support Systems & Approaches

Structures within the provision were seen as conducive to pastoral support, giving staff time to listen to and support students using restorative and solution-focused approaches.

we have more time for them here…the groups are smaller so you can talk…to make them feel valued (Staff Participant 4)

all of the kids in here have a fifteen minute session with their tutor every day… it allows you to build those relationships up with students… (Staff Participant 3)

…having time for the kids to offload… having someone available because … they come in and they need to offload with somebody and you can't put that into a timetable… (Staff Participant 5)

sitting down with the students and being able to overcome and discuss anything in a real…open and restorative kind of way (Staff Participant 5)

…it's the solution-focused approach…(Staff Participant 3)

4.3.8.4 Importance of information sharing

Staff noted that information sharing can occur through both formal and informal channels.

we've got a community officer in the school full time … so there is that external input…parents will let us know…because they find out a lot about the things happening outside of school…(Staff Participant 3)

4.3.8.5 Staff-student communication

Staff described the need to empathise with students.

It's just talking to them, being logical…explaining, breaking it down their behaviour and explaining the impact it has … It's about taking their perspective… (Staff Participant 4)

The importance of modelling calm, respectful communication with students and speaking to them like adults was also noted.

…they're treated like young adults, they're not shouted at, they're spoken with… we talk less but we communicate more… I think that's the key here, we do have that little bit more time… I do think they do appreciate that… (Staff Participant 2)

This was seen as becoming internalised by students over time.

… helping them to bring on that maturity…speak to them more as adults so that they can…model that behaviour themselves… we do see it by the time they get to Year 11…I'm absolutely amazed at their confidence…and how they speak to us (Staff Participant 5)

4.3.9 Systemic Factors

A range of organisational factors were perceived as supporting the effectiveness of the provision.

4.3.9.1 Strong leadership

Staff members perceived the provision as being managed through effective leadership, characterised by a vision to which staff are subscribed.

> *Having a strong leader (who) wants to get things done…has made this look…a lot more like…a working environment rather than a youth club… (Staff Participant 6)*

> *…taking on board (manager's) dream for … them to achieve and get these qualifications…she's said to all the teachers what she wants from them and they're just doing it (Staff Participant 4)*

4.3.9.2 Staff retention

The importance of the consistency of staff was noted.

> *…key to this unit is staff retention… (Staff Participant 1)*

> *…they need the same faces (Staff Participant 8)*

4.3.9.3 Links with mainstream

Maintaining links and consistency with mainstream practice was perceived as benefitting staff and students, enhancing the provision's sense of belonging and connectedness in the wider school system.

> *this kid's adored when he walks through school so and it does his ego some good he feels better about himself (Staff Participant 2)*

> *… support is increasing and that feels good… the outcome is going to be better for the students… we're going to go to their meetings and we'll have access to their resources … this is more of a structure…for every subject which is going to benefit us as a unit…that's a real positive … it's like a bigger team…(Staff Participant 6)*

> *it feels like part of the school (Staff Participant 2)*

4.3.9.4 Early intervention

Staff saw the value of working with younger students and addressing issues early on.

> *… it can be quite nice to have caught the gaps early and to see how well they do…cos we've got them from a younger age…(Staff Participant 1)*

4.3.9.5 Attendance

Requirement for good student attendance was viewed as supporting success and effectiveness.

> *…the students that are now coming into (the unit)…have to be good attenders (Staff Participant 3)*

4.3.9.6 Systemic positioning

Staff positioned the unit in terms of the wider school organisation as a final chance for students to engage.

> *…some of them that know it is a last stop saloon and if they mess about they will be permanently excluded…they don't want to leave school, they're scared of the unknown…and what these PRUs are like… you've just got to keep on at them, but at the end of the day, they're their own beings… (Staff Participant 4)*

4.4 Discover Phase: Parent views

RQ1(c) What facilitative factors within educational provision are perceived to support engagement of students who have experienced FTE within an alternative provision unit in secondary school according to the views of parents?

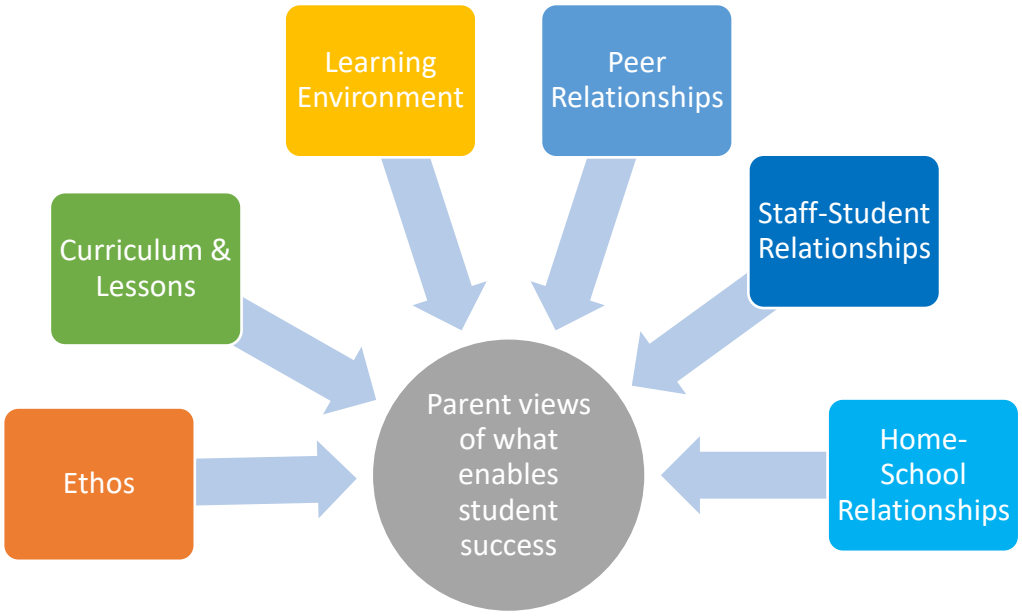


Figure 4.5: Overarching themes of parent views of positive factors which enable students' success at school

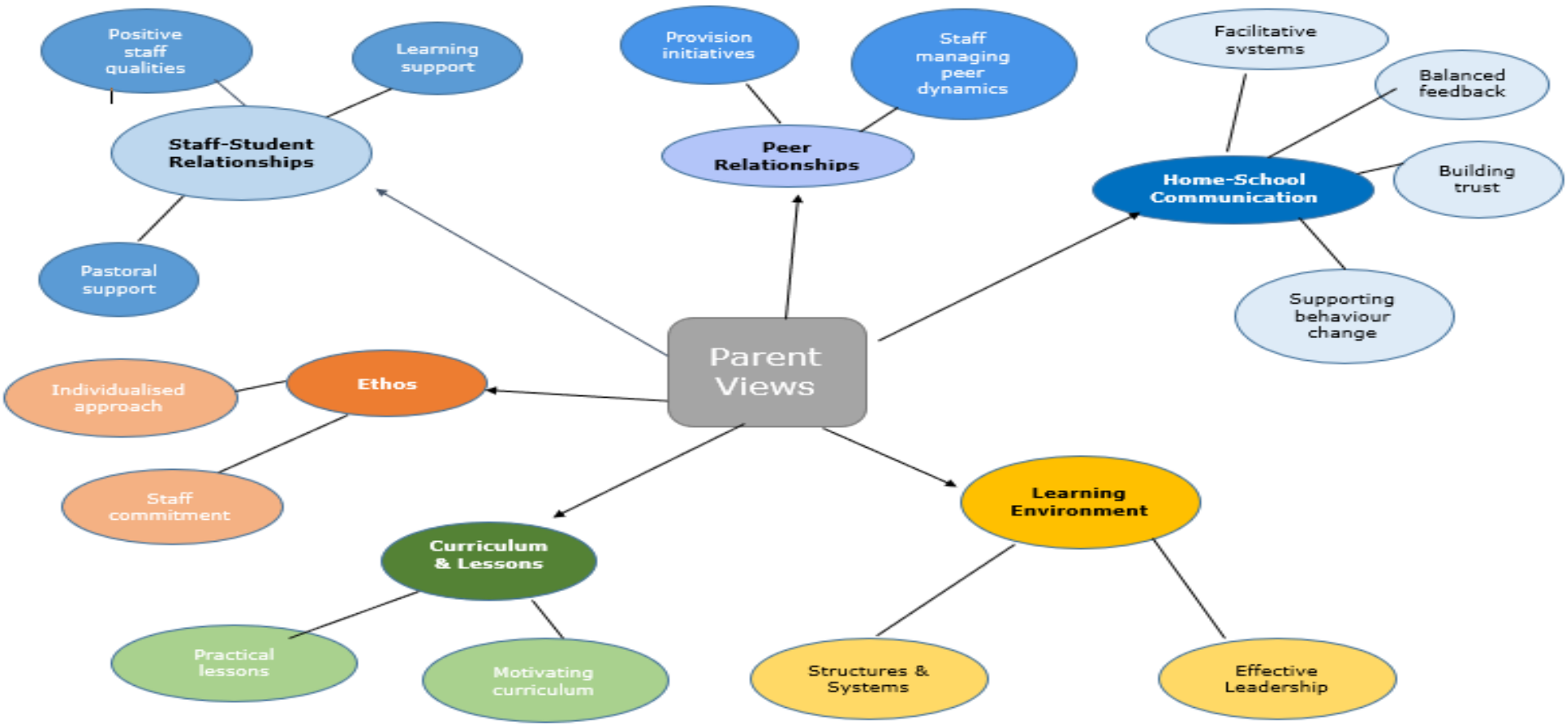


Figure 4.6: Subtheme map of parent views of positive factors which enable students' success at school

4.4.1 Ethos

4.4.1.1 Individualised approach

Parents gave a sense of the individualised support and provision offered by staff, through prioritising the student's best interests and appropriately challenging them.

> *… they take each child on their own merit and work to the best of their ability and look at what they're capable of …every child is looked at personally (Parent Participant 2)*

Parents spoke of a flexible approach by staff to meeting students' needs, giving them freedom and autonomy, and responsibility for getting their own needs met.

> *"…he's started maturing a bit more …if he wants time out, he can have time out; if he wants to talk, he'll talk…They're quite flexible with him…" (Parent Participant 5)*

4.4.1.2 Staff commitment

There was a strong sense of gratitude and appreciation from parents about the effort and dedication of staff in providing an effective education for their children:

> *they help him in every way they can…just thank God for schools like this (Parent Participant 5)*

> *I appreciate what the school's doing…they've got time for (my child), if it was other schools they would've thrown him out but they're givin' him a chance in any way they possibly can (Parent Participant 4)*

4.4.2 Curriculum & Lessons

4.4.2.1 Practical lessons

Parents frequently attributed students' success and engagement with the curriculum to enjoyment of practical lessons and activities.

He likes his sports, he likes his gardening…motor vehicles… hands on stuff…Cos he's out of an enclosed space and he's actually doing something physical (Parent Participant 3)

..he's more for doin'…than the written (Parent Participant 5)

4.4.2.2 Motivating curriculum

Parents offered insight that the provision supported students' interests within the curriculum, and sense of well-being derived from these opportunities.

I know he likes school…cos he's eager to come…he loves PE…He talks about basketball…he's interested in sport (Parent Participant 4)

… he's got more of the stuff he likes to do… (Parent Participant 3)

The gardens, the allotments…I think that's his bit of like tranquil…he loves seeing things grow… (Parent Participant 5)

4.4.3 Learning Environment

4.4.3.1 Structures & systems

Parents observed that the shorter school day supported their child's engagement at school, while the smaller provision enabled more structure and attention for students.

… it's less hours but more concentration…I think that's why she likes it here (Parent Participant 1

I think she works better in the smaller situation…people can actually see her work and be interested... she's got more attention here… Parent Participant 1)

4.4.3.2 Effective leadership

There was also a sense of strong leadership and vision from management enabling the provision to be effective.

it's a lot to do with, I believe, how this department is run (Parent Participant 2)

4.4.4 Peer Relationships

4.4.4.1 Provision initiatives

Parents saw provision initiatives involving peers as enriching student development.

> *she's mentoring some of the younger ones as well and she's thriving with that… (Parent Participant 2)*

4.4.4.2 Staff managing peer dynamics

Parents also acknowledged staff's role in managing dynamics amongst peers.

> *they look at the dynamics of the children together and see…what works well and what doesn't (Parent Participant 2)*

4.4.5 Staff-Student Relationships

4.4.5.1 Positive staff qualities

There was a sense of positive attributions of parents towards teachers, who were seen as encouraging and nurturing of students.

> *the teachers here are really passionate, really good… there's a lovely mix of teachers…they've all got great personalities… so into it all and encouraging… they're very dedicated here (Parent Participant 2)*

> *I just think they've got a nice caring nature (Parent Participant 5)*

4.4.5.2 Learning support

Parents also perceived that students received high-quality support from teachers with their learning.

> *He's getting a lot of help here from the teachers…the support he's having…I think it's good because he's havin' one to one...which…has made me happy…cos he's a bit behind in his reading and writing (Parent Participant 4)*

4.4.5.3 Pastoral support

Parents saw staff as supportive, patient and understanding of students' needs, taking the time to listen to them and offer support, which reassured parents.

> *(staff) probably got a lot of patience with him… talk to him…help him… they're really supportive… (Parent Participant 4)*

> *I think the people that give me positive things about her listen to her and maybe understand her… (Parent Participant 1)*

> *… teachers taking time out for him… he can talk to 'em… he's good at responding to the teachers…as long as he can communicate with someone and say how he's feelin'…You can nip things in the bud as such… (Parent Participant 5)*

4.4.6 Home-School Relationships

This was the most prolific theme discussed by parent participants.

4.4.6.1 Facilitative systems

Parents felt that systems for regular, open and supportive home-school communication (e.g. weekly phone calls; half-termly review meetings) enabled them to gain an overview of, and support, their children's progress.

> *they always show me her work…I enjoy seeing her work…they do tell me how she's getting on (Parent Participant 1)*

> *I can see where (my child) is at and where we may need to improve or what I need to do as a parent to try and support the school… if… there's any problems, we can iron it out… I want to support the school as much as they want to support me so I'm happy (Parent Participant 2)*

> *they are open and…happy to take…any ideas from parents… they'll take my point and they'll take it on board (Parent Participant 2)*

…they're very supportive, if I have any problems with (my child), I always can chat to them (Parent Participant 4

4.4.6.2 Balanced feedback

Parents' appreciation of the balanced and positive feedback they received about their child was oft-cited.

they inform me when something's happened…every Friday, Mr X gives me a call to update how (my child's) week's been…Good days and bad days… they always keep me informed… At least I know if anything has happened… (Parent Participant 3)

I think 'oh he's had a bad day' but not all the time…It's progress today…So that's good for me (Parent Participant 3)

…whether he's been bad or good, they'll still give you a response (Parent Participant 5)

This communication created positive emotions for parents of happiness, pride and reassurance and enabled them to reward their child's behaviour.

…it's great… I'm proud of him and I will praise 'im at the end of the day...it's just like a reward…for being good (Parent Participant 3)

…sometimes even if he's had a brilliant day I'll even get a phone call to say he's been good today and that's quite a bit of a buzz (Parent Participant 5)

Very emotional, I'm just proud of her, it's really good and I praise her…I'm so proud, I could cry (Parent Participant 2)

4.4.6.3 Building trust

The honest and positive communication between parents and school staff was seen as building trusting and positive relationships.

somebody who thinks more positively of your child, you're more likely to tell them things aren't you (Parent Participant 1)

I like the staff… I get on with all the staff (Parent Participant 3)

4.4.6.4 Supporting behaviour change

This communication was also seen as supporting parent-child communication, enabling reports of students' behaviour to be linked to rewards at home.

> *it's good so I can talk to (my child) about what's happened…when they ring me on a Friday, that's how I decide how much money I'm going to give …When…I've put that in place they tell me she improves …*
> *(Parent Participant 1)*

Parents offered a sense that improvements in their child's pro-social behaviour had been generalised to the home environment.

> *he's calmed down loads at home (Parent Participant 4)*

4.5 Conclusion of Discover phase

Following the presentation of all the key themes, outlined above, to staff participants, themes staff identified as resonating with them most strongly are presented in Table 4.1 below. These messages were later presented in a subsequent session with staff participants to stimulate the Dream phase.

Table 4.1: Summary of Inquiry: "The Best of What is", as identified by staff participants following presentation of key themes from Discover phase

- Nurturing positive relationships
- Teaching and learning through creative, practical and group activities
- Lessons are fun and enjoyable
- Structures embedding in the provision
- Staff being non-judgemental, being able to "switch it on", offering fresh starts
- Students' self-belief is nurtured
- Prioritising students' emotional well-being
- Parental involvement creates cycles of positivity
- Sense of a "family"
- Students "looking out for each other"

4.6 Dream & Design Phases

4.6.1 Dream phase

The Dream phase initially involved using 'magic wand' and 'miracle' questions with all participants in interviews and focus groups. All students within the research setting subsequently participated in a small group 'Dream' activity done with staff where their ideals were represented through graphics they created (See Appendix I).

4.6.1.1 Student Dreams

A summary of student participant dreams is presented in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 Summary of collated list of students' wishes and dreams for the future

- Students to have improved resources, e.g. football nets; staff to listen to student requests for resources in the provision: *"they might behave better… cos they'll have got what they want" (Jason)*
- More links to mainstream through overlap with mainstream practice (e.g. non-uniform days), events (e.g. whole school football tournament) and use of mainstream facilities (e.g. sports hall)
- More phone calls home
- Students to have ownership of the space (e.g. separate outdoor areas for different year groups; chill out space; graffiti artist to decorate); teachers have their own area and space to relax
- More extra-curricular activities (e.g. running club, horse riding, swimming): *"you can run and it will get all your mind off the world (Callum)*
- More student rewards, e.g. prizes; outings; go out for food: *"it would encourage people to be good" (Kieran)*
- More school trips and residentials: *"staying overnight somewhere camping, fishing"* (Kieran)
- Bigger building with larger rooms and more windows
- More practical and creative lessons (e.g. building projects; science experiments)
- More options and qualifications offered in subjects of interest (e.g. science, music); vocational and practical subjects (e.g. construction; woodwork; small animal care

- More experiential learning, e.g. outdoor education; educational trips
- Students to have college and course visits to support aspirations
- More activities at break times (e.g. table tennis)
- More large-group activities involving students and teachers
- Different structures, e.g. shorter lessons; more lessons; mixed groupings with different people in different lessons: *"Start off with a fun and then do some work in the middle and then at the end you get to do something good again…choosing time like board games, laptops)" (Callum)*

4.6.1.2 Staff Dreams

A summary of staff participant dreams is presented in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Summary of collated list of staff wishes and dreams for the future

- "Students are connected to their aspirations"
- "Students have self-respect"
- "Empowerment of students"
- Develop the curriculum, teaching and learning with a focus on practical elements
- More dedicated subject knowledge by staff
- Develop skills for life/Student Engagement activities for "education through experience"/ "education for life"
- Develop staff skills in pastoral support (e.g. solution-focused approaches)
- Tutor time to be developed more, linking to rewards
- Staff resilience to be supported through peer support and appraisal
- Holistic rewards system to be developed and promoted
- More celebration of success between home-school
- Positive relationships to be built through structure and consistency
- More large-group, bonding and team-building activities
- Address the gaps in students' learning early

- ❖ For the unit to maintain systemic links to mainstream and enjoy a raised profile in wider school: “door half open to mainstream” for students
- ❖ Student peer support to be promoted, e.g. peer mentors

4.6.1.3 Parent Dreams

Parent participants frequently emphasised their satisfaction with the provision in its current form.

> *…what they’re giving…is good enough…I think they’re doing as much as they can do at the moment and to be honest I wouldn’t want to change anything (Parent Participant 2)*

However, some ideas from parents are outlined in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Summary of collated list of parents’ wishes and dreams for the future

- ❖ Staff to better understand the individual student and reasons for behaviour
- ❖ Students to have a key staff member to act as an advocate for students in meetings and find ways forward when issues arise
- ❖ Parents feeling invited, rather than instructed, to attend meetings
- ❖ Staff to get the views of students who find it hard to express these
- ❖ Students’ career path to be nurtured

4.6.1.4 Aspiration Statement

To conclude the Dream phase, staff participants summarised their aspiration for the provision in the following statement:

By academic year 2018-2019, what we most aspire to is using practical, hands on, fun experiences that teach key life skills needed for progress through developmental stages with a broad range of curriculum opportunities that are underpinned by experiences and rewards that motivate and engage students to achieve.

4.6.2 Design

4.6.2.1 Provocative Propositions

The Provocative Propositions generated by the researcher to support the Design phase of the AI are outlined in Table 4.5 below. These propositions

were used to facilitate an action planning meeting with staff participants (See Section 3.4.4).

Table 4.5: List of Provocative Propositions generated from 'Discover' and 'Dream'

1. The unit promotes positive, supportive staff-student relationships through effective pastoral support
2. The unit operates a robust, holistic rewards system underpinned by strategies which serves to motivate all students
3. The unit offers a broad range of curriculum opportunities and experiences which inspire students' motivation and aspiration
4. The unit promotes positive home-school relationships and communication to support engagement and empowerment of students and their families
5. The unit empowers students by valuing the student voice and affording ownership of the space with consideration of their age and developmental level
6. The unit maintains links to mainstream practice and opportunities for the benefit of students
7. The unit offers practical, creative, fun activities in lessons which motivate and engage students.
8. The unit promotes positive, supportive peer relationships which provides students with a sense of belonging

4.7 Deliver Phase

4.7.1 Action Planning & Outcomes

A range of corresponding actions were planned and agreed through group discussion with staff participants during the action planning meeting (see Section 3.4.4.2). Use of the Provocative Propositions as a working 'Action Plan' document on PowerPoint to record agreed action, timeline and person(s) responsible for agreed action was employed. The range of actions planned and agreed with staff drawing on the Provocative Propositions, along with their implemented outcomes, are outlined in Table 4.6 belo

Table 4.6: Actions planned and implemented during Appreciative Inquiry (Jun-Dec 2017)

Provocative Proposition	Actions planned (Nov, 2017)	Actions implemented (Dec, 2017)	Further actions planned
1. The unit promotes positive, supportive staff-student relationships through effective pastoral support	Tutor time to be developed: linking to rewards/ achievement/behaviour records: celebrate success, do solution-focused work on difficulties Develop team meetings as a forum for supporting staff resilience Pastoral support training package to be discussed and agreed with SENCO	Tutor time developed: staff logging achievement and celebrating success; staff carrying out solution-focused work on difficulties	Pastoral support skills enrichment for staff: Emotion Coaching and Restorative Approaches training (Spring term 2018) Team meetings developed to support staff resilience: Staff training on strategies (e.g. Solution Circles) (Spring term 2018)
2. The unit operates a robust, holistic rewards system underpinned by strategies which serves to motivate all students	Development of positive/achievement points using SIMS (school information system) Staff to clarify what this achievement looks like Team to promote rewards in tutor time; communicate positive achievement/share with home ("motivational reward")	Streamlined rewards system with consistency for how achievement points/rewards are earned by students Weekly 'Star of the Week awards' and 'Subject Achievement' awards introduced	Staff to further explore options for rewards within budget constraints Manager to hold meeting with attendance officer to develop attendance rewards
3. The unit offers a broad range of curriculum opportunities and	Student engagement activities to be explored and scheduled (team meeting discussion to be held;	Talks from colleges for Y9-11 students planned with Post-16 service	Student Engagement curriculum activities to be explored and scheduled (Spring term 2018)

Provocative Proposition	Actions planned (Nov, 2017)	Actions implemented (Dec, 2017)	Further actions planned
experiences which inspire students' motivation and aspiration	time to be allocated to staff to plan and deliver this		
4. The unit promotes positive home-school relationships and communication to support engagement and empowerment of students and their families	Consistent communication with parents to celebrate success/ offer positive and constructive feedback: Staff to keep a log on office board to ensure two positive phone calls per fortnight (student name/ date)	Increase in parental contact: all staff members log positive phone calls home for two students per week Messages sent home relating to weekly awards More personalised approach to progress day/home-school meetings: parents now just meet with form tutor	
5. The unit empowers students by valuing the student voice and affording ownership of the space with consideration of their age and developmental level	Staff meeting discussion to be held regarding actions relating to student views gathered during the 'Dream' phase	Activities for wet break introduced (e.g. table tennis) Football nets in an enclosed area to be set up with students by staff	
6. The unit maintains links to mainstream practice and opportunities for the benefit of students	Staff meeting discussion to be held regarding reflecting mainstream practice, e.g. non-uniform days	Two students have re-integrated to mainstream support with support from staff to make this successful More reflection of mainstream practice, e.g. Christmas jumper days	Two more students to be re-integrated to mainstream (Spring term, 2018)

Provocative Proposition	Actions planned (Nov, 2017)	Actions implemented (Dec, 2017)	Further actions planned
7. The unit offers practical, creative, fun activities in lessons which motivate and engage students.	Staff to collaborate on devising practical/creative lesson plan activities	Staff introducing more creative activities, especially for younger students	
8. The unit promotes positive, supportive peer relationships which provides students with a sense of belonging	Opportunities to large group bonding/ team-building activities to be discussed at staff meeting	Large group activities being facilitated by staff Table tennis competitions established	Possibility of peer mentor training to be explored (Spring term, 2018)

4.7.2 Evaluative Commentary

This section contains elements of transcribed audio-recorded data, obtained during focus group interviews in the Discover phase and subsequent sessions in the Dream, Design and Deliver phases, which pertained to participant reflections on the AI process, as derived, analysed and organised within the Thematic Analysis process. Further discussion and evaluation of the AI process as effecting organisational change is offered in Section 5.3.

The AI process seemed to generate innovation for change through discussion in the 'Discover' phase.

> *it might be worth looking at maybe whether the Year 11s actually mentor the younger ones…I've never really thought about that before, I'm just thinking about it now since we're talking (Staff Participant 5)*

Feedback of the 'Discover' phase was reported as creating a morale boost for staff. The value of the researcher as an external party in the data gathering was noted.

> *"This is really uplifting to hear" (Staff Participant 1)*

> *"perfect timing…morale's been bad…" (Staff Participant 3)*

> *"what impressed me the most was the maturity of the answers, cos we don't see a lot of that generally…it's probably credit to the questions that you asked…" (Staff Participant 2)*

The 'Dream' phase was viewed as a positive, shared experience between staff and students, which increased staff empathy for student views.

> *"staff got a lot out of Dream with kids" (Staff Participant 4)*

> *"cos we are always aiming...we forget how young they are…they want to be kids…to have their own time and space to learn things the fun way" (Staff Participant 1)*

Macro-systemic influences and organisational uncertainty were reported as presenting barriers to effecting positive change for these students.

"Throughout this, I've been thinking 'it would be nice to do this' but if we get special measures, we could be gone" (Staff Participant 1)

“Ofsted and government don’t recognise or value any of this” (Senior Leader)

“staff won’t have the say when the academy comes in…responsibility has been taken away” (Senior Leader)

4.8 Summary

A summary of key findings in relation to each Research Question is presented in Appendix Q. These will be further expanded upon and discussed in the context of current literature and theoretical insights in the following chapter. Additional participant quotations relating to themes and evaluative commentary are presented in Appendix R.

5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction to chapter

Within this chapter, findings of the current study are discussed in the context of the Research Questions and with respect to existing research and theoretical bases. Within this discussion, the voice of student participants is prioritised, consistent with the study's emancipatory aims. Strengths and limitations of the current research are considered through an evaluation of the study's methodology, aims and original contribution. Implications for EPs, schools and LAs and policy-makers are explored. The researcher's reflections on the research process are presented, along with concluding comments.

5.2 Findings summary & interpretation

Coalescence was apparent between participant groups in the identified themes which emerged in the study analysis. For ease of summary and interpretation, themes identified across each participant group have been amalgamated into overarching themes representing all groups, shown in Figure 5.1 below.

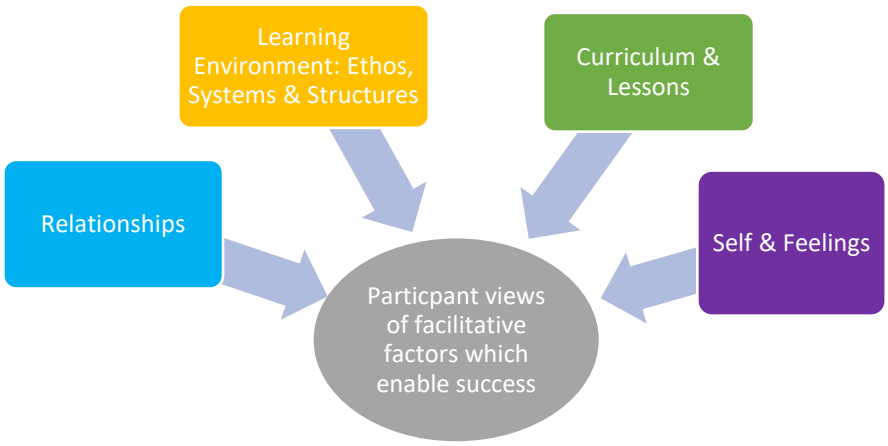


Figure 5.1: Overarching themes across participant groups

5.2.1 *Summary of Findings in the Current Study*

The findings of the current study are now summarised discussed with respect to Research Question 1 (RQ1). The consistencies found between the study findings and previous research will be considered within an interpretation of each theme and with respect to the current Qualitative Research Synthesis (presented in Chapter 2). Though limitations of context are noted, particularly due to differing legislative and policy backgrounds, research within the wider literature will also be considered to provide a broader overview of related knowledge to the current themes.

RQ1: What facilitative factors within educational provision are perceived to support engagement of students who have experienced FTE within an alternative provision unit in secondary school according to the views of students, school staff and parents?

5.2.1.1 Overarching Theme: Relationships

5.2.1.1.1 Theme Summary:

The theme of positive teacher-student relationships was the most prolific enabling factor cited by students, in terms of the perceived learning and emotional support students felt teachers provided for them.

Student accounts spoke of a relationships-based approach to educational provision by staff. Positive relationships were facilitated through consistent provision of high-quality pastoral support, respectful communication and rapport-building with students by staff. Teachers were viewed as possessing favourable qualities and as acting as advocates for students by empathising with their views. Students described feelings of safety, empowerment and mastery related to experiences of the learning support provided by staff.

Staff participants offered a similar view of these relationships and the underpinning mechanisms, particularly the importance of robust pastoral support systems, opportunities to build trusting relationships and staff modelling of respectful communication. Facilitation of key adult relationships was also seen by staff as crucial in the promotion of student well-being and

prevention of permanent exclusion. These accounts were triangulated by those of parents, who often attributed their children's success to staff qualities and the pastoral and learning support of students, which evoked confidence and reassurance in parents.

Regular, respectful and balanced home-school communication was cited by all three participant groups as enabling trusting relationships at different levels, facilitating a "chain" of positive communication which permeated the system. This was the most widely-discussed theme for parent participants, perhaps reflecting the salience of this to their own realm of experience of their children's education. This was viewed as mediating favourable behaviour change for students both at home and school in the view of parents and students.

Peer relationships were also viewed by students as enabled by empathy with peers and supportive provision structures, such as large group activities. These views were reaffirmed by parents and staff, who additionally noted staff management of peer dynamics as crucial to successful peer relationships.

Staff relationships and communication characterised by collaborative working, peer support and positive and problem-solving communication was uniquely noted by staff participants as a reflection of their practice as a group to support successful engagement for students.

5.2.1.1.2 Theme Interpretation & Links to Existing Research

The centrality of positive, trusting relationships to the successful engagement of disaffected young people in education is evident across the current and previous research (e.g. Noble & McGrath, 2012; Riley, Ellis, Weinstock, Tarrant & Hallmond , 2006). These experiences seemingly nurtured a sense of security for students, provided them with a sense of affiliation, and cultivated their positive views of self which became internalised over time.

Regarding teacher-student relationships, there are striking similarities between findings of the current study and previous research. Discussion of

pastoral support and of students feeling understood by teachers who have time to listen to them is prominent (e.g. Boyd, 2012; Gooding, 2014; Hart, 2013; Hawkins, 2011; Mann, 2014; McKeown, 2001; Preece & Timmins, 2004). These relationships seemed to enhance students' feelings of belonging and safety at school, as similarly seen in previous studies (e.g. Hawkins, 2011; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Further, students across the reviewed and current research emphasised their appreciation of calm, respectful communication and of being treated 'fairly' and 'as an adult' by teachers (e.g. Hamill & Boyd, 2002; Hart, 2013; Hawkins, 2011; Loizidou, 2009; Mann, 2014; McCluskey, Riddell & Weeldon, 2015; Preece & Timmins 2004).

The theme of home-school relationships also has resonance with previous findings (Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017), with positive relationships and communication between school and family systems cited as the greatest preventative factor of school exclusion in one study (Loizidou, 2009). Parents' view of regular review meetings, frequent and open contact with staff and the linking of rewards at home to school targets as facilitating students' increased motivation and engagement at home and school resonate with previous findings (Hallam & Castle, 2001; Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006). Parental involvement and trusting home-school relationships is cited as particularly crucial to student engagement and effective education of disadvantaged populations ((Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll & Russ, 2004, 2004). Moreover, findings from a study exploring risk factors for permanent exclusions (Rendall & Stuart, 2005) indicate that support for families to positively reframe and adapt to difficult events can have a lasting, beneficial impact on students' challenging behaviour.

Crucially, student participants noted their feelings of acceptance, value and self-belief as a result of positive peer and staff-student relationships (Gooding, 2014; Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Sellman, 2009; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). Thus, research indicates that educational provision which offers a safe forum for students to form pro-social

relationships with others can enable disaffected students to remain within education (O'Donovan, Berman & Wierenga, 2015).

5.2.1.2 Overarching Theme: Learning Environment (Ethos, Structures & Systems)

5.2.1.2.1 Theme Summary

Students' accounts acknowledged a nurture-based and non-judgemental approach by staff. Both student and staff groups noted an ethos underpinned by high expectations and equality as facilitative. An ethos which acknowledges behaviour and learning as intrinsic, and which seeks to empower students and prepare them for life, was additionally noted by staff. Strong staff commitment and implementation of an individualised approach for students were also noted by all participants.

Participant groups concurred on the factors which facilitated a conducive learning environment. Supportive behaviour management systems underpinned by clear expectations and consistent boundaries, and structures such as small provision size and class groups, low-sensory environment and high staff-student ratios, were noted as enabling. Rewards systems were particularly noted as facilitative by younger students. Systemic factors including strong, effective leadership and a highly-structured learning environment which also allowed flexibility to respond to student needs were additionally reported by parent and staff participants. Staff participants further observed systemic factors such as staff retention, effective staff communication and links with mainstream as supporting student engagement.

These factors reportedly facilitated a sense of predictability and security for students within their learning environment, which enabled their engagement and motivation.

5.2.1.2.2 Theme Interpretation & Links to Existing Research

The concept of a supportive, nurturing ethos was likewise noted in previous research as fostering a sense of security for students (Hamill & Boyd 2002;

Hart, 2013; Preece & Timmins, 2004). The importance of consistently-applied behaviour policy, boundaries and expectations was also emphasised (Hart, 2013; Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Hawkins, 2011; McCluskey, Riddell & Weeldon, 2015). Overlaps also exist regarding supportive aspects of the learning environment, including favourable staff-student ratios (Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Hart, 2013; Sellman, 2009), small class sizes (Hart, 2013; McKeown, 2001; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Preece & Timmins, 2004) and a calm, low-sensory working environment (Boyd, 2012; Hart, 2013; McKeown, 2001; Preece & Timmins, 2004).

The current findings resonate with predictors of positive outcomes and successful inclusion of students with SEN, such as an ethos which prioritises personal and social development as well as academic achievement (Ofsted, 2006), collaborative staff communication and strong, visionary leadership (Frederickson & Cline, 2009).

5.2.1.3 Overarching Theme: Curriculum & Lessons

5.2.1.3.1 Theme Summary

All participant groups reported a curriculum perceived by students as relevant, meaningful and practical as essential to educational engagement. Students described a feeling of ownership and autonomy within the curriculum, through pursuit of areas of interest and aspiration. Staff additionally referred to the importance of teaching of 'life skills' to students. Lessons were similarly viewed as engaging, 'fun' and accessible by students, with visual supports emphasised as facilitative by staff and students. High levels of differentiation and learning support also ensured students' feelings of safety and competence in their learning, according to the accounts of staff and students.

5.2.1.3.2 Theme Interpretation & Links to Existing Research

Again, distinct parallels can be observed with previous research. Lessons perceived as 'fun' and 'interesting' were frequently-cited as important to

student engagement (Hamill & Boyd 2002; Hart, 2013; Hawkins, 2011; Loizidou, 2009; Preece & Timmins 2004). Reference to a curriculum perceived by students as 'relevant' and 'meaningful', as well as focus on life skills and those relevant to future careers was also prominent (Hawkins, 2011; Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). A sense of ownership and active involvement in their education were similarly cited by students (Gooding, 2014; Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson 2013).

Education perceived as meaningful and relevant, as well as real-world, practical applications of learning, have previously been noted as key factors in reducing student disaffection, particularly within disadvantaged populations (Hopkins & Reynolds, 2002). The importance of appropriate curriculum adaptation which promotes effective instruction and high expectations for students is also recognised (Clark, Dyson, Millward & Robson, 1999).

Sharp (2014) refers to the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD; Vygotsky, 1978) and Zone of Reflective Capacity (ZRC; Tinsley & Lebak, 2009) to interpret students' experiences of adult scaffolding and encouragement as increasing their perceptions of ability development and motivation. Emphasis on future career or further education was similarly found to have intrinsic motivating power for secondary students (Sharp, 2014).

5.2.1.4 Overarching Theme: Feelings/Self

5.2.1.4.1 Theme Summary

This theme pertained solely to the experiences of student participants. Student accounts within this theme spoke of their development of positive and powerful feelings as a result of their educational experiences.

Explicit links between students' feelings of safety and security at school were drawn alongside their perceptions of their environment, relationships with staff and availability of learning support. Students further cited the quality of

positive staff-student and peer relationships, epitomised by comparisons to a "family", as evoking a sense of belonging and relatedness.

Students described feelings of autonomy and agency in pursuing their aspirations and effecting control over their environment. This was seemingly facilitated by staff, who afforded them choice and freedoms, which students felt empowered their sense of responsibility.

Students described the direct impact of accessible work and staff support as enabling their feelings of success in their learning. Some students noted external factors, e.g. exams, as contributing to their motivation. However, they more commonly reflected on positive staff feedback and curriculum opportunities as supporting their drive to achieve. Improved behaviour regulation was viewed as an outcome of personal choice and an individual success by many students.

5.2.1.4.2 Theme Interpretation & Links to Existing Research

Within the literature review (Chapter 2), a corresponding theme captured student reflections on their improved behaviour as a personal success (Boyd, 2012; Hamill & Boyd 2002). Several studies also referred to students' improved self-belief owing to feelings of perceived progress in their behaviour and learning (Gooding, 2014; Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Hart, 2013; McCluskey, Riddell & Weeldon, 2015; McKeown 2001). An increased sense of control and autonomy within their learning environment was explicitly cited as promoting self-esteem for students (Boyd, 2012). These experiences were comparably described as facilitating feelings of 'self-motivation', and 'deciding to achieve' for students (Gooding, 2014; Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Loizidou, 2009; Mann 2014; Michael & Frederickson 2013; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). Though mediated by external factors, e.g. exams, students fundamentally attributed their motivation to succeed to an internal and voluntary change process (Sheffield & Morgan, 2017).

Valuing students, nurturing a sense of belonging and being part of a 'family' was similarly characteristic of effective schools in disadvantaged areas

(Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll & Russ, 2004). Hart (2013) summarises the characteristics of educational settings seen to promote positive outcomes and protective factors for vulnerable students. These include a sense of school belongingness, active engagement in lessons, personalised learning, emphasis on life skills, positive relationships and social support, high expectations, clear boundaries and small class sizes.

A recent review concluded that schools which provided a 'sanctuary' in the form of emotional and physical safety, a sense of community, and flexible behaviour support systems enabled the retention and engagement of students in alternative education (O'Gorman, Salmon & Murphy, 2016). Similarly, students' experiences in an inclusive setting are seemingly characterised by a sense of being valued, accepted, belonging, achievement, efficacy and meaningfulness in teaching and learning (Cooper,, Drummond, Hart, Lovey & McLaughlin , 2000). Sharp (2014) concludes secondary students' increased sense of belonging, facilitated by feeling valued and heard and through effecting control in their environment, enabled their perceptions of agency and, in turn, motivation for action.

Thus, it seems that an internalisation of experiences which promote thoughts and feelings of belonging, agency, safety and achievement in students may impact on their intrinsic motivation to succeed at school.

5.2.2 Theoretical interpretations of findings

Psychological theory which supports the current themes is now considered.

5.2.2.1 Theories of Human Motivation

5.2.2.1.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

As defined in Chapter 2, Maslow's 'theory of human motivation' holds that personal growth, self-fulfilment, and a desire "to become everything one is capable of becoming" (Maslow, 1987, p. 64) is enabled when people's basic 'physiological', 'safety', 'belonging' and 'esteem' needs are met (Maslow, 1943). Solomon and Thomas (2013) note the relevance of Maslow's theory to the context of young people in PRUs. Furthermore, NICE guidelines to

promote social emotional well-being for secondary school students also draw on this theory to advocate nurturing feelings of safety and security for students to promote their self-worth, emotional regulation and motivation (NICE, 2009).

Porter (2014) recently expanded on this to create a version pertinent to the needs of children at risk of school exclusion. This 'Model of Human Needs' to facilitate engagement and proactively manage behaviour in schools refers to nurturing a sense safety and well-being for students, promoting a sense of belonging, self-esteem, competence and autonomy to enable a sense of happiness and purpose.

Participant accounts indicate the activation of this model within the current research setting, particularly regarding students' sense of safety, belonging, self-esteem, competence and autonomy seemingly facilitating their engagement.

5.2.2.1.2 Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2002) asserts that human motivation occurs by supporting the three basic needs of competence (feeling confident in one's actions), relatedness (feeling connected to others) and autonomy (feeling able to behave congruently with one's interests and values) (Wilding, 2015). Proponents of SDT hypothesise that the extent to which these needs are supported is determined by the social context (e.g. Wang & Peck, 2013). Where needs are unmet or obstructed, this can cause the individual to orientate away from the setting's goals (Miserandino, 1996). Crucially, Wilding (2015) asserts that from this perspective, the extent to which a school meets these needs may therefore inform student experiences of disaffection.

Wilding (2015) draws upon empirical evidence to support this application of SDT to understanding of student disaffection. Teachers have highlighted a prescriptive National Curriculum at Key Stage 4 as not supporting students' interests or aspirations, thereby contributing to student disaffection (DCSF, 2009). Some reports have identified that although practical, vocational

curricula may prevent student disaffection, many students rather wish to access traditional subjects through motivational teaching and learning which enable experiences of competence (Hayward & Williams, 2011; Pring et al., 2009). Student-teacher relationships are fundamental to students' feelings of relatedness at school (DSCF, 2009; Resnicow & McMaster, 2012; Wilding, 2015). Inclusion practices where students are not allowed to voice their views may can contribute to feelings of alienation (Hartas, 2011) and frustrate their need for acceptance at school (Ryan & Deci, 2002).

Conversely, field research (e.g. Ryan & Grolnick, 1986) has found that teachers who support autonomy incite greater intrinsic motivation in their students (a sense of inherent satisfaction in performing an activity). Ryan and Deci (2000) assert that the internalisation of extrinsic motivational factors is a function of perceived efficacious performance and competence. Children who feel more securely connected to their teachers, parents and peers are more likely to internalise the regulation for positive school-related behaviour and facilitating students' autonomy supports this process (Ryan, Stiller & Lynch, 1994). The principles of SDT are also evident within alternatives to school exclusion for disengaged students, e.g. the 'Hands On Learning' method increasingly adopted in Australian schools. This programme aims to develop connection, control and meaning for students through their participation in creative projects within mainstream settings (O'Donovan, Berman & Wierenga, 2015).

There appear to be overlaps between the principles of SDT, supporting empirical research and participant accounts in the current study. Students clearly articulated their sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness within their educational experiences as facilitating their engagement, positive behaviour change and motivation to succeed. Therefore, the present research concurs with Wilding's (2015) assertion that SDT offers an economical, consolidated framework within which EPs and schools can consider the mechanisms of student engagement from a systemic perspective. This will be revisited in section 5.5 below.

5.2.2.2 Resiliency Theory

There are also commonalities between the current themes and those contained in educational resilience research. Resilience has been defined as "positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000, p.543). It has been conceptualised as being comprised of dynamic, inter-related elements, including feelings of confidence and a belief in one's self-efficacy (Rutter, 1985). Resilience can also be understood as a balance between protective and risk factors at the individual and environmental levels (Toland & Carrigan, 2011). The compensatory model of resilience purports that adversity can be counterbalanced by individual characteristics or supportive environmental factors (Masten, Powell & Luthar, 2003).

In a review of a decade of resilience research, Benard (2004) identified key protective factors for children, including caring relationships, school connectedness, feelings of autonomy, a sense of purpose and participation, as well as high expectations. A strategy to promote resilience in schools (Henderson & Milstein, 2003) correspondingly advises promotion of prosocial bonding, clear and consistent boundaries, teaching of life skills, care and support, high expectations and opportunities for meaningful participation. Similarly, Coleman (2015) suggests that schools can support the resilience of students who experience school exclusion through fostering supportive relationships with staff and sense of school belongingness, as well as strategies to promote a sense of autonomy, internal locus of control, self-esteem and self-efficacy for students.

Thus, there seem to be evident links between the current themes and known factors to promote resilience in schools, particularly the provision of supportive relationships, high expectations, clear boundaries, a sense of autonomy and purpose and teaching of life skills. Within the compensatory model, these environmental factors could be seen to be actively offsetting the risk factors experienced by these vulnerable young people. Implications of this for schools will be discussed in Section 5.5.2.

5.3 Evaluation of AI in the current study

In responding to RQ2, an evaluation of AI in the current study is now presented.

RQ2: How is AI successful in effecting organisational change in schools for young people who have experienced school exclusion?

5.3.1 EP as an external facilitator

The value of the EP as an external party within organisational change processes is noted by Morgan (2016) as creating a fresh vision for those involved. The status of the researcher as an outside agent within the current study was noted by staff participants as facilitative of more candid sharing of experiences by students. Staff communicated their view that an external facilitator heightened the objectivity of the process for those involved. The researcher's external status also enabled naïve questions to be posed and objectivity offered in discussions with staff regarding their perceptions of current organisational strengths and difficulties.

5.3.2 The Positivity Principle of AI

McNiff (2013) states that the outcome of action research should be to enable participants' learning. The AI process enabled the surfacing of elements of best practice within the research setting, which was shared with participants. Receiving feedback on the positive aspects of student and parental experiences of the educational provision was noted as creating a timely sense of celebration, morale boost and motivation for staff. Staff empathy for student's views and experiences was described as enhanced through the process. Additionally, staff participants noted the AI process as a collaborative, shared and positive experience between staff and students. These outcomes indicate the power which the positivity principle of AI can offer to schools as organisations.

Despite these strengths, it became apparent at times during the AI process that the positive focus was perhaps incongruent with participants' current

lived experience of systemic uncertainty. The researcher acknowledged a sense of discomfort in pursuing a hopeful ideal with participants in the face of such organisational ambiguity. It was also noted that the approach perhaps did not acknowledge current political constraints at a local and national level as barriers to the realisation of the AI outcomes.

The risk that the adoption of AI may create resistance and a sense of ennui with the approach for those involved if they feel that the full picture is not reflected is therefore recognised. Johnson (2007) observes that resistance to AI relates to people's vulnerability in separating from problem-solving to a methodology which may silence their expression of that which they perceive as most salient to their experience. Compelling participants to separate from barriers which they see in the system through the selective positive lens of AI is therefore a potential limitation of the approach. In consideration of the 'Shadow' and 'dark side' of AI, Fitzgerald, Oliver and Hoxsey (2010) strongly caution against the polarisation of positive and negative experiences within the approach, as this risks creating cognitive dissonance and constraining organisational congruence for those involved. Related implications for EP practice are returned to in section 5.5.1.

5.3.3 AI as a mechanism for systemic change

Crucially, McNiff (2013) notes that, within action research, political issues are beyond participants' control. Several macro-systemic, political factors were described as barriers to provision development for student participants. Impending academisation, imminent Ofsted inspection and ongoing accountability pressures contributed to the sense of the research setting as being in a current state of uncertainty. Such issues arguably created barriers in creating an environment of 'psychological safety' required for effecting organisational change (Schein, 1987, 2006). Moreover, SLT gave their view that current government agendas do not recognise or support inclusion practices for these students, reflecting the tensions which can occur between centralised policy and the processes of action research, as outlined by Townsend (2013). This might be further be viewed as reflective of

organisational incongruence where bottom up-change is not reciprocated by higher political powers (Morgan, 2016; Stobie, Boyle, & Woolfson, 2005) and of the difficulties in influencing such organisational change as an outside agent, noted by McNiff (2013). The researcher contends this further constricted wider organisational change as an outcome of the study. Related implications for policy-makers will be explored in Section 5.5.3.

The engagement of members of the whole system is essential to successful AI to evoke trust and interdependence, connection with wider organisational purpose, and establish credibility and increased likelihood of action (Ludema & Fry, 2008). Further, Morgan (2016) notes that within EP work at a systemic level, consideration must be made of the cultural co-existence of systems. Change becomes more difficult to realise when organisations are accountable to larger systems with greater political power, thereby increasing the likelihood of the maintenance of the status quo (Stobie, Boyle, & Woolfson, 2005). Where 'bottom-up' change is not reciprocated by 'top-down strategy', this creates incongruence and presents a barrier to organisational change (Morgan, 2016). Furthermore, Morgan (2016) observes that where top-down change is imposed on an organisation, this can create retrenchment and dissatisfaction. These reflections were salient within the current study in many crucial ways.

The current study attempted to stimulate systemic change using a 'bottom-up' approach to developing provision for students who had previously been excluded from school. Despite the researcher's intentions to engage participants from the whole system at the outset, securing participation of staff representatives from the SLT within the AI process proved challenging, due to constraints of their time and availability. Therefore, those with decision-making power at an organisational level within the school did not directly participate within the AI. This is therefore acknowledged as a limitation, such that the capacity for wider organisational change as a result of the process was constrained. Implications of this future research for EP practice and will be considered in Sections 5.5.4 and 5.5.3.

Lewin (1947) notes that group behaviour should be the main focus of change. Despite limitations, many of the espoused benefits of an AI approach to stimulating organisational change were apparent in the current study. There was evidence in participants' dialogue and action during the AI process to suggest that the act of inquiry itself generated innovation and energy for positive organisational change (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008; Hammond, 1998), such that implemented action was reported by participants even at the conclusion of the 'Discover' phase. In this way, such changes may be seen as reflective of the 'unfreezing' of the organisational equilibrium (Lewin, 1951), as a result of the AI process. Within the action cycles of the current AI, a collated list of participants' wishes for the future was collaboratively developed and related actions were planned and implemented. Participants' visions articulated in the 'Dream' phase can be seen as an amplification of substantiated examples of the provisions' 'positive core', as surfaced through the 'Discover' phase and thematic analysis, thereby exemplifying the practical and generative aspects of AI (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008). Similarly, the provocative propositions in the 'Design' phase were developed as an integration of the Discover and Dream ideals, which supported planning of short-term action realised in the 'Deliver' phase. The researcher was seen as a facilitator of this process, of which the participants had ownership, therein upholding the study's emancipatory aims. Further, wider organisational influences of the study's outcomes were seen in the subsequent delivery of training by the researcher in Emotion Coaching (Gottman, Katz & Hooven, 1997; Gus, Rose & Gilbert, 2015) and Restorative Approaches in schools (e.g. Sellman, Cremin & McCluskey, 2013) for staff participants and the SEN support staff of the wider school, as a means to develop the relationships-based approach to behaviour management, conflict resolution and student engagement highlighted through the AI process. Implications for this for schools' practice will be further explored in Section 5.5.1.

Thus, the current AI was seen as supporting positive organisational change in a number of ways, consistent with the transformative aims of this research.

5.3.4 AI as an equalising process

An assumption of AI is that it has an equalising effect on participants' voices with "power discrepancies minimized" (Elliot, 1999, p. 10). Within the current study, the views of student participants regarding their positive educational experiences were gained along with those of parents, thereby assigning these typically less empowered groups the same status as staff representatives.

However, unforeseen pragmatic, organisational and ethical constraints sometimes precluded the full realisation of the equalising potential of AI within the current process. Crucially, students did not actively participate at the action-planning stage to inform decisions about enacting their views. There were several reasons for this outcome. Difficulties in potentially obtaining signed consent for all students within the setting to participate in researcher-led Dream activities became apparent. By enabling staff who had experienced and received training on the Dream phase to then cascade this across the setting as part of usual tutor/PSHE provision, this ensured that all student voices could be heard. Affording ownership of this activity to staff and students could also begin to embed the practice of staff advocating for and hearing the student voice, which could ideally endure beyond the research study. However, during the Dream phase with staff, it became apparent that current systemic uncertainties presented potential barriers to the realisation of AI outcomes. The researcher was aware of the need to sensitively respond to this situation and of the ethical difficulties in drawing students into action planning which may not be realised in the event of systemic changes. Short-term action planning with staff participants was therefore decided as the most appropriate course of action in these circumstances. Within these processes, the student voice was heard and acted upon by adults to influence organisational change, perhaps typifying Level 3 ('children's views are taken into account') of Shier's (2001) 'Pathways to Participation' model and Level 5 of Hart's (1992) 'Ladder of Participation', whereby children are 'consulted and informed' within an adult-led project which they understand and about which their views are taken

seriously. This signifies an example of 'models of genuine participation' (Hart, 1992). Improvement of service provision can be achieved with lower levels of child participation (Shier, 2001), an assertion which was perhaps thus represented in the outcomes of the current study. However, to achieve the wider benefits of student participation (e.g. sense of ownership, increased responsibility, citizenship and democratic participation), Shier (2001) emphasises that children have to be assigned an active role in decision-making. Although students were consulted and thereby empowered by having their views heard (Shier, 2001), they were not directly involved in the decision-making process, which represents a limitation of the current AI. Shier (2001) describes that to accomplish the highest levels of child participation of sharing decision-making power with adults, this requires the uninhibited commitment of the adults involved. Within the political landscape of the current study described in Section 5.3.3 above, it could be said that the staff participants themselves currently held uncertainty about their own power levels within the organisational context. This situation arguably presented a barrier to adults sharing power with students within the current process. This creates a cause for reflection on the political and systemic influences on approaches which seek to involve the highest levels of student participation. Implications for schools will be considered in Section 5.5.1.

5.4 Strengths & Limitations of the current study

An evaluation of the study's methodology, aims and original contribution is now presented.

5.4.1 Evaluation of methodology

5.4.1.1 Evaluation of setting

The researcher's original intention was to gain the views of students at risk of permanent exclusion within a mainstream education population about what enabled their success at school. Ultimately, action research principles determined that the study sample was obtained from a population of students

educated in an alternative provision within the mainstream school, since an exploration of the effectiveness of this setting was deemed a current priority by school managers. This research setting ensured fulfilment of the sample inclusion criteria, given its function as a provision to retain students who had previously experienced FTE. Therefore, the views of this group were highly relevant to the research aims. However, the views of students within mainstream populations deemed 'at risk' of exclusion about their educational experience remain an under-researched area.

5.4.1.2 Evaluation of data-gathering

Semi-structured interviews were effective in enabling a person-centred approach by the researcher to flexibly respond to participants' accounts. This allowed the nuances of human experience to be explored, as afforded by qualitative methodology. However, in retrospect, use of data-gathering and consent-gaining processes which relied on participants' mastery of language and literacy may have served to exacerbate existing power imbalances for those involved. Although detailed verbal briefing to ensure informed consent was also issued to all participants, it became apparent during the process that at least one parent participant identified as being unable to read or write. Furthermore, AI requires articulation of participant views through their use of language. Though the researcher sought at the outset of the study to include photographs taken by students to offset such issues, this was not seen as feasible by staff due to their view of the need to supervise students within this activity and a lack of requisite resources. These issues may therefore have presented barriers to the engagement of some participants.

The use of focus groups offered distinct advantages to obtaining staff views. The initial exchange of views in pairs and small groups before wider group discussion ensured contribution by each participant. This also imbued the process with a sense of collaboration and shared meaning-making. Participants were afforded freedom to bring those issues which they deemed most salient to the discussion. These group discussions also heightened the researcher's awareness of staff members' perceptions of the organisational culture and current systemic complexities, which proved valuable to the

action research process. However, the researcher became aware that systemic instabilities and the potentially incongruent positive focus of AI as a methodology may have created the “conscious concealment of reactions” (Schein, 1969, p.23) in less vocal participants. It is therefore possible that the need to guide the discussion in positive directions may have inadvertently supressed some participant views.

5.4.1.3 Evaluation of Case Study Methodology

The current case study design enabled an in-depth, strengths-based empirical investigation of the views of different groups operating within an educational provision created with the expressed aim of avoiding permanent exclusions for students. Consistent with Yin’s (2009) claims, although the current case study enabled the generalisation of theoretical propositions, the caveats associated with limits of generalisability to populations are acknowledged and expanded upon below.

5.4.1.4 Evaluation of Trustworthiness

Procedures adopted by the researcher to enhance the trustworthiness of the study were described in Chapter 4. Member checks with participants, inter-rater checks, presentation of illustrative data excerpts and thematic maps to enhance the internal coherence of the study are viewed as important quality criteria. However, it is noted that the study’s validity cannot be unequivocally claimed.

Although consistency of the current themes with those which exist within the literature may indicate a degree of trustworthiness to the findings, it is recognised that these may not necessarily be broadly transferable. The ideographic nature of the current research study is therefore acknowledged. Thus, it is suggested that the study’s findings may offer knowledge for educational provisions to consider in facilitating engagement for their students deemed to be at risk of exclusion, particularly within similar settings to that of the current research.

5.4.1.5 Evaluation of analysis

The researcher is confident that thematic analysis enabled the most salient features of participants' accounts to be identified, coherently organised and shared in an accessible way with participants and SLT within the research setting, such that one member of management described the feedback as "extremely coherent".

It is acknowledged that although a researcher-led approach was deemed most appropriate due to constraints of time and the need for quality assurance within the current analysis, this may have served to distance the participants from their own data. Aspects of the different AI stages were collaboratively developed with participants and member checking enabled their verification of the process. However, greater co-construction of analysis with participants may have enhanced the study's emancipatory aims.

5.4.2 Evaluation of research aims & original contribution

Despite identified limitations, the current study achieved through its chosen methodology many of its expressed aims. Responses to the research questions were enabled and rich data elicited, particularly concerning the student voice. Qualitative methodology appeared effective in obtaining the views of a particularly vulnerable and silenced group, thereby contributing to the related knowledge base.

The views a group of students within an AP unit within a secondary school about the aspects of their educational experience which facilitate their successful engagement were gained, along with those of their parents and teachers. Innovative ideas about how these could be developed were elicited and an action plan generated through which several of these ideas were realised. In this way, the student voice was captured, heard and acted upon to influence the organisation's decision-making, commensurate with the emancipatory aims of the study and consistent with levels of child participation advocated by the United Nations Convention (Shier, 2001; UNICEF, 1989).

Use of AI within the current study facilitated a focus on ‘what works’ for a group of students who had experienced FTE, which offered a novel perspective on the issue of school exclusion. It is hoped that the current study’s findings will be disseminated in the LA where it took place to stakeholders, including LA representatives and head teachers, through the researcher’s role within a steering group concerned with collaboratively developing evidence-based, context-specific practice to empower schools and promote sustainable cultural change to strategically address the issue of school exclusion within the LA. It is also hoped that the AI process activated with the research setting can continue to evolve and be revisited within the provision through ongoing involvement by the researcher.

In evaluating the contribution of the study to the existing evidence base, the researcher is mindful of the limits of generalisability. However, links were noted between the current findings and those of previous studies with similar populations. Therefore, although the current study has captured the views and experiences of a group of vulnerable young people within a specific context, the findings may offer some insight to issues applicable to similar students in other comparable contexts. The study also adds to the evidence base the voice of a sample of young people attending an educational provision in one of the most deprived neighbourhoods of the country, created with the expressed aim of avoiding permanent exclusion and retaining them successfully in education.

5.5 Implications of current research

The implications of the current study for EP practice, schools, policy-makers and future research are now considered.

5.5.1 Implications for schools

The outcomes of the current and previous research indicate that young people at risk of school exclusion have much insight to offer into what enables their engagement. The benefits of student participation in the

development of their provision are well-documented (Shier, 2001). Schools are encouraged to fulfil their statutory obligation and students' human rights to participation by actively seeking to involve students and share power and responsibility for decision-making with them (Hart, 1992; Shier, 2001). As noted in section 5.3.4, the current political and structural situation of a system and the explicit commitment of adults within this process requires careful consideration where organisations seek to assign children to the highest levels of participation. This level of participation requires opportunities to be created for students to join in decision-making, which may require organisations to make significant alterations in how they operate (Shier, 2001). To enable this, schools are advised to consider areas which may be appropriate to share decision-making power with students and then facilitate this within a supportive environment (Shier, 2001).

The outcomes of the current study reflect the findings of a range of previous research and outline the facilitative factors for engaging young people deemed at risk of school exclusion in their education. These findings emphasise the need for schools to understand that student motivation and behaviour is underpinned by basic needs, including competence, relatedness and autonomy (Nie & Lau, 2009; Wilding, 2015), and the need for schools to empower students through emphasising their choice and control (Nie & Lau, 2009). Wilding's (2015) recommendation for schools to employ SDT as a framework to explore systemic influences on student disaffection seems to be supported by the current study.

The study outcomes also reflect an abundance of previous research which reinforces the fundamental importance of schools forging positive, respectful relationships between staff and students, home and school and amongst peers (e.g. Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Noble & McGrath, 2012; ; Riley, Ellis, Weinstock, Tarrant & Hallmond , 2006). The crucial importance of relational dynamics to effective provision for students at risk of exclusion is further cited by Malcom (2018), who particularly notes restorative approaches, a practice which puts relationships at the centre of complex difficulties, as a model to explicitly

explore to develop alternative educational provision. This assertion is further extended by Sellman, Cremin and McCluskey (2013), who assert that restorative approaches offer opportunity for a transformative reimagining of teacher-student relationships in schools. Restorative practices offer a means to reduce exclusion by nurturing relationships and improving behaviour through capacity-building of staff within mainstream schools. The importance of schools adopting restorative approaches as a general ethos, rather than solely as a means of responding to conflict in times of crisis, is also emphasised (McCluskey, Riddell & Weedon, 2015).

Despite the many positive factors cited by students, staff and parents about the educational provision explored within the current study, the risk of such provision as not being truly inclusive for students is noted. Although some shifts in practice were reported during the AI process (e.g. greater reflection of mainstream practice, the planned reintegration of small number of students into mainstream provision), student accounts in the study indicated their perception of a general lack of linkages with the wider mainstream setting. The difficulties reflected in enabling wider organisational change within the current AI process meant that discussion regarding the systemic positioning of the provision with SLT or those with decision-making power was beyond the scope of the current study. However, schools should arguably consider the positioning of such provision and means of maintaining linkages within the wider school. The use of problem-solving and restorative approaches, as discussed above, to support students to reflect on their difficulties and plan strategies to avoid these happening in future has also been cited as key to avoiding the risks of 'internal exclusion' associated with in-school 'support centres' for young people at risk of exclusion and to supporting their wider mainstream integration (McKeown, 2011). A number of other key elements for schools' consideration to this end are cited by McKeown (2001). Relationship protection, i.e. liaison with wider school staff such as heads of year, teachers and other students to support the needs of core students at whom the provision is aimed, is noted. The need for a clear 'exit process' to avoid such provision becoming a full-time alternative to

school is also cited, along with supporting students to develop strategies to manage beyond in school beyond this type of provision (McKeown, 2001). Aim-related evaluation to ascertain what exclusion alternatives hope to accomplish is also essential to this success (Munn, Cullen & Lloyd, 2000), particularly with regard to supporting students' re-integration to mainstream provision (McCluskey, Riddell & Weedon, 2015).

The importance of a resilience-building approach which acknowledges that a supportive school environment can offset risk factors for vulnerable young people appeared to be supported by the current findings. This is particularly relevant in the context of the deprivation levels of the current research school. Recent government guidance emphasises the key role of the school in promoting resilience for students through an understanding of protective factors which enable children to overcome adversity (DfE, 2016b). Such factors are usefully summarised within such resources as the Resilience Framework (Hart, Blincow & Thomas, 2007). Therefore, on the basis of evidence of the current and previous studies, it would seem advisable that all schools, particularly those with high proportions of deprivation, seek to develop their practice to support student resilience.

5.5.2 Implications for LAs and policy-makers

There are a number of policy implications pertaining to the outcomes of the current study.

The Children and Families Act (DfE, 2014b) states that in involving and supporting young people, LAs are required to ensure the full participation of young people and their parents in decisions relating to them, taking into account their views in order to facilitate the best possible educational outcomes. The current study outcomes indicate that action research and AI approaches offer a means for LAs to continue this in the future.

The current study took place in a contemporary education system arguably fraught with political frustrations and tensions. Though the study was essentially a focus on the enabling factors within students' educational experience, staff participants cited multiple systemic barriers to the

successful inclusion and engagement of these students in education. The advent of academisation, ever-increasing accountability pressures, narrowing of the curriculum and continued funding cuts appear, on the basis of evidence from this study, to be creating cumulative barriers to schools' capacity to educate their most vulnerable students. These issues are synonymous with those within a recent report on the impact of the accountability agenda on schools, particularly those with high proportions of disadvantaged students (Hutchings, 2015). The findings revealed teachers' perceptions of accountability measures as causing a decline in the quality of teacher-student relationships, a lack of flexibility to respond to the needs of individual children and a focus on a tighter range of subjects. This signifies that factors which the current and previous studies have demonstrated as enabling for vulnerable students are possibly prohibited by current agendas. It is essential that policy-makers acknowledge the counter-intuitive and evidently damaging nature of this situation.

It is argued that policy should instead encourage schools to foster the skills and talents of all pupils through a renewed emphasis on a broadly-based curriculum which nurtures creativity, enthusiasm for learning and collaboration rather than competition (Hutchings, 2015). It is promising that Ofsted has recently indicated a shift of focus away from performance-led agendas towards a knowledge-rich education and a broad curriculum which promotes social mobility (Spielman, 2018). The current and previous research outcomes perhaps offer insight into how such innovation may be operationalised. Policy-makers might also do well to consider best practice in other jurisdictions. Interventions such as those currently implemented in Australia to continue disaffected students' mainstream education path (O'Donovan, Berman & Wierenga, 2015) incorporate many of the facilitative elements discovered within the current and previous research, e.g. connectedness, autonomy and meaning. Such approaches may offer an innovative blueprint for educational provision in the UK to pilot for the engagement of disenfranchised students.

On a local level, LAs are encouraged to discover best practice about 'what works' in schools within their context and engage in dialogue with national policy-makers accordingly to support the inclusive education of their most vulnerable young people.

5.5.3 Implications for future research

"There has been virtually no research into 'what works' to change the trajectories for children who have been excluded" (Gill, Quilter-Pinner & Swift, 2017, p.36). This is evidently an area ripe for further research. Further exploration of the factors which facilitate engagement of students at risk of exclusion in other educational settings would enable comparison with the current findings and possibly create more generalisable knowledge of successful intervention (Miller & Frederickson, 2006; Yin, 2009). Research to explore the successful retention of students deemed at risk of exclusion within mainstream settings is particularly recommended, owing to the dearth of studies in this area.

Future research which seeks to discover and act upon student views would enable educational settings and LAs to uphold their statutory obligations and contribute to development of evidence-based practice and policy for engaging disenfranchised students within education. Owing to the current study's limitations, action-orientated research which seeks to assign young people to the highest levels of participation and decision-making, as delineated by Shier (2001), is therefore recommended. Future research which seeks to co-construct the inquiry and analysis with participants may further transformative, emancipatory epistemological aims. Hart (1992) notes that in order to effect truly participatory research projects with children, they should be involved in their design as well as their implementation, a prospect which may also inspire future research in this area. Future studies which seek to gain student views may wish to consider offering alternative or supplementary methods of data gathering to individual verbal interview, such as use of photo elicitation (e.g. Smith, Gidlow & Steel, 2012).

The limitations of AI within the current study have important implications for method-selection in future research in this area. The significance of successful organisational change processes in facilitating the transformation of tacit, culturally-based knowledge to explicit, communicable knowledge through both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' strategies is emphasised by Morgan (2016). Engaging participants within the organisation in discussion about their meanings and values is essential to this process and achieving commitment to action and positive outcomes. Further, Schein (1988) identifies that processes should focus on such factors as group norms, roles and interactions in order to create change. Socio-cultural activity theory (Engeström, 1999) may thus offer an alternative in future research, as unlike AI, it explicitly examines how socio-political factors, implicit and explicit rules, issues around power, control and division of labour, and imbued cultural and historical issues can mediate the way schools work with exclusion. Developmental work research and Change Laboratory methods (Engeström, 2007) may further offer a contrasting approach to AI such that, rather than directing them towards a positive focus, stakeholders can be brought together to surface and explore tensions and to jointly reflect on how to address systemic issues around school exclusion.

In addition, future research which seeks a more formalised exploration of an AI process in effecting organisational change may further support evaluation of its success as an approach for use with students deemed 'at risk' of school exclusion. There continues to be a need for rigorous systematic programmes of research into the implementation of restorative approaches in schools (Song & Swearer, 2016). These authors assert that from a research perspective, the core components of restorative approaches are effectively unknown. Implementation research to identify the critical strategies involved is required to facilitate high-quality implementation in schools (Song & Swearer, 2016). As such, restorative approaches and their implementation in schools, particularly with regard to the EP role, is arguably an area ripe for further research.

5.5.4 Implications for EP Practice

The current study offered an account of a strengths-based intervention within a school system. Though there is currently a dearth of evaluative research in the UK about such approaches, studies have indicated that approaches which use solution-orientated language and promote a 'can-do' attitude foster feelings of 'positive aspiration' for participants, thereby creating a catalyst for change (Morgan, 2016). Morgan (2016) acknowledges that this creates both professional and practical challenges, but illustrates the potential of the EP role in supporting change at the organisational level. The researcher concurs with Cooper and Woods' (2017) assertion that application of strengths-based development approaches represent a distinctive contribution by EPs, through their position to effect positive organisational change and capacity-building for schools.

As a profession, EPs have a responsibility to carry out research and systematic inquiry to ascertain what is effective within educational settings, thereby informing policy and improved outcomes for children (Timmins, Bham, McFadyen & Ward, 2006). Further, Hartas (2011) suggests the potential for EP contribution in the development of effective inclusion and participation policies, particularly in hearing the views of students experiencing disaffection. The current study demonstrated that AI offers EPs a strengths-based process in which to consult with vulnerable young people and their parents about 'what works' to support successful educational outcomes. Future avenues for EP work with AI might also involve training of staff to apply the approach within educational provisions (Martin, 2015).

The outcomes of the current study have implications for EP practice in facilitating organisational change. Eco-systemic analysis must acknowledge the interactional contribution of all parties surrounding an issue (Timmins, Bham, McFadyen & Ward 2006). As per the limitations of the current study, the enrolment of members of the whole system, particularly those with decision-making powers, is paramount to successful AI and other organisational change processes. The importance of timing within EPs'

systemic work with schools with respect to the change cycle (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1986) and systemic instability is also a crucial consideration.

The limitations of AI in the current study have implications for EP practice in applying AI. Pursuing a holistic appreciation which seeks to value and blend all of participants' lived experiences, including negative dimensions and what is learned from difficult events, is recommended (Fitzgerald, Oliver & Hoxsey, 2010). In this way, "appreciation" as a means of "honouring", rather than a focus on "positive" becomes the most significant aspect for AI (Fitzgerald, Oliver & Hoxsey, 2010). Encouraging participants to focus on factors within their control was a significant learning point for the researcher in the current AI process. In future, EP practitioners employing AI may be advised to focus on short-term, achievable goals, particularly in the context of challenging systemic factors. Enabling a group to envision small steps to success is important within solution-orientated EP work, as this ensures a focus on their own sphere of influence, thereby offsetting the risk of a sense of helplessness by participants (Morgan, 2016; Onyett, 2009).

The issue of preventing student disaffection, which can manifest as behaviour issues, remains a key concern for EPs (Atkinson & Woods, 2003; DfEE, 2000; Wilding, 2015). The current study's outcomes have important implications for EPs in their work with supporting schools and LAs to prevent student disaffection and exclusion. This includes encouraging a systemic view and offering theoretical insights pertaining to student motivation and engagement, considered in Section 5.2. Wilding (2015) urges EPs to consider student disaffection from a systemic perspective through employing SDT as a framework with schools, an encouragement supported by the current findings. This is arguably a more empowering perspective for educators in that it seeks a focus on contextual factors which can be changed, in contrast to within-child hypotheses which disregard the complexities of disaffection (Guay, Ratelle, Roy & Litalien 2010; Wilding, 2015). Similarly, the adoption of a resilience framework in EP practice which is increasingly encouraged as providing an opportunity to work at an individual and systemic level with vulnerable young people (Toland &

Carrigan, 2011) is also supported by the current findings. The findings also support the claim that the EP has key messages to deliver at the organisational, policy and governance level through increasing dialogue on the topic of human autonomy and agency as a means of empowering young people (Sharp, 2014).

The outcomes of the current study indicate the seemingly crucial significance of relational work in schools and restorative approaches arguably offer a powerful means of supporting this work (McCluskey, Riddell & Weedon, 2015; McKeown, 2001; Sellman, Cremin & McCluskey, 2013). This has important implications for EP practice. The early findings of an evaluation study (McCluskey, Riddell & Weeldon, 2008) indicate that the adoption of restorative approaches resulted in substantial positive gains for schools, particularly where this was not perceived as a panacea, but rather was implemented as a whole-school approach and embedded as part of the school ethos. The cultural change required to enable this should not be underestimated, such that sustained engagement, modelling by senior management and a strong commitment by staff to training is required to achieve this (McCluskey, Riddell & Weeldon, 2008). It is essential, therefore, that EPs and other professionals seek to deliver these messages to ensure effective contracting of training and evaluation with schools, by engaging in a collaborative approach and constructive feedback loops with staff (McCluskey, Riddell & Weeldon, 2008). Owing to the dynamic and contextual nature of restorative approaches in practice, in addition to being trained in the approach, it is imperative that professionals also address implementation practices of restorative approaches with schools (Song & Swearer, 2016). Training in effective consultation skills through professional development workshops with schools (Song & Swearer, 2016) may offer a further innovation for EPs to support work in this area.

5.6 Researcher's reflections on the research process

This research has reinforced for the researcher the critical importance of hearing and acting upon the pupil voice within the EP role, particularly those

who may be marginalised, disempowered and at risk of poor educational outcomes. The researcher was struck by the quality and depth of the insights and ideas which student participants generated for development of their educational provision. Evidently, young people have much to say about their education when offered a forum in which to share their views. Careful consideration must, however, be made of how to take these ideas forward in practice and share them with those with decision-making powers around the young people involved. This perhaps requires innovation on the part of the EP as an advocate for children and young people.

Implementation of the AI process within the current study has been valuable 'practice for practice' for the researcher as a strengths-based, solution-orientated facilitator. The application of the researcher's inter-personal and group skills in consultation, such as rapport-building, empathy and active listening, facilitated a collaborative process and enabled the elicitation of rich data from all participant groups. The importance of the facilitator directing a focus, synthesising ideas into solutions and ensuring maximum participation within the group while maintaining a neutral position within the process (Morgan, 2016) is particularly acknowledged. The salience of timing and knowing when and how to intervene, while trusting in the process and the group to generate their own solutions (O'Connell, 2007), is also recognised. The researcher intends to take the learning points from this process into future EP practice and organisational change work with schools.

The researcher gained awareness of the practical challenges and complexities of conducting real world research and the need for compromise and flexibility within the process. In much the same way that all EP problem-solving frameworks can only be adjudged by their capacity to effect positive change for children, their families and schools (Kelly, 2008), the researcher holds that educational psychology research should endeavour to inform practice and policy for the benefit of children in order to be meaningful, ethical and worthwhile. Conducting this study has confirmed for the researcher the value of an action research approach which offers EPs a

constructive means to directly inform and improve practice following systematic inquiry within the settings in which they work.

The researcher has been inspired by the transformative epistemology which underpinned the current study and will continue to strive for evidenced-based, emancipatory practice in her future role as an EP. This research has highlighted the importance of context-specific, person-centred planning in EP practice and working sensitively and collaboratively with schools as organisations. This experience has thus affirmed the researcher's view of the EP role as facilitating positive change for young people, their families and educational systems.

This research journey has emphasised for the researcher the unique role of the EP in bringing psychology, evidence-based and quality-assured approaches to promote the success of vulnerable young people at school. EPs offering systemic insight to schools to promote intervention which seeks to move away from within-child formulations appears key to addressing the complex and critical issue of school exclusion. As such, the researcher foresees taking the knowledge and skills accrued through conducting this research forward in her own EP practice.

5.7 Conclusions

Exclusion rates continue to rise exponentially (DfE, 2017a), arguably signifying a crisis within the education system. It remains that the most vulnerable students are those most likely to be excluded (DfE, 2017a). The grave ramifications of this for young people, their families and wider society, but also the positive action which can be taken by schools and policy-makers to address this issue, have been discussed within the current paper.

This study has explored through a transformative paradigm the factors which enable students deemed 'at risk' of school exclusion to be successful within education. It is hoped that these outcomes can contribute to a growing knowledge base of 'what works' for these students, such that EPSs, schools, and local and national policy-makers can use their voices to support

development and implementation of best practice in enabling their successful educational outcomes.

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Appendix A: Systematic Search Details

Date	25/05/17
Timespan	1966-date
Search language	English
Databases	EBSCO (ERIC)
Search terms/ Results	(prevent*) AND (school exclusion) OR (expulsion) (1,235 results)
Actions	Search terms refined

Date	29/05/17
Timespan	1966-date
Search language	English
Databases	EBSCO (ERIC)
Search terms/ Results	Prevent* AND school exclusion (52 results – duplicates removed) (prevent*) AND (school exclusion) OR (expulsion) AND student views (10 results- all excluded) Support* AND students AND school exclusion – DONE 29/05/17 (201 results) (91 results – EBSCO: relevant saved for screening; duplicates removed) Student OR child AND views AND prevent* AND school exclusion – (2 results- excluded) Student AND views AND school exclusion (25 results- saved and duplicates removed) prevent* AND (at risk OR disengag*) AND students AND (UK OR United Kingdom OR Britain OR England) (156 results- relevant saved/duplicates removed)
Actions	Exclusion criteria applied and references removed (principal reasons for exclusion: non-UK studies; studies related to adult views, i.e. school staff, parents, professionals, etc; exclusive focus on deficits or barriers in school experience) Remaining references saved to RefWorks for screening

Date	29/05/17
Timespan	1966-date
Search language	English
Databases	Web of Science
Search terms/ Results	Prevent* AND school exclusion AND student views – 5 results- all excluded Prevent* AND school exclusion OR expulsion AND student views – 6 results, all excluded Support* AND students AND school exclusion –(167 results- relevant articles saved; duplicates removed)

	Student OR child AND views AND prevent* AND school exclusion – (13 results- all excluded) Student AND views AND school exclusion – (119 results- all excluded) prevent* AND (at risk OR disengag*) AND students AND (UK OR United Kingdom OR Britain OR England) (104 results- all excluded)
Actions	Exclusion criteria applied and references removed (principal reasons for exclusion: non-UK studies; studies related to adult views, i.e. school staff, parents, professionals, etc; exclusive focus on deficits or barriers in school experience) Remaining references saved to RefWorks for screening

Date	30/05/17
Timespan	1966-date
Search language	English
Databases	Psych Info (OVID)
Search terms/ Results	Prevent* AND school exclusion AND student views (20 results: all excluded) Prevent* AND school exclusion OR expulsion AND student views (0 results) Support* AND students AND school exclusion (14 results: 4 articles saved) Student OR child AND views AND prevent* AND school exclusion (0 results) Student AND views AND school exclusion (2 results: saved for screening) prevent* AND (at risk OR disengag*) AND students AND (UK OR United Kingdom OR Britain OR England) (24 results- all excluded)
Actions	Exclusion criteria applied and references removed (principal reasons for exclusion: non-UK studies; studies related to adult views, i.e. school staff, parents, professionals, etc; exclusive focus on deficits or barriers in school experience) Remaining references saved to RefWorks for screening

Date	30/05/17
Timespan	1966-date
Search language	English
Databases	EThOS

Search terms/ Results	Student views AND school exclusion: (19 results: 2 saved, included in final selection) Prevent* AND school exclusion AND student views (3 results: 1 duplicate: 2 excluded) Prevent* AND school exclusion OR expulsion AND student views (0 results) Support* AND students AND school exclusion (34 results: all excluded) (1 saved, included in final selection) Student OR child AND views AND prevent* AND school exclusion (1 result-excluded) prevent* AND (at risk OR disengage*) AND students (0 results)
Actions	Exclusion criteria applied and references removed (principal reasons for exclusion: non-UK studies; studies related to adult views, i.e. school staff, parents, professionals, etc; exclusive focus on deficits or barriers in school experience) Remaining studies saved for screening

Appendix B: Selection of studies excluded from final review selection

Excluded study	Reason why
Cefai & Cooper, 2010	Deficit-focused
Coleman, 2015	USA
Hartas, 2011	Not a focus on enablers; Seeking to address barriers in student participation, barriers to their engagement
Graham, Van Bergen & Sweller,, 2016	Australia
Graham, Van Bergen & Sweller, 2015	Australia
Jahnukainen, 2001	Finland
Knipe, Reynolds & Milner, 2007	Pupil views on exclusion policy
McGregor, 2015	Australia
O'Gorman, 2015	Ireland
Pace, 1998	Survey design
Polat, & Farrell, 2002.	-Residential setting -Retrospective account of students who had already left the setting
Pomeroy, 1999	-Interviews covered all aspects of the school experience leading to their exclusion -Students no longer attending the provision
Thompson & Bell, 2005	Australia
Wise & Upton, 1998	Emphasis on the contribution that mainstream schools were perceived by the pupils to have made to their difficulties

Appendix C: Qualitative Research Synthesis Themes Table

Third order interpretations				
Connectedness/Relatedness *Autonomy* *Competence* *Empowerment* *Validation* *Secure base* *Building resilience* *Motivation* *Meaning/Purpose* *Notions of improving the self*				
Overarching Themes				
	Relationships & communication	**Learning Environment: Systems, Structure & Ethos**	**Curriculum/ Teaching & Learning Support**	**Self**
Second Order Themes				
	Teacher relationships *Peer relationships* *Family relationships and support* *Home-School relationships/ Communication* *Feeling listened to/understood* *Having views heard*	*Discipline & Reward systems* *Structure & Consistency* *Nurture/pastoral* *Secure environment* *Emotionally literate environment* *Promoting well-being* *Physical environment* *Positive feedback systems*	*Expectations (reduced pressure)* *Sense of safety in learning* *Engaging lessons* *Differentiation/accessible work* *Help and support with learning*	*Taking responsibility* *Locus of control/ Self-efficacy* *Self-esteem* *Self-motivation/ self-discipline* *Confidence*

	Positive communication *Being treated fairly* *Respectful relationships* *Relaxed relationships* *Sharing humour* *Learning to behave*		*Access to educational alternatives* *Individualised learning* *Relevant curriculum*	*Independence* *Positive feelings* *Identity*
Study	*First Order Themes/Codes*			
Boyd, 2012	-Adults being in control of feelings and behaviour -Removal of peers who cannot control behaviour -Others' responses to behaviour -Feeling listened to -Learning and teaching to behave by adults (parents, teachers) and peers	-Awareness of punishments & rewards -Low-level sensory stimulation in physical environment -Having fundamental needs met	-Receiving offers of help with learning & behaviour	-Feelings of control over learning -Perceived self-esteem influenced by feelings of control, learning and environmental factors -Feelings of happiness, excitement, interested -Having time alone to calm down increasing sense of control -Reducing anger, feeling calmer
Gooding, 2014	-Feeling understood -Feeling accepted -Teachers are "there for you" -Can talk to teachers -Consultations with family	-Rewards and incentives for good behaviour -Daily report -Exit card -Close monitoring (rules & boundaries)	-Consultation done in small groups -Life Skill programme -Receiving support with learning when it is requested	-Increased confidence -Feeling empowered to think about the future

	-Acceptance and positive regard of adults	-Flexible systems	-Receiving 1:1 support for learning needs -Flexible curriculum -Element of choice	-Time to change: hopeful for positive outcomes
Hamill & Boyd 2002 Scotland	-Teachers treat everyone fairly -Teachers make an effort to include everyone -Teacher as a 'friend' -Teacher strict but fun -Teachers respect you -Teachers see you as a person -Good teachers help you and spend time with you -Teachers understand students' personal problems -Teachers helpful and supportive -Being treated with genuine positive regard	-Supportive ethos -Feelings of security -Rewards system -Flexible use of behaviour system: interpreting policy in relation to individual needs	-Work made interesting and fun -Well-differentiated work -Receiving help and support with learning	-Feelings of self-efficacy "like I can do it"
Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006England	-New relationships with peers -Feeling welcomed and treated with care and respect by staff - Feeling special and valued by certain teachers -Relaxed, respectful student-teacher relationships -Humour/having a laugh with teachers	-Positive intervention addressing a need for individual attention -Receiving positive feedback in the form of 'a good report' -Consistent application of a clearly defined whole-school behaviour management policy -Less formal nature of setting -Staff-student ratios	-Being consulted and given choices about lessons and timetabling -Having special lessons/ additional learning support (small-group and individual tuition) -Ensuring that pupils' academic progress was well supported	-Feelings of a fresh start -Feelings of hope for the future -Feelings of worth (like they mattered) -Developing positive new identities and positive

			-Adequate differentiation: staging work appropriately to enable success, progress and mainstream integration -Access to out-of-school educational alternatives -Individually-tailored programs	behaviours to reinforce this -Positive impact on self-esteem (experiencing success, receiving praise, feeling listened to and receiving support)
Hart, 2013 UK	Peer relationships/prosocial bonding (Fostered through team work/support with social skills) Pupil–staff relationships (Fostered through trust and positive staff characteristics, e.g. staff seen as kind, fair, fun and humorous) Caring and support (Staff support/help with work, behaviour, social skills)	- a sense of 'safety and security' -Clear consistent boundaries (Achieved through good communication between staff) -Rewards that motivate (Group and individual rewards/rewards linked closely to targets) -Rules and consequences made clear -High staff–pupil ratio (Staff available to give time and attention to children and their needs) -Emulates features of mainstream environment (e.g. classrooms, timetable, routines, wall displays) -Calm/quiet environment Small building (More space for children in classrooms) -Fewer children/small groups	-Personalised learning experiences -Life skills focus (e.g. cooking, gardening, orienteering) -Active involvement/ participation (Practical lessons/children's involvement in decision making) -Focus on learning and supporting children to make good progress (Strong learning ethos) -Building literacy skills -Engaging lessons that are fun and creative -Achievable targets (Targets 'better designed' and manageable/based around children's developmental	Students identified that they had made progress and changed

			level/children aware of targets/targets permeate every lesson/children involved in reviewing them)	
Hawkins, 2011 England M. thesis	-Teachers taking a pastoral interest in the students -Common interest with staff -Knowledge they can get on with staff -Knowledge that staff will look out for them and care for them -More relaxed style where pupils can have a laugh with the teacher but still maintain appropriate boundaries -Being treated as adults and with respect -Sense of belonging -Friendships as a motivator for coming to school	-positive discipline system: praise and rewards for good behaviour and attendance	-Engaging lessons are fun and interactive -Practical lessons -Working with others -Relevant curriculum -Meaningful curriculum -Accessible academic work/ appropriate differentiation	
Loizidou, 2009 (England)	Teachers: Positive relationship (understanding); good communication: good listening; staying calm not shouting at them; understanding them and caring about them; supporting them to stay out of trouble, treating everyone equally,	Behaviour support systems: exit card (i.e permission to leave class when upset); attending anger management groups; school liaising with external professionals	Support for Accessing Learning (support provided by school and individual teachers, i.e. given extra work; visual, practical aids; learning mentor; special behavioural arrangements) -Teachers making lessons interesting	-Locus of control -Willingness to change

	valuing education and possessing a sense of humour. Positive Relations: Family Dynamics: good communication; supportive environment.			
Mann, 2014 England	Respect Being listened to Relationships with staff Repaying staff Relationships with students Positive body language Being able to deal with emotions Friends achieving Staff not giving up Feeling cared for Being treated fairly Positive parent and/or carer relationships developed	Drug regime	Being taught well	Deciding to achieve

McCluskey 2015 UK (Wales)	-Being given time to talk -Non-judgemental attitudes of staff -School-home communication to share positive achievements -Being treated 'more like an adult'	clear boundaries set	-teachers explain carefully, do not belittle their efforts -make space for them to learn at their own pace	pride about academic achievement
McKeown 2001 England	-Teacher-student relationships: teachers being polite, listening to me, gets the truth from me, helps sort out the problems, keeping on checking to see if I'm okay, somebody who I can talk to, takes me seriously, someone who can see both sides of the story, asks reasons why you did it, talks to you as a friend. -The importance of teachers not shouting - Learnt how to get on with other children better, talk to other teachers	-Working environment: quieter; smaller class sizes -Promotes students to be organized. -A place in which students can calm down -Give students opportunities to self-correct. -Strategies to sort out problems. -Somewhere to go when you have done something wrong -Happier atmosphere which makes you laugh. -Counsellor -Individual targets	-Teachers don't mind repeating instructions until the children feel confident -Teachers don't make students feel embarrassed for not understanding	-Can talk about things now.' -'Be honest about myself.' -Improvement in behaviour, spelling and work in general

Michael & Frederickson 2013 England	- 'Positive relationships' with teachers, peers and family members -Teachers providing emotional support -Positive relationships with their peers related to feelings of reassurance or safety -Support/encouragement from family members to attend educational setting	-Clear and consistent consequences and sanctions -Learning environment: smaller classes promote positive learning and behavioural outcomes	-Extra-curricular activities -Curriculum relevance: teaching them the skills they needed to go on to the career of their choice -personalisation/ individualisation of learning tasks -differentiation of work	-Self-motivation -Self-discipline
Preece & Timmins 2004 England	-Staff have respect for students -Staff helping to resolve problems for students -Having someone to talk to -Sense of humour -Not shouting -Time to listen to students -Positive focus -Fair -A friend -Can tell them things -Make an extra effort	-Quiet -Friendly -safe environment -small group teaching opportunities -smaller teaching environment -opportunities for students to reflect upon their behaviour in a safe environment -allowed students to learn social skills	-Make learning fun -Do not make you feel silly for getting things wrong -Respite for some students from the perceived social and academic pressures of mainstream	-educational benefits -increase their confidence -Learned how to control their behaviour

Sheffield & Morgan, 2017 England	-Motivators for success: Family Guidance -Teacher–pupil relationships: teachers understanding, motivating, supportive and having belief in the young person -experiencing shared interests with the liked teacher -Teachers they liked as understanding, motivating, supportive and having belief in the young person		Receiving support	-Acknowledging own academic/interpersonal strengths -Becoming a different person -Motivators for success: Exams Coming Up inspiring students to make a change in their behaviour; attributing this to a change internally
Sellman 2009 England	-systems of reward and ultimately restraint were underpinned by the quality of relationships -students feeling valued	-reward system clear and understood by all students -clear expectations for students in relation to sanctions and incentives -structure, regularity and consistency of provision -more favourable staff–student ratios -activities in place offered some order in their lives		

Appendix D: Case Study Protocol for the current study

Table D: Case Study Protocol for the current study (adapted from Yin, 2009)

Protocol	Description	Activity in current study	
Overview of case study project	Summary of case study purposes, setting and background information to the chosen case (from Literature Review, Chapter 2)	• The issue of school exclusion in mainstream education continues to be a problem of major concern in the United Kingdom. • The poor outcomes and adverse trajectory of students who experience permanent school exclusion have long been documented. • Secondary schools are the by far the highest-excluding educational settings. • Much of the research on school exclusion focuses on young people who have already been permanently excluded from school. • An eco-systemic approach is necessary in order to promote lasting change in the prevention of school exclusion; strategies are most effective where they have the involvement and commitment of the whole school staff, senior management, students and parents. • The current research aims to discover how facilitative factors at a systemic level enable students who have previously experienced fixed-term school exclusion to be successful at school, according to the views of the students, their parents, and school staff. • It also aims to explore staff, student and parent views about how these discovered enabling practices might be developed within the provision to support positive outcomes for students. • Case study setting: an internal alternative educational provision, established within the mainstream school site with the expressed aim of retaining students at risk of permanent exclusion within the school.	
Case study questions	Questions asked of the individual case to be answered	Level 1: questions asked of interviewees	Semi-structured interview schedules, based on the principles of Appreciative Inquiry and developed with consideration of the literature base (See interview schedule, Appendix H)

	by the researcher	Level 2: questions to be asked of the individual case	How do facilitative factors within educational provision enable students who have experienced school exclusion to be successful at school: (a) according to the views of the students? (b) according to the views of school staff? (c) according to the views of parents? How can these enabling practices be developed within the provision to support positive outcomes for students, according to staff, student and parent views? How is an action research (Appreciative Inquiry) approach successful in effecting organisational change in mainstream schools for young people who have experienced school exclusion?
		Level 3: questions to be asked of the pattern of findings across cases	What are the patterns of convergence within views of different participant groups? What are patterns of divergence within participant views? (See thematic analysis findings, Chapter 4)
		Level 4: questions asked of the entire study (e.g. information from literature base)	What can existing research tell us about the views of students who have experienced school exclusion about the enabling factors which facilitate their success and engagement within educational settings? (See qualitative research synthesis, Chapter 2) How do these findings relate to those within the literature base and reflect current theoretical bases? (See Discussion, Chapter 5)
		Level 5: normative questions about policy recommendations beyond scope of study	How might action research (Appreciative Inquiry) approaches inform policy development at a school, LA and national level for young people who have experienced school exclusion?

			How does current government policy impact on schools' ability to enable successful outcomes for young people who have experienced school exclusion?
Case study propositions	Propositions provide direction to the researcher as to what they should examine within the study	**Research Question**	**Related propositions**
		Research Question 1a:	• The young people themselves are stakeholders in this process • Young people should be assigned to highest level of child participation to 'share power and responsibility for decision-making with adults' with decisions concerning them • Young people who have experienced school exclusion possess crucial insight into the factors which enable their success in education but their views are rarely sought
		Research Question 1b:	• It is essential to have school representatives committed to this project as stakeholders • The involvement of school staff as stakeholders increases the likelihood of the outcomes of the AI process being embraced and implemented • Involving staff in the process can foster a sense of community and collaboration between school staff and students.
		Research Question 1c:	• Parents should be empowered to voice their views about their children's education • Parental engagement is the greatest predictor of positive outcomes relating to prevention of school exclusion, therefore seeking their involvement is crucial

		Research Question 2	• It is important to capitalise on the power of AI in providing a platform for systemic reform at the micro-level • It is important to act on the views of stakeholders when these have been elicited in order to fulfil the transformative aims of the current research • It is important to seek the views of students about how practices can be developed within their educational provision to support positive outcomes for them • Systemic reform is ultimately determined by adults in positions of power to enact such change • It is salient to discover how eco-systemic approaches can promote lasting change in the prevention of school exclusion
Case selection		• Purposive sampling procedures • Inclusion and exclusion criteria applied in participant selection	
Field Procedures		• Summary of content and researcher facilitation procedures within each AI phase outlined in Appendix F • Details of implementation of AI process and timelines within the current study contained in Appendix F • Schedule of data collection activities and contingency plans for unanticipated events contained in Appendix F	
Case study report		• Debriefing of study participants (see Appendix P) • Documenting of case study within the current report • Reporting of findings to EPS and parties within LA where the research took place	

Appendix E: School Recruitment Email

Dear (Senior Leadership/Management staff member name)

I am currently working as a Trainee Educational Psychologist and I have received your contact details through colleagues at the Educational Psychology Service.

For the purposes of research I am undertaking for the Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology at University of Nottingham, I am seeking to discover positive factors and supportive strategies which can enable young people identified as being “at risk of school exclusion” to be successful in their school environment.

This study aims to use an Appreciative Inquiry approach, a form of action research which proposes to discover the positive factors within an environment such as a school and to build on these to create progressive change for those involved. This process would involve gaining the views of the students themselves, of school staff members and of parents, as well as holding collaborative discussion and planning between students and staff members about how these supportive factors might be best developed within the school setting.

I am therefore very keen to speak to any school senior leadership/management staff who may be interested in this action research project. If your school is interested in this study, I would be delighted to hear from you. You can kindly express your interest by replying to this secure email address, following which I will happy to arrange a visit to your school at a time which is convenient for you and your colleagues to discuss the proposed study. Your expression of interest would be greatly appreciated and will not put you under any further obligation nor affect your access to the Educational Psychology Service.

Thank you for your time.

Yours Sincerely,

Elaine Looney

(Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix F: Implementation of AI process within the current study

Table F.1: Schedule of data collection activities and contingency plans for potential risks with original timelines & outcomes

Researcher Action	*Planned Timescale*	*Planned Action*	*Potential issues/ risks*	*Proposed Contingency*	*Outcome*
School Recruitment	Sept-Dec, 2016	-Discussion with EPS staff about potential AI study -Identification of potential schools to be approached for involvement	-No schools forthcoming in committing to the proposed AI approach	-Review study aims/methodology and solely focus on the young people as stakeholders: study aim would still be to gain the young people's views and perceptions of supportive strategies which facilitate their success, but without the action research element which an AI approach provides	
Pre-study phase	January, 2017	-Secure ethical approval for study -Conduct training session with staff and students in AI approach and aims of research -Potential participants identified	-School not willing to commit to the AI approach following training -Teaching staff/SMT unwilling to participate in focus groups -School unable to identify suitable student participants	-Seek engagement from alternative settings (approach other schools) -Review study aims and methodology, as above, to seek to gain student views without using an AI approach -Seek to engage other stakeholders, e.g. support staff, SMT/SLT, governors, parents	Ethical approval secured behind schedule due to administration delays in the university: contingency extensions for timelines applied hereafter

Researcher Action	*Planned Timescale*	*Planned Action*	*Potential issues/ risks*	*Proposed Contingency*	*Outcome*
		-Information, consent/assent forms sent	-Parental consent not given	-Investigate possibility of recruiting students from more than one school -Attempt to re-engage parents/provide additional information -Pursue engagement from other students who might be suitable participants/seek consent accordingly	
Pilot Phase	February, 2017	Conduct pilot focus groups and interviews; finalise interview schedules	-Participant attrition	-Aim to have other potentially suitable participants identified within the school	Extension applied due to time pressures caused by delay in gaining ethical approval Pilot interviews conducted April-May, 2017
"Discover" Phase	March-April, 2017	Conduct focus groups and individual interviews	-Participant attrition	-Aim to have other potentially suitable participants identified within the school	Extension applied as above Focus groups and interviews carried out May-June, 2017
First Analysis Phase	April-May, 2017	-Thematic analysis to inform "Dream" and "Design" phase	-Time pressures/ constraints	-Extension for "Dream" "Design" phase	Extension applied as above Thematic analysis carried out June-September, 2017
"Dream" and "Design" phase	May-July, 2017	-Facilitate collaborative group discussion and planning within this phase -Analysis (ongoing)	-Staff or student attrition/dropout	-Invitation of new participants to engage in this stage (e.g. newly appointed staff members)	This phase implemented September-October 2017 New staff members invited to participate

Researcher Action	*Planned Timescale*	*Planned Action*	*Potential issues/ risks*	*Proposed Contingency*	*Outcome*
Submit Literature Review	July, 2017				Literature review submitted on time
Implementation and Review of "Deliver" Phase	Sept -Dec 2017	-Meet with school management/ representative to discuss progress regarding implementation of the action plan	-Time constraints	-Can be reviewed instead with the school at a later date (after thesis submission)	Meeting held in December, 2017
Final Write-Up Phase	Jan-May, 2018				
Thesis submission	May, 2018				

Table F.2: Summary of content and researcher facilitation within each AI phase

AI Phase	Purposes	Procedure	Content
Discover	Exploration of "what is working well" and 'the best of what is'	One individual semi-structured interview conducted with 8 student participants lasting up to 45 minutes each	AI questioning contained in Student Interview Schedule (Appendix)
		One individual semi-structured interview conducted with 5 parent participants lasting up to one hour each	AI questioning contained in Student Interview Schedule (Appendix)
		Three focus group sessions conducted with 8 staff participants	AI questioning contained in Staff Focus Group Interview Schedule (Appendix)
		Analysis of all recorded interviews and focus group sessions	Transcription and Thematic Analysis of all recorded data
		Summary of findings from Thematic Analysis shared with staff participants	PowerPoint presentation format using anonymous quotations and description of key themes and concepts from 'Discover' phase
Dream	Participants visualise the ideal and "what could be"	Final question and prompts in Student interview schedule	*Magic wand*: If you had a magic wand and could make the school be however you want, what would it be like?
		Final question and prompts in Parent interview schedule	*Miracle question*: If a miracle happened overnight and we came to school tomorrow to find that school is now our absolute ideal and we are working at the best we have ever been, what would it be like?

AI Phase	Purposes	Procedure	Content
		Final question and prompts in Staff Focus Group Interview schedule	Miracle Question: as above
		Focus group session held with all staff participants to stimulate and provide a briefing on the 'Dream' phase to staff	PowerPoint presentation of a summary of 'The Best of What is' from conclusion of 'Discover' phase and collated list of wishes and dreams for the future derived from Thematic Analysis of interview data Briefing by researcher on purposes of 'Dream' phase and on the line of questioning to be used by staff in 'Dream' group activity with students
		Small group activity mediated by staff over a three-week period during tutor sessions in which students were asked to draw/graphic their 'Dream' ideas with their peers	'Magic wand' questioning Graphics and brainstorm representations created by students in small group activity
		Focus group session in which staff participants presented the outcomes of the dream activity from each respective student group to the researcher	Use of graphics created by student groups by staff to provide feedback of outcomes to researcher and other staff members Group discussion facilitated by researcher 'Aspiration statement' created by staff to summarise the content

AI Phase	Purposes	Procedure	Content
		Analysis of audio-recorded 'Dream' phase data	Transcription and Thematic Analysis
Design	Participants consider steps to move closer to the dream	Series of 'provocative propositions' generated by the researcher and shared with staff in advance of action planning meeting	Outcomes of the Discover and Dream phases Use of AI guidance
		Action planning meeting for staff participants	PowerPoint presentation of 'Provocative Propositions' framework to staff In-depth discussion facilitated by the researcher to gain group feedback and reach collaborative agreement on how best to proceed with actions relating to each proposition
Deliver	Participants devise and implement action plan	A range of corresponding actions were planned and agreed through group discussion with staff participants during this action planning meeting	Use of Provocative Propositions framework as a working 'Action Plan' document on PowerPoint to record agreed action, timeline and person(s) responsible for activity
		Action plan reviewed with staff participants who hold management roles to evaluate outcomes and discuss organisational and systemic factors seen as influencing these.	Use of Action Plan document to assess outcomes of agreed actions

Appendix G: Interview schedules (student, staff, parents)

Students semi-structured interview schedule

Background questions: How long have you been here in this provision?

Q1: Tell me about your best experience at school so far this year. What do you think helped this to happen? How did you help this to happen? How did others help this to happen?

Prompts:

Can you think of something that has gone really well for you since you have been here/this school year?

Has there been a really good day for you at school that stands out?

What has been your best experience? What do you think helped this to happen? How did you help this to happen? How did others help this to happen?

Have there been any other good things happening for you at school this year?

Q2: Tell me about your best experience of working with the teachers in this school so far this year. What do you think helped this to happen? How did you help this to happen? How did the teacher(s) help this to happen?

Prompts:

Can you think of one teacher who you have really enjoyed working with? What made this enjoyable? What did they do? What did you do?

Q3: Tell me about a time when you felt really listened to by an adult at this school. What did they do? What did you do?

Prompts:

How do the staff listen to the students? What do they do to make that happen? What sort of things make you know that they are there to listen to students? Is there something about the school day that helps that to happen?

Q4: Can you think of an achievement you have had recently? What made that happen? How did you help this to happen? How did others help this to happen?

Prompts:

What have you been most proud of this school year? What made that happen? How did you help this to happen? How did others help this to happen?

How do you know when you are doing well? How do people let you know when you are doing well?

Q5: When have you been most proud to be a part of this school? What made that happen? What was your role in that? What was the role of others in that?

Q6: Tell me about a lesson you have had at school this year which you feel went really well for you or which you really enjoyed. What was the lesson like? What were you doing? What was the teacher doing? What made the lesson so good/interesting? What did you really enjoy about it?

Q7: Tell me about a time where you felt like you got really good help and support with your learning at school. What happened? Who helped? What did they do? What was it like for you?

Q8: What do you think helps the students here to be good friends to one another? What do the students do? How does the school help this to happen? If school were really helping people to be good friends to each other at this school, what things might they do?

Q9: Can you think of a time where you felt supported or encouraged by someone at home (e.g. parents, someone in your family) to do well at school? What did they do? What was it like? What did you do? What do you think helped that to happen?

Q10: What makes you want to come to school every day? What is it about this that motivates you/makes you want to come to school?

Prompt: if we could imagine a different kind of school day- what would make you want to jump out of bed in the morning and rush to get to school?

Q11: What helps you to feel like you belong at this school? What would help you to feel more like you belong here?

Q12: What else helps you to do well at school? What is good about being here? Tell me the three best things about going to school here.

Q13: If you had a magic wand and could make the school be however you want, what would it be like? If you could imagine the best possible place this could be, what would it be like? If I could have a tour of it, what things would I see? What would be good about that?

Prompt:

What would students be doing? What would teachers be doing?

What things would be inside the school (e.g. what would the classrooms be like?)? What would the outside of the school be like?

What activities would the students do at break time? What would students be learning? Which subjects would they be studying?

Remember!

- Member check: anything to add to that?
- Issue reminder: how information will be used: check consent for anonymous quotes
- Offer a sense of accomplishment: we talked about a lot, you have given me lots of really interesting information
- Thank throughout the interview/reflect on what has been shared

Staff focus group interview schedule

Q1: Tell me about your best recent experiences of work with students so far this academic year. What circumstances do you think made this possible? What was your role in that? What was the role of others in that?

Q2: Tell me about the things in your work in this school which have given you the greatest satisfaction. What makes this possible? What is your role in this? What is the role of others in this?

Q3: What aspects of school policy are particularly important to your work with students and why?

Q4: What resources do you feel you have to support your work at this school? What have you already achieved by using those resources?

Q5: When have you been most proud to be a part of this school? What circumstances do you think made this possible? What was your role in that? What was the role of others in that?

Q6: What do you notice about yourself when you are at your best? What else? What do you do differently?

Q7: What do you notice when the team is at its best? What do you do differently? What do others do differently?

Q8: When have you felt that this is the right place to be and the right work to be doing? What was your role in that? What was the role of others in that?

Q9: What are your wildest dreams for the school?

Prompt

If a miracle happened overnight and we came to school tomorrow to find that school is now our absolute ideal and we are working at the best we have

ever been, what would it be like? What would we see? What would we hear? What would students be doing? What would teachers be doing? What things would be inside the school (e.g. what would the classrooms be like?)? What would the outside of the school be like? What activities would the students do at break time? What would students be learning? Which subjects would they be studying?

Parent semi-structured interview schedule

Q1: Tell me about the best experiences you have had with this school this year. What do you think made that possible? What was your role in that? What was the role of others in that?

Q2: When have you been most proud of this school? What do you think made this possible? What was your role in that? What was the role of your child in that? What was the role of others in that?

Q3: What do you think this school does really well? What is the staff's role in this? What is students' role in this? What is parents' role in this?

Q4: Tell me about a time when you felt that your child was in the right place and doing the right work for them. What were they doing? What helped this to happen? What were others doing? What was your role in this?

Q5: What are your wildest dreams for the school?

Prompt

If a miracle happened overnight and we came to school tomorrow to find that school is now our absolute ideal and we are working at the best we have ever been, what would it be like? What would we see? What would we hear? What would students be doing? What would teachers be doing? What things would be inside the school (e.g. what would the classrooms be like?)? What would the outside of the school be like? What activities would the students do at break time? What would students be learning? Which subjects would they be studying?

Appendix H: Interview Summary Sheet example

Name of interviewer: Elaine Looney

Date: 20/06/17

Interviewee ID: “Kieran”

Most quotable quote from the interview?

“It’s fun cos they show you a different way and you know you’re not going to struggle again”

“I’ve learned not to be too silly since I’ve been here”

Most compelling story from the interview?

- Teachers are nice, funny, strict (good to have boundaries), happy (greetings)
- Teachers let you know when you are going well: comments, grades, feedback
- Teachers listen: Write down ideas; good to know they are there
- Teachers support in class: go around and help where needed; break tasks down and show different ways to do it
- Work is challenging but at the right level (appropriate differentiation)
- Students are encouraged to be sensible because of the rules and rewards
- Students share and look out for each other
- Parents are kept informed: good because Mum is proud
- Three best things: timing of day; people (other students) and lessons (fun and enjoyable)

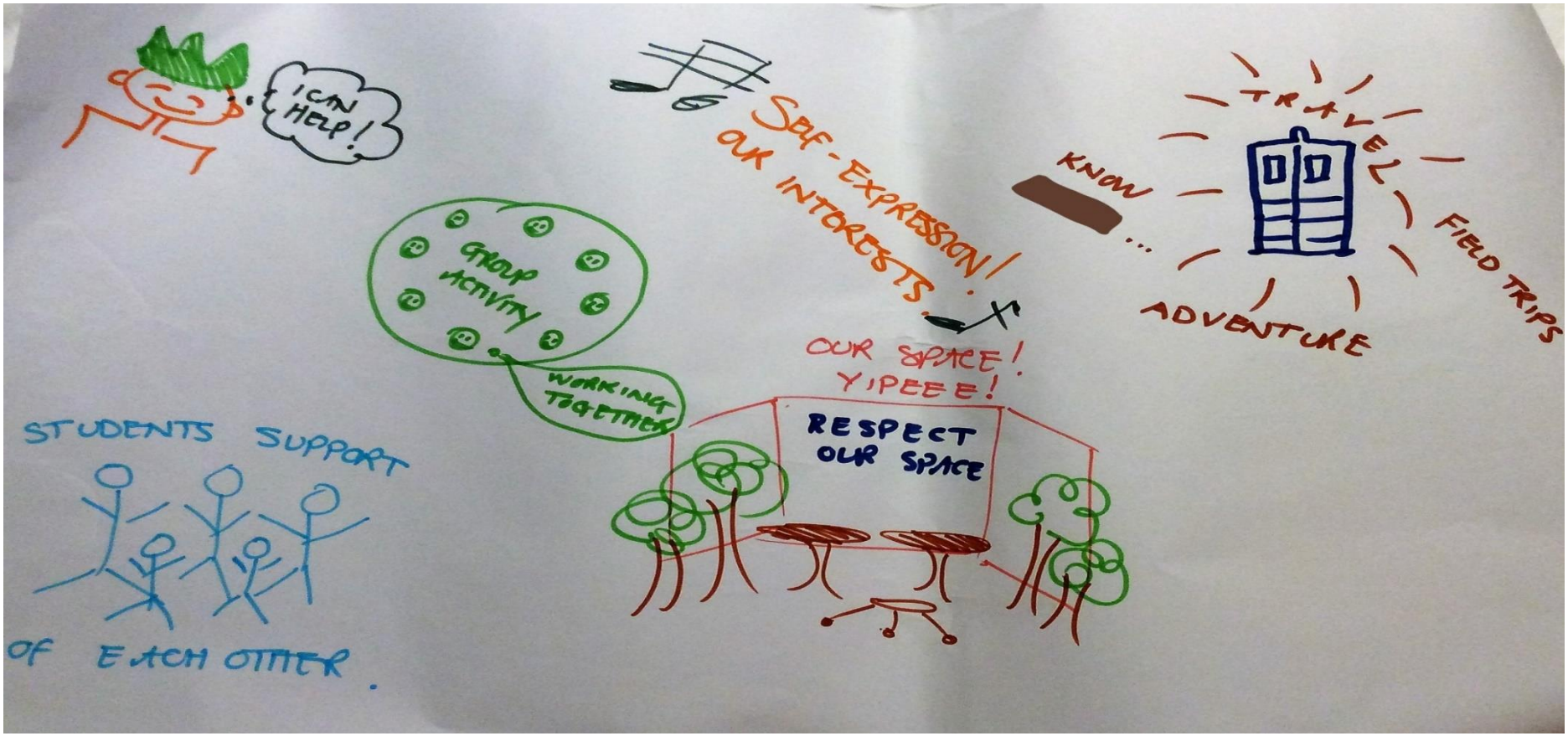
Overall, what was your sense of what was important to this individual?

Being outdoors, experiencing nature

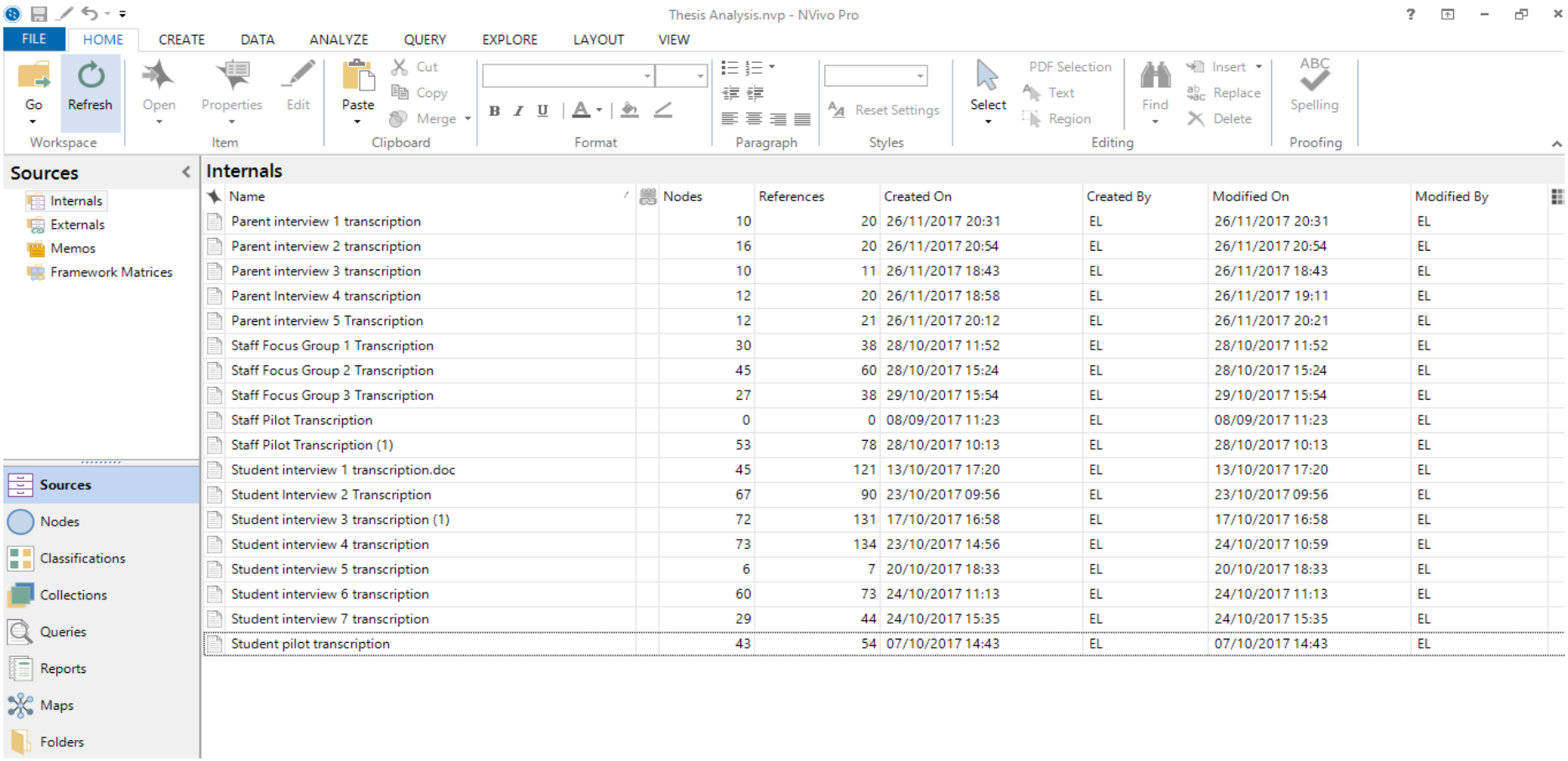
Vision of the future

- Swimming every week
- School trips: overnight, camping and fishing (nature and animals)
- Bigger rooms- more space, windows
- Should have reward points to earn and save for big rewards (e.g. gift cards, trips): “would encourage people to be good”
- Have a school pet: students could take care of it and enjoy it
- Building projects, e.g. treehouse or den; place to chill; fresh air; building desks
- Science experiments, e.g. volcanoes
- More activities at break time which can involve everyone, e.g. table tennis
- Teachers would have their own space and staff room
- Teachers would play games with students, e.g. board games

Appendix I: Student Dream Graphic Example

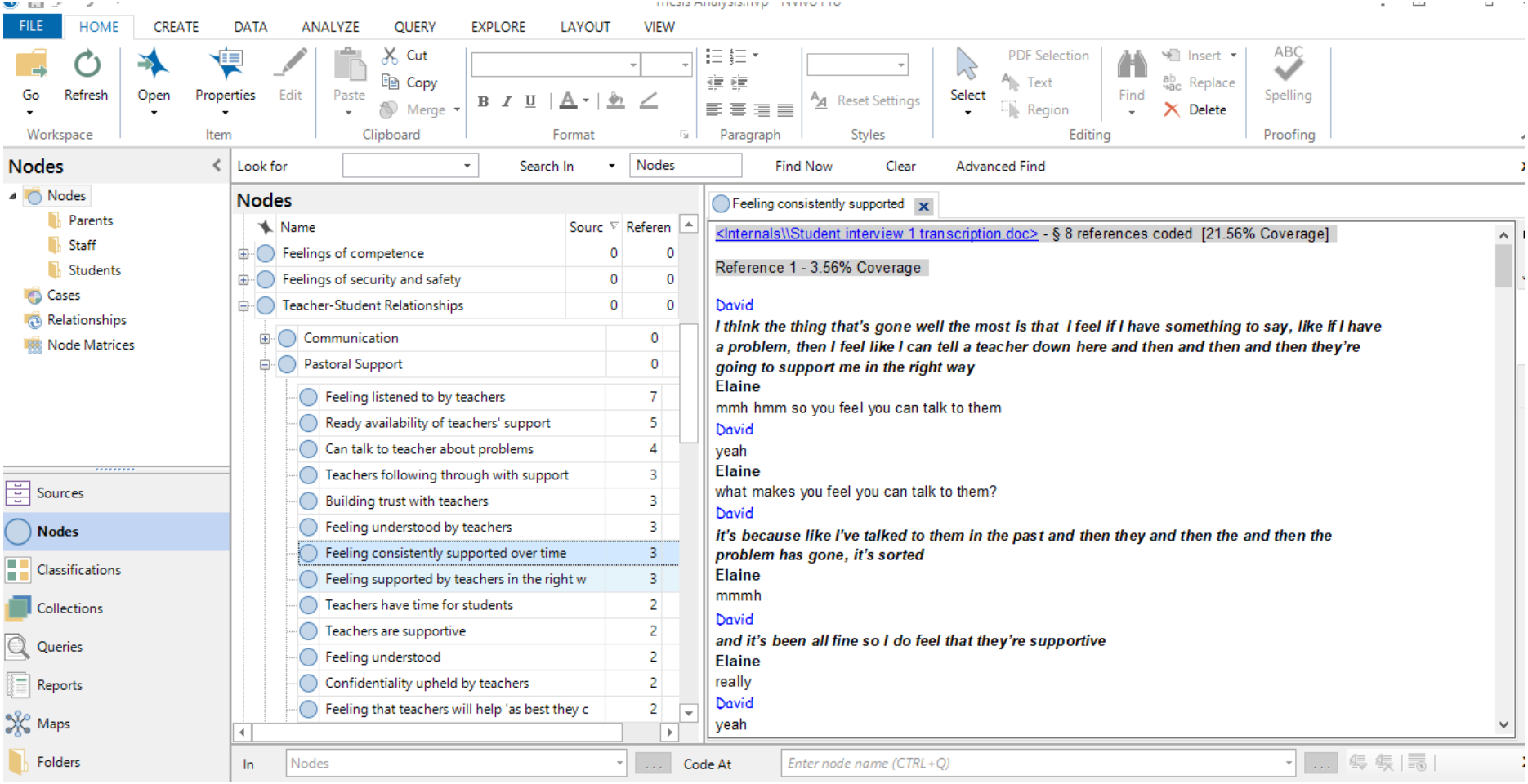


Appendix J: Analysis Audit Trail

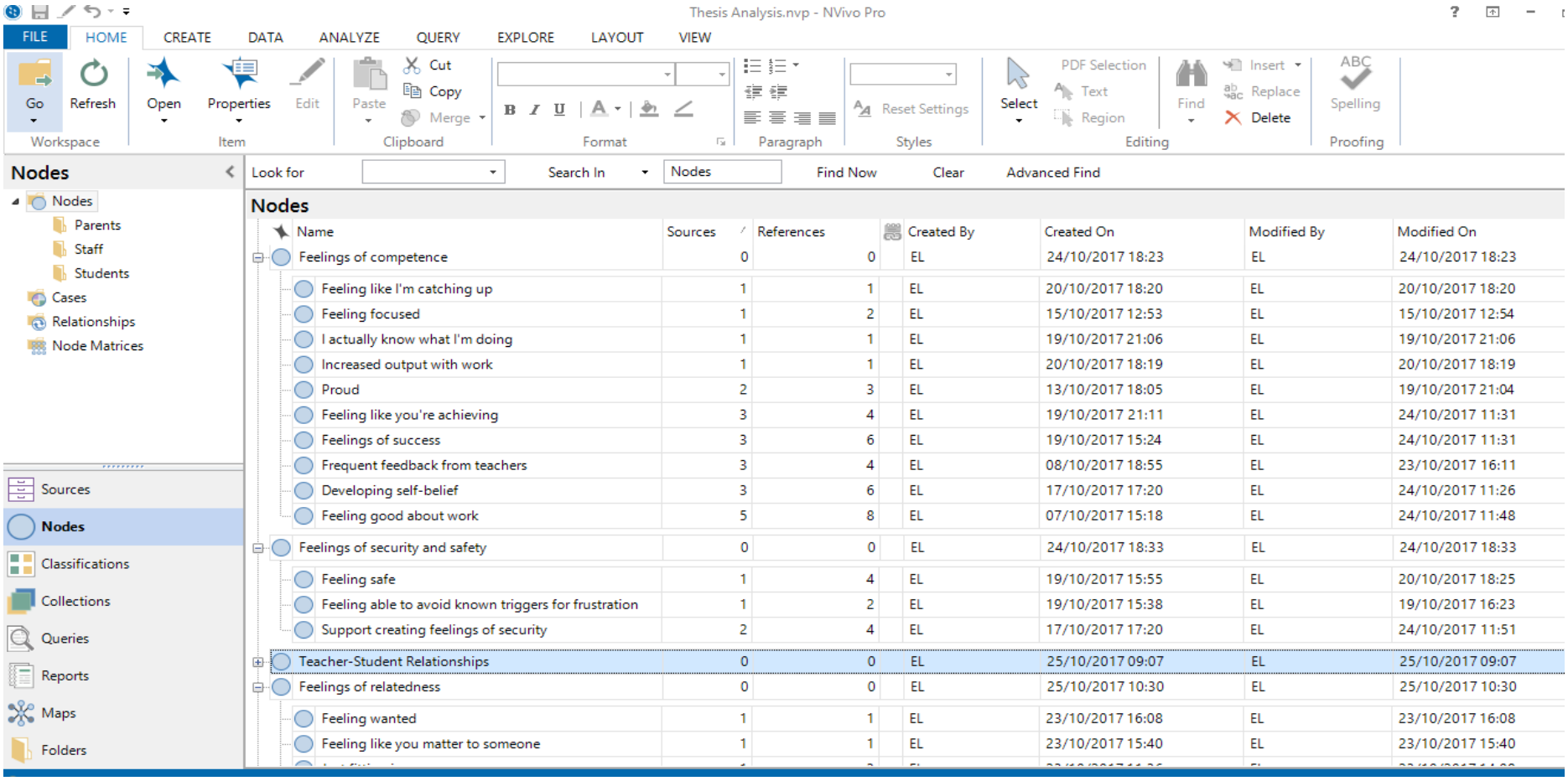


Name	Nodes	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Parent interview 1 transcription	10	20	26/11/2017 20:31	EL	26/11/2017 20:31	EL
Parent interview 2 transcription	16	20	26/11/2017 20:54	EL	26/11/2017 20:54	EL
Parent interview 3 transcription	10	11	26/11/2017 18:43	EL	26/11/2017 18:43	EL
Parent Interview 4 transcription	12	20	26/11/2017 18:58	EL	26/11/2017 19:11	EL
Parent interview 5 Transcription	12	21	26/11/2017 20:12	EL	26/11/2017 20:21	EL
Staff Focus Group 1 Transcription	30	38	28/10/2017 11:52	EL	28/10/2017 11:52	EL
Staff Focus Group 2 Transcription	45	60	28/10/2017 15:24	EL	28/10/2017 15:24	EL
Staff Focus Group 3 Transcription	27	38	29/10/2017 15:54	EL	29/10/2017 15:54	EL
Staff Pilot Transcription	0	0	08/09/2017 11:23	EL	08/09/2017 11:23	EL
Staff Pilot Transcription (1)	53	78	28/10/2017 10:13	EL	28/10/2017 10:13	EL
Student interview 1 transcription.doc	45	121	13/10/2017 17:20	EL	13/10/2017 17:20	EL
Student Interview 2 Transcription	67	90	23/10/2017 09:56	EL	23/10/2017 09:56	EL
Student interview 3 transcription (1)	72	131	17/10/2017 16:58	EL	17/10/2017 16:58	EL
Student interview 4 transcription	73	134	23/10/2017 14:56	EL	24/10/2017 10:59	EL
Student interview 5 transcription	6	7	20/10/2017 18:33	EL	20/10/2017 18:33	EL
Student interview 6 transcription	60	73	24/10/2017 11:13	EL	24/10/2017 11:13	EL
Student interview 7 transcription	29	44	24/10/2017 15:35	EL	24/10/2017 15:35	EL
Student pilot transcription	43	54	07/10/2017 14:43	EL	07/10/2017 14:43	EL

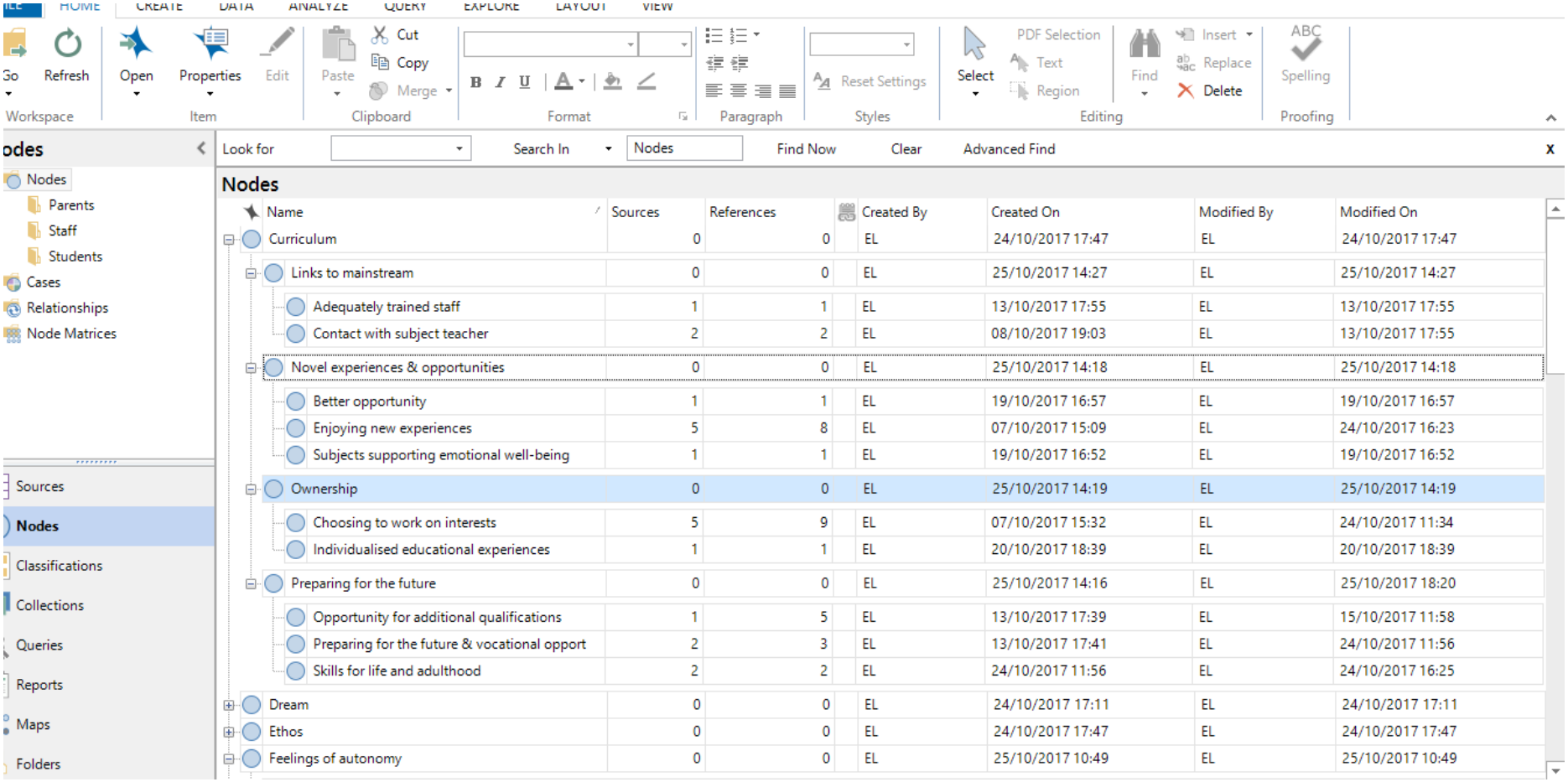
Illustrative example: Participant data files imported to NVivo following transcription and familiarisation to enable code generation



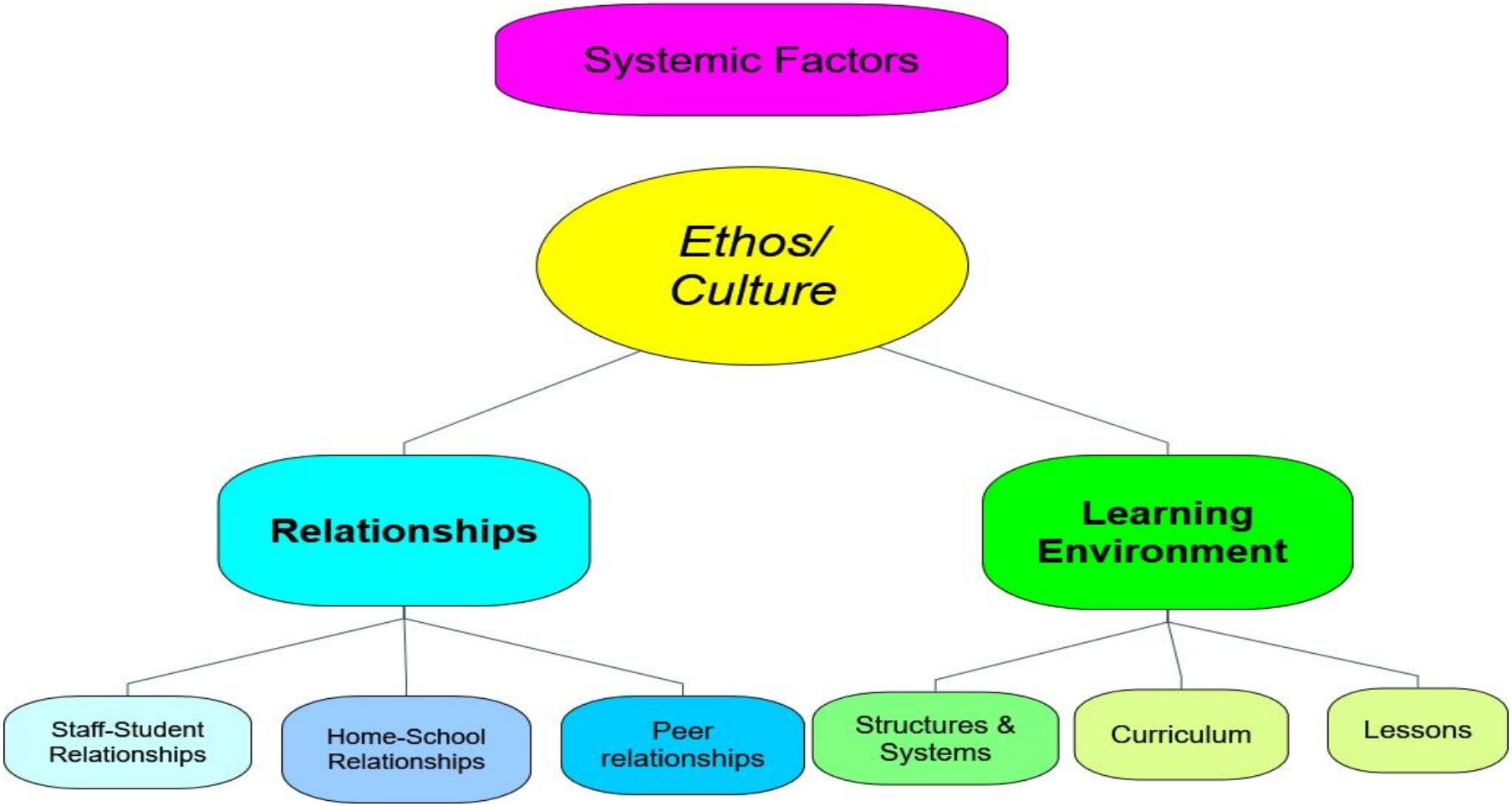
Illustrative example: Inductive coding of data using NVivo software: Data coded with surrounding text to remain contextualised



Illustrative example: Creation and naming of 'nodes' and 'memos' in NVivo to store, locate and retrieve data relating to codes (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013)



Illustrative example: Organisation of 'nodes' into a hierarchical structure of categories and subcategories (i.e. themes and subthemes) to enable conceptual clarity and pattern identification (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013)



Illustrative example: Creation of thematic 'mindmap' in NVivo to represent initial themes/key ideas of analysis

Appendix K: Research Diary Excerpts

Excerpt 1: Jun 26 2017, 11.02am

- **Reflection on data gathering (parent interview 1)**
  - Parent was unsure if she was the right person to talk to because of the positive focus of the study

Reflection 1: the AI approach can be off-putting for those who perhaps want to have the pain heard or who do not feel positively towards the subject under consideration. With careful elicitation and selective active listening, the positives and asset-based discourse could be drawn out. Acknowledging the parent's negative feelings but also focusing on the positive talk or on occasions where she had felt positively about certain experiences or interactions and unpicking what made these possible was key. Also, using the perceived negatives in the situation to move towards solution-focused/ideal situation strategies (tying in the with Dream phase of AI), such that the parent could imagine a better future or vision was a helpful way to manage negative discourse while remaining faithful to the approach. The parent thanked me for listening to her at the end of the session, indicating that did feel her views were heard appropriately

Reflection 2: Are parents perhaps naturally disinclined to be positive about school, particularly where there may be trust issues and their child has previously been excluded (i.e. negative experiences of schools)?

Reflection 3: students seemed to find the positive focus easier. Are they more willing to see the strengths in their situation? Is there something about their experience here that makes them more appreciative?

Reflection 4: parental illiteracy: awareness of the need to talk parents through the process to ensure that they are fully informed; reiterating their right to withdraw, etc.

Excerpt 2: Oct 02 2017, 05.55pm

- **Reflection on session with staff to introduce Dream phase**

- Some staff left early - only two remaining by end of session (Next sessions to take place in morning to facilitate better engagement)
- Started well as a group activity - people understood the concept of the phase as being a vision; used graphics and labels accordingly
- Group members became very preoccupied with the constraints, systemic barriers to what this would look like and how it wouldn't work; I found this difficult to facilitate but tried to manage this by reflecting these in terms of the ideal, e.g. "it sounds like if we had our ideal, staff would feel…"
- Also became more of a debate around the details of how this "ideal' provision could be operationalised, i.e. action planning/Design phase such that these phases may be somehow blurred. The session probably needed to be more about the principles and aspirations for the provision rather than action planning at this stage (can try to draw this out in the next session)
- Sense of needing to be realistic and of not wanting to do too much too soon -NB: the gradients of action planning to be noted in Design phase with focus on the short-term
- Staff report current uncertainty – is it difficult to be idealistic in this climate?
- Positives: many of the 'Discover' elements have already been developed (e.g. listening to student views: now have student reps; one teacher noted that she would be making a feedback phone call regarding her classes this week as a result of last week's session)
- Some dialogue emerged about aspiration statements: e.g. students are connected to their aspirations", have "self-respect", empowerment; "door half open to mainstream"; "education through experience"/"education for life"
- Some key areas which would have the most impact identified: curriculum; rewards & behaviour modification strategies

Next steps:
-Have a feedback session (5 minutes each of presenting the Dream of staff groups and students): enable a more structured elicitation of the Dream phase
-Have some prompts for eliciting aspiration statements
-Create questions/provocative propositions for stimulating action planning
-Design: need to be clear on time-scales with focus on the short-term

Excerpt 3: October 27, 2017: 4:40pm

- **Reflections from inter-rater discussion with SK (TEP)**

- SK noted that student's positive experiences appeared to become internalised (development of intrinsic motivation). He spells out the stages of this aspiration development: being given an opportunity, then he was told he was good at it, parents were told, he started to see achievement, began to internalise this, now he is motivated and has personal aspiration; reflection of this as like a journey
- Sense of being jointly invested, mutual commitment by staff and students
- Give students a sense of worth and self-esteem (i.e. proper tools and teacher); discussion of the "broken glass theory" from sociology
- Some codes an exact match, e.g. "Engaging lessons", some almost exactly match: "Scaffolded teaching" for "teachers scaffolding support"; most inter-rater interpretations could be seen as synonyms of the researcher's codes, e.g. Staff are dependable and trustworthy where researcher coded "building trust with teachers" and "feeling consistently supported over time"
- Key themes noted, e.g. autonomy, intrinsic motivation, feeling supported and safe, self belief; self motivation also noted by inter-rater
- Some novel ideas presented, which were then incorporated to enhance existing theme descriptions, e.g. practical subjects: cater to areas of strength (in addition to lessons seen as meaningful and relevant to the students)

Appendix L: Consideration of risk bias of flexible designs in proposed study

Table L: Consideration of risk bias of flexible designs in proposed study (adapted from Robson, 2011)

Potential Threat	Reactivity	Respondent Bias	Researcher Bias
Description	Impact of researcher presence on research setting and participant behaviour	Participant responses masking their true views according to their perception of the researcher/ situation	Researcher views/assumptions affecting process, e.g. questions asked
Action to overcome risk of bias	Use of semi-structured interviews to allow participants' own agenda to emerge Explicit reporting of the nature of research context and active researcher role Use of a reflective research diary	Pre-study briefing for all stakeholders on AI approach and research purpose Member validation of thematic analysis interpretations with participants to ensure validity Separate interviewing of stakeholder groups to avoid inhibition of responses	Inter-rater reliability checks of thematic analysis Use of summary templates completed by researcher at the end of each interview Use of reflective research diary Co-construction of analysis with participants Transparency in presentation of data and thematic coding process

Appendix M: Inter-rater reliability check (illustrative excerpts)

Original transcript	Researcher codes	Inter-rater codes
Elaine ... Can you think of something that has gone really well for you since you've been down here? David ***I think the thing that's gone well the most is that I feel if I have something to say, like if I have a problem, then I feel like I can tell a teacher down here and then and then and then they're going to support me in the right way*** **Elaine** mmh hmm so you feel you can talk to them David yeah **Elaine** what makes you feel you can talk to them? David ***it's because like I've talked to them in the past and then they and then the and then the problem has gone, it's sorted*** **Elaine** mmmh David ***and it's been all fine so I do feel that they're supportive*** **Elaine** really David yeah **Elaine** ok and they've sort of showed you that over time David yeah **Elaine** that they're able to deal with any problems you bring David mmh hmm **Elaine** great..how how do you think they deal with problems well? David I don't know, ***I think they just like think about your opinion the most*** **Elaine** yeah David ***and then try to work on that*** **Elaine**	Feeling listened to by teachers Feeling consistently supported over time Building trust over time Teachers are supportive Staff empathise with student views	Feels listened to Trust staff Can rely on them Demonstrate empathy

a ha. so they're really listening to you David yeah **Elaine** and what you're telling them David yeah **Elaine** and then they work to solve it for you David as best they can **Elaine** as best they can great. it sounds like that's gone well for you over time David yeah it has **Elaine** they've shown you that a lot David mmh **Elaine** ok so would you say that's the best thing about being here? David yeah **Elaine** great thank you for that. ehm can you think about what has been your best experience since you've been down here, something that's gone really well? David ***I'm doing a course where I get a diploma in..motor vehicle*** **Elaine** wow David ***so it's something good int' it that I can take away from being in here*** **Elaine** right can you tell me how that came about David yeah it was when I first came in here **Elaine** mmh David I had a choice where I had to do a few things and then I had a choice to do that so I chose that **Elaine** right David and then it's gone like well..and then the teacher asked if I could have a diploma level in it	Teachers will help "as best they can" Opportunity for additional qualification Preparing for the future & vocational opportunities Ownerhsip/Choosing to work on interests	Staff are dependable and trustworthy Pride in qualification Autonomy and choice Proud of achievement

Elaine I see, wow. So am I hearing that when you came they gave you a list of things you could do? David mmh **Elaine** some choices and that was what you chose? David obviously I had to do like math English and maths and that **Elaine** right David but then I had a few other choices of like other things to do like art **Elaine** mmh hhm David or I could have gone in the garden or something **Elaine** right David but ***I chose to be in there and I then I get a diploma so I'm happy I chose it in the end*** **Elaine** brilliant so when you chose it did you know there was going to be a diploma? David no **Elaine** that was something that came afterwards..and when they offered that to you, the diploma, what was that like? David I was happy about it **Elaine** yeah David very happy **Elaine** and am I hearing that's because it's something you can take away with you when you're finished here? David mm **Elaine** a qualification David yeah **Elaine** brilliant, so can you tell me a bit about how that works cos you're obviously at school? How do you do your diploma?	Ownership/ Choosing to work on interests Autonomy Feeling happy	Choice and autonomy Intrinsic motivation? Happy! Proud.

Appendix N: Ethics Approval

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SJ
Ref: S945R

Wednesday, 22 March 2017

Dear Nick Durbin and Elaine Looney,

Ethics Committee Review

Thank you for submitting an account of your proposed research 'An Appreciative Inquiry Of Positive Factors And Supportive Strategies Which Enable Secondary School Students Who Have Experienced Fixed-Term School Exclusion To Be Successful In Their School Environment'.

That proposal has now been reviewed by the Ethics Committee and I am pleased to tell you that your submission has met with the committee's approval.

Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you or your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Psychological Society and the University Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns whatever during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice. The Committee should be informed immediately should any participant complaints or adverse events arise during the study.

Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site. Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Yours sincerely



Professor Stephen Jackson
Chair, Ethics Committee

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SJ/tp

Ref: S1045

Thursday 16th November 2017

Dear Elaine and Nicholas,

Title of the new project: An Appreciative Inquiry of positive factors and supportive strategies which enable secondary school students who have experienced fixed-term school exclusion to be successful in their school environment

Applicants: Elaine Looney

Further to your request for Chair Approval for amendments to the project:-

Details of the previous study:

Applicant: Elaine Looney
Title: An Appreciative Inquiry of positive factors and supportive strategies which enable secondary school students who have experienced fixed-term school exclusion to be successful in their school environment
Date of approval: 22nd March 2017
Reference number (if known): S931

As Chair of the Ethics Committee I have considered your request and I am happy to grant approval for the following changes:

• My original proposal outlined that individual interviews with students who attend an internal alternative provision in a secondary school and some of their parents, as well as school staff focus groups, would form the 'Discover' phase of the Appreciate Inquiry methodology. Informed written and verbal consent was secured for each of these participants, as per the particulars of my original ethics submission, and this phase of the action research is now successfully completed.

• As part of the next phase of this research project, the 'Dream' phase, the school staff participants are seeking to gain the views of the wider student body of the research setting (up to 30 students) regarding how their school experience could be improved. This rationale for this is to capture the views of all students in this process to raise the profile of the 'student voice', a key aim of this research study and a current focus of school improvement work within this school. This information is being gathered in small student groups, conducted by teachers as part of the pupils' usual tutor/PSHE provision. I will not be directly involved in the gathering of this data, nor will I be meeting with any students as part of this phase of the study. If ethical approval is received, school staff will share the anonymous views of students which they have gathered with the researcher for inclusion in the final report (see details below). Version 4 2015

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• I believe that this variation does not pose any further or different ethical risks that were included in the original ethics proposal. I provide reference to the Ethical Risks Checklist, regarding some particularly relevant sections of the original proposal with a commentary regarding how this is enacted within the current variation:

Section C: 24. "In order to further offset the possible emotional intensity and formality of an interview situation with an adult, students will also be given the option to share their experiences through use of alternative/visual media, such as drawings or photographs, to facilitate discussion with the researcher about aspects of their school environment which they find supportive".

Within the proposed variation, students will be asked to draw/graphic their ideas in as part of a small group activity with their peers, mediated by a familiar adult.

"Any presentation of visual data in the study's analysis will be fully anonymised".

No names will appear on any of the data. The researcher will not be given any student names at any stage.

26. "For the purposes of the Dream/Design phases of the research, generic, fully anonymized, positive statements about the school system working at its ideal or best level, as derived from the thematic analysis and which are not attributed to any individual participant, will be shared amongst staff, students and parents to inform the Design/Deliver phases for action planning". This is upheld in the current variation, as the ideas of the students are to be shared with the researcher by school staff who facilitate the tutor groups. No information will be attributed to any individual, as feedback will be generically shared as the collective views of the group.

Original Appendix C: Excerpt from original interview schedule

Q20: What are your dreams for this school? Prompt: If you had a magic wand and could make the school be however you want, what would it be like? What would students be doing? What would teachers be doing? What things would be inside the school (e.g. what would the classrooms be like?)? What would the outside of the school be like? What activities would the students do at break time? What would students be learning? Which subjects would they be studying?

This line of questioning will be used by all staff facilitators in the current variation, following a briefing from the researcher, to ensure uniformity and clarity within the activity. Version 4 2015

3. School staff will be asked to provide these anonymous students who meet the given criteria with parental consent forms... No student names will be supplied to the researcher

Parental consent for the sharing of anonymous data with the researcher by school staff is proposed to be gained within this variation through 'opt-out' consent forms. The rationale for this proposal is that students will not have face to face/direct contact with the researcher within this activity and will be taking part in a group activity as part of normal school procedures. The only data collected and shared will be in response to the line of questioning outlined above, therefore the risk of harm is

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deemed very low within this activity. The purpose of this form is to seek parental permission, by opt-out consent, for the data to be shared with me by school staff for the purposes of the research, but with complete anonymity and confidentiality. A proposed template for this consent form is included in current Appendix A.

Original Appendix D: Debrief Procedure

At the point of conclusion of involvement by the researcher with the school following this review stage, it is proposed to provide a summary of the research aims, outcomes and signposting to further information about the study to all participants. This summary and a summary of the action plan implementation to date will also be provided to the school's link Educational Psychologist to followup with any future review cycles as part of their work with the school, as appropriate. The original study summary debrief form is to be issued to all participants, as above. The outcomes of this activity are proposed to be shared with all participants at the conclusion of the research study (see current Appendix B). The following line has been additionally added to the summary/debrief form, following agreement with school staff, in order to manage expectations of students in expressing their ideal and to ensure that the student voice is continued to be heard following conclusion of the research: It is hoped that this action plan can continue to be reviewed and that staff can continue to seek the views of the students to support this. This debrief form has also now been modified to include signposting to external agencies and services from which student participants can seek support outside of the school. This template is included in current Appendix B.

Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you or your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Psychological Society and the University Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns whatever during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice.

Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site. Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Yours sincerely



Professor Stephen Jackson
Chair, Ethics Committee

Appendix O: Participant Information Sheets/Consent Forms



Staff Information sheet

This is an invitation to take part in a research study which will be reported as part of a doctoral thesis and assessed as part of the researcher's Professional Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology at the University of Nottingham. Before you decide if you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss with others if you wish. Please ask if you would like any further information. Please take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Who will conduct the research?
Elaine Looney, Trainee Educational Psychologist, University of Nottingham.

Title of the Research
An Appreciative Inquiry of positive factors and supportive strategies which enable secondary school students who have experienced fixed-term exclusion to be successful in their school environment.

What is the aim of the research?
This study aims to discover the positive factors and supportive strategies within the school environment and to build on these to create positive change for students who have previously received fixed-term school exclusion. This process would involve gaining the views of these students, some parents and school staff members, as well as having collaborative discussion and planning between students, parents and staff members about how these supportive factors might be developed within the school.

Why have I been chosen?
You have been invited to take part as you have been identified as a professional who works with students who are seen as being at risk of school exclusion. It is hoped that there will be X participants who are members of staff in total involved in the research.

Who else is involved?

A small number of students in the school who have previously received fixed-term exclusion and parents will also be involved in this study. The Educational Psychology Service where the researcher is on placement, as well as the Directors of Education of the Local Authority and the University of Nottingham are the other stakeholders in this research study.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?
You will take part in a focus group interview with other staff members which will be arranged at a convenient time for all participants. You have the right to not take part or withdraw from the process at any time. You will also be asked to participate in later collaborative group discussions and planning between staff, students and parents about how the positive factors identified by all participants might be best developed within the school.

What happens to the data collected?
The responses from the interview will be audio-recorded, analysed and written up for a doctoral thesis. Any quotations or information will be anonymised in reports and group feedback.

How is confidentiality maintained?
The school and participant's names will not be identified in the study. All data will be stored securely and destroyed when it is no longer needed.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

What is the duration of the research?
The research process will last for approximately one academic year.

Where will the research be conducted?
The interview will take place in a quiet, private room in the school. You will be informed of the location if you choose to take part.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?
The research findings will be written up as part of a doctoral thesis for the Professional Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology at the University of Nottingham. The findings from the study will also be fed back to the school and the Educational Psychology Service as well as the Directors of Education of the Local Authority.

Criminal Records Check
The researcher has undergone a satisfactory criminal records check.

Contact for further information
*Researcher email***:** elaine.looney@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor email: nick.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk

What if something goes wrong? If you have any complaints about the study, please contact: Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee) stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk

Consent Form (Staff)

School of Psychology

Consent Form

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Title of Project

An Appreciative Inquiry of positive factors and supportive strategies which enable secondary school students who have experienced fixed-term exclusion to be successful in their school environment.

Ethics Approval Number or Taught Project Archive Number:

Researcher(s): Elaine Looney [e-mail:

elaine.looney@nottingham.ac.uk]

Supervisor(s): Nick Durbin [nick.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk]

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below: **Please Initial Box**

☐ I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above study

☐ I have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

☐ I agree that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

☐ I agree that the interviews will be audio recorded

☐ I agree to the use of anonymous quotes

☐ I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form

"This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time."

Signature of the Participant: Date:

Name (in block capitals)

I have explained the study to the above participant and he/she has agreed to take part.

Signature of researcher: Date:

The University of Nottingham

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Parent Information sheet (Student participants)

Your child has been invited to take part in a research study which will be reported as part of a doctoral thesis and assessed as part of the researcher's Professional Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology at the University of Nottingham. Before you decide if you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss with others if you wish. Please ask if you would like any further information. Please take time to decide whether or not you wish your child to take part.

Who will conduct the research?
Elaine Looney, Trainee Educational Psychologist, University of Nottingham.

Title of the Research
An Appreciative Inquiry of positive factors and supportive strategies which enable secondary school students who have experienced fixed-term exclusion to be successful in their school environment.

What is the aim of the research?
This study aims to discover the positive factors and supportive strategies within the school environment and to build on these to create positive change for students who have previously received fixed-term school exclusion. This process would involve gaining the views of these students, some parents and school staff members, as well as having collaborative discussion and planning between students, parents and staff members about how these supportive factors might be developed within the school.

Why has your child been chosen?

Your child has been chosen to take part as they have previously received a fixed-term exclusion at school. There will be a small number of other students also involved in the research.

Who else is involved?
A group of staff members in the school and a small number of parents will also be involved in this study. The Educational Psychology Service where the researcher is on placement, as well as the Directors of Education of the Local Authority and the University of Nottingham are the other stakeholders in this research study.

What would your child be asked to do if they took part?
Your child will take part in a maximum of three individual interviews with the researcher which will last up to one hour each in total. The interviews will be arranged at a convenient time for your child to cause minimum disruption to their school day, with their agreement. Questions will explore your child's positive school experiences and thoughts about positive factors which help them to be successful in school. Your child will have the right to not take part or withdraw from the process at any time. Your child will also be asked to participate in later group discussions and planning between staff and students about how the positive factors identified by all participants might be best developed within the school.

What happens to the data collected?
The responses from the interview will be audio-recorded, analysed and written up for a doctoral thesis. Students will also be given the opportunity to take photographs or to create drawings of their school relating to their positive experiences at school. Your child's image will not appear in any of this media. Any quotations, information or media will be anonymised in reports and/or feedback so that your child's name will not be mentioned.

How is confidentiality maintained?
The school and participant's names will not be identified in the study. All data will be stored securely and destroyed when it is no longer needed.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?
It is up to you to decide whether or not your child takes part. If you do decide you want your child to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. Your child will still be free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. This will not affect your child's access to the Educational Psychology Service.

I have also been asked to participate in this research, as well as my child. Can they still be involved, even if I do not want to?

This study also aims to get parent views. If you have been asked to be a parent participant, you can make a separate decision about whether you want to be involved yourself. This form is regarding whether you would like your child to be involved. If you do not want to be involved, but would like for your child to participate, they can still do so provided you give your consent for this on the attached form on this sheet.

What is the duration of the research?
The process will last for approximately one academic year.

Where will the research be conducted?
The interview will take place in a quiet, private room in the school. Your child will be informed of the location if you decide you would like them to take part.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?
The research findings will be written up as part of a doctoral thesis for the Professional Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology at the University of Nottingham. The findings from the study will also be fed back to the school and the Educational Psychology Service (Local Authority).

Criminal Records Check
The researcher has undergone a satisfactory criminal records check.
Contact for further information
Researcher email: elaine.looney@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor email: nick.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk

What if something goes wrong? If you have any complaints about the study, please contact: Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee) stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk

Student Consent Form (For Parents)

School of Psychology

Consent Form

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Title of Project: *An Appreciative Inquiry of positive factors and supportive strategies which enable secondary school students who have experienced fixed-term exclusion to be successful in their school environment.*

Ethics Approval Number or Taught Project Archive Number:

Researcher(s): Elaine Looney [e-mail: elaine.looney@nottingham.ac.uk]

Supervisor(s): Nick Durbin [nick.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk]

If you are happy for your child to participate please complete and sign the consent form below: **Please Initial Box**

☐ I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above study

☐ I have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

☐ I agree that my child's participation in the study is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

☐ I agree that the interviews will be audio recorded

☐ I agree to the use of anonymous quotes of and media (photos/drawings) created by my child

☐ I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form

"This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time."

Signature of the Participant: Date:

Name (in block capitals)

I have explained the study to the above participant and he/she has agreed to take part.

Signature of researcher: Date:

The University of Nottingham

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Student Information sheet

You are invited to take part in a research study that I am doing as part of the Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology at the University of Nottingham. Before you decide if you would like to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take your time to

read through the following information carefully and discuss it with your parents/ carers or teachers if you want to.

The researcher for this project is Elaine Looney. Her supervisor is Nick Durbin at the University of Nottingham.

This research aims to discover your views of your positive experiences of school. It will also try to find out things which you feel help you to do well

You have been invited to participate in this study because you have previously received a fixed-term exclusion at school. A small group of other students have also been invited to take part in this study.

If you decide to take part, you will be involved in up to three interviews with the researcher that will last about one hour each. You will be asked to answer some questions about your positive experiences at school. Students will also be given the opportunity to take photos or create drawings of what helps them to be successful at school. You should make sure that your image or anyone else's image does not appear in these photos. These pictures will only be used in the study if you tell the researcher that you agree to this during the interviews.

All of the interviews will be recorded so that the researcher can listen to them to find common themes in the things that are said. Nobody apart from the researcher and their Supervisor at University of Nottingham will listen to these and they will be destroyed when they are no longer needed.

The interview will take place in a quiet, private room at school, which you will be told about if you decide that you would like to take part.

If you decide that you would like to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will be asked to sign the consent form. You can decide that you do not want to take part at any time.

You will also be invited after this to take part in group discussions between students and staff members to discuss and plan things which we have found can help students to be more successful and do better at school.

If you have got any questions please email Elaine Looney at: elaine.looney@nottingham.ac.uk or her supervisor, Nick Durbin, at: nick.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk

What if something goes wrong? If you have any complaints about the study, please contact: Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee) at: stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk

If you would like to find out more about people you can talk to outside of school about any problems or worries which you might have, you can contact these groups:

- **YoungMinds:** the UK's leading charity committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people.
  -Visit their website: www.youngminds.org.uk
- **The Mix**: the UK's leading support service for young people. They are here to help young people to take on any challenges they might be facing. Talk to them 24 hours/ day
  -via their website: www.themix.org.uk,
  -via online chat: www.themix.org.uk/get-support/speak-to-our-team
  -or on this free, confidential helpline: Freephone 0808 808 4994
- **Childline**: the UK's free helpline for children and young people. It provides confidential telephone counselling service for young people with a problem.
  Talk to them for free any time:
  -by phone on: 0800 1111
  -or via online chat:
  www.childline.org.uk/get-support/1-2-1-counsellor-chat/

If you are happy to participate in this study, please complete and sign the consent form below.

Student Consent Form (For Students)

School of Psychology

Consent Form



Please tick the box

☐ I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above study and I have had a chance to think about this information, to ask questions and that these have been answered for me.

☐ I agree that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

☐ I agree that the interviews will be audio recorded

☐ I agree to the use of anonymous quotes and media (photos/drawings)

☐ I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books or journals.

I agree to take part in the above project

_____	_____	_____
Student Name:	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
Parent/Carer taking consent	Signature	Date

Name/Relationship to child: _____

The University of Nottingham
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Parent Information sheet (Parent Participants)

This is an invitation to take part in a research study which will be reported as part of a doctoral thesis and assessed as part of the researcher's Professional Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology at the University of Nottingham. Before you decide if you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss with others if you wish. Please ask if you would like any further information. Please take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Who will conduct the research?
Elaine Looney, Trainee Educational Psychologist, University of Nottingham.

Title of the Research
An Appreciative Inquiry of positive factors and supportive strategies which enable secondary school students who have experienced fixed-term exclusion to be successful in their school environment.

What is the aim of the research?
This study aims to discover the positive factors and supportive strategies within the school environment and to build on these to create positive change for students who have previously received fixed-term school exclusion. This process would involve gaining the views of these students, some parents and school staff members, as well as having collaborative discussion and planning between students, parents and staff members about how these supportive factors might be developed within the school.

Why have I been chosen?
You have been invited to take part as you have been identified by the school as a parent of a student who has previously received a fixed-term exclusion.

Who else is involved?
A small number of students in the school who have previously received fixed-term exclusion and school staff will also be involved in this study. The Educational Psychology Service where the researcher is on placement, as well as the Directors of Education of the Local Authority and the University of Nottingham are the other stakeholders in this research study.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?
You will be asked to take part in an interview with the researcher in which you will be asked questions about your positive experiences of your child's school. If you wish to be involved, this will be arranged at a convenient time for you. You have the right to not take part or withdraw from the process at any time. You will also be asked to participate in later collaborative group discussions and planning between staff, students and parents about how the positive factors identified by all participants might be best developed within the school.

What happens to the data collected?
The responses from the interview will be audio-recorded, analysed and written up for a doctoral thesis. Any quotations or information will be anonymised in reports and group feedback.

How is confidentiality maintained?
The school and participant's names will not be identified in the study. All data will be stored securely and destroyed when it is no longer needed.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. If your child has also been asked to participate, this will not affect their involvement, unless you also wish for them to not participate. This will not affect your child's access to the Educational Psychology Service.

My child has also been asked to participate in this research. Can they still be involved, even if I do not want to?
This form is regarding whether you would like to involved in the research yourself as a parent participant. If you do not want to be involved, but would like for your child to participate, they can still do so provided you give your consent for this on the separate Student Consent Form (For Parents).

What is the duration of the research?
The research process will last for approximately one academic year.

Where will the research be conducted?
The interview will take place in a quiet, private room in the school. You will be informed of the location if you choose to take part.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?
The research findings will be written up as part of a doctoral thesis for the Professional Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology at

the University of Nottingham. The findings from the study will also be fed back to the school and the Educational Psychology Service as well as the Directors of Education of the Local Authority.

Criminal Records Check
The researcher has undergone a satisfactory criminal records check.

Contact for further information
Researcher email: elaine.looney@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor email: nick.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk
What if something goes wrong? If you have any complaints about the study, please contact: Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee) stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk

Consent Form (For Parent Participants)

School of Psychology

Consent Form

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Title of Project: *An Appreciative Inquiry of positive factors and supportive strategies which enable secondary school students who have experienced fixed-term exclusion to be successful in their school environment.*

Ethics Approval Number or Taught Project Archive Number:

Researcher(s): Elaine Looney [e-mail: elaine.looney@nottingham.ac.uk]

Supervisor(s): Nick Durbin [nick.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk]

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below: **Please Initial Box**

☐ I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above study

☐ I have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

☐ I agree that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

☐ I agree that the interviews will be audio recorded

☐ I agree to the use of anonymous quotes

☐ I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form

"This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time."

Signature of the Participant: Date:

Name (in block capitals)

I have explained the study to the above participant and he/she has agreed to take part

Signature of researcher/school staff member: Date:



Parent Information/Consent Sheet

Your child's school is currently participating in a research study. The outcomes of this research will be reported as part of a doctoral thesis and assessed as part of the researcher's Professional Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology at the University of Nottingham. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss with others if you wish. Please ask if you would like any further information. Please take time to decide whether you wish your child to take part.

Who will conduct the research?
Elaine Looney, Trainee Educational Psychologist, University of Nottingham.

Title of the Research
An Appreciative Inquiry of positive factors and supportive strategies which enable secondary school students who have experienced fixed-term exclusion to be successful in their school environment.

What would your child be asked to do if they took part?
You child has been recently invited to participate in a tutor group activity with school staff in which students are asked their views about how their school experience could be improved, by creating drawings or writing down some of their ideas. It is hoped that these students' views can be anonymously shared with the researcher by

school staff for use in this study (no names used). The researcher will not be meeting directly with your child as part of this activity. Your child's name will not be shared with the researcher. The information shared with the researcher will not contain any details which could identify your child.

How is confidentiality maintained?
The school and participants' names will not be identified in the study. All data will be stored securely and destroyed when it is no longer needed.

What happens if I do not want my child to take part?
If you have any objection to your child's views being used for the purposes of this research study, please advise school staff of this by December 20th 2017.

Contact for further information
Researcher email: elaine.looney@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor email: nick.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk

What if something goes wrong? If you have any complaints about the study, please contact: Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee) stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix P: Debrief Forms

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Title of study: *An Appreciative Inquiry of positive factors and supportive strategies which enable secondary school students who have experienced fixed-term exclusion to be successful in their school environment.*

Researcher: Elaine Looney (email: elaine.looney@nottingham.ac.uk)

Research supervisor: Dr Nick Durbin (email: nick.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk)

10th July, 2017

Hello David*,

It was lovely to meet you at school recently and to get to know more about you, especially about the things you like about school and all the things that are going well for you. I would like to thank you for sharing these so honestly and for taking the time to talk to me. These are some of the things we talked about:

- *You have enjoyed having the option to make subject choices to work on your interests, e.g. motor vehicle*
- *You are happy that you are being supported in (provision) to work towards getting qualifications*

- *Students are listened to by teachers; resolve problems and give help whenever you need it*
- *You feel that having something to work towards has given you a focus and that you feel this has helped your behaviour to improve*
- *You think it is good that staff call parents and give positive feedback about how you are doing*
- *You think it is helpful in (provision) that students have a tutor who they can talk to every day and that if there is a problem, they will help to sort it*
- *You think having visuals in the lesson (examples you can see) is helpful and you feel that teachers in (provision) will always give you help if you ask for it*
- *You have been told that you can get a good grade in Geography and you feel you can work towards this*

As we discussed, I am hoping to visit your school again next term so that we can have a big group discussion between teachers and students about the things that help students to do well at your school.

If you would like to talk more to someone about anything we discussed, you can speak to Ms. X at school.

If you would like to find out more about people you can talk to outside of school about any problems or worries which you might have, you can contact these groups:

- YoungMinds: www.youngminds.org.uk
- The Mix: www.themix.org.uk ; phone: 08088084994
- Childline: www.childline.org.uk ; phone: 0800 1111

I will look forward to meeting you again when I next visit and I wish you all the best for the future.

Best wishes,

Elaine ☺

(Elaine Looney, Trainee Educational Psychologist)

***** psuedonym

Study summary for debrief of all participants



Title of study: *An Appreciative Inquiry of factors which enable success at secondary school for students who have experienced school exclusion*

Researcher: Elaine Looney

(email: elaine.looney@nottingham.ac.uk)

Research supervisor: Dr Nick Durbin

(email: nick.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk)

Many thanks to you for your recent participation in the above research study.

Study aims: The aim of this study was to discover positive and supportive factors which enable students who have experienced fixed-term school exclusion to be successful in a secondary school setting. The views of students, of parents and of school staff about how these positive factors and supportive strategies can be developed to for these students at school were also explored as part of this study.

Outcomes: An Appreciative Inquiry approach was used to discover these positive factors. Some of the factors which students, staff and parents identified included the following:

- *Positive staff-student relationships*: high-quality pastoral support, respectful communication and rapport-building with students by staff.

- *Positive, supportive peer relationships*: students feeling like a 'family', supported by shared experiences, large group activities, and role models.

- *Regular, respectful home-school communication*: phone calls and progress review days focusing on positive, balanced feedback of students' progress.

- *Learning environment*: clear expectations/rules; consistent boundaries; small class groups; quiet environment; high staff-student ratios; rewards systems

- *Lessons*: engaging; "fun"; accessible; use of visual supports; availability of learning support for students

- *Curriculum:* relevant, meaningful and practical; students able to pursue areas of interest and future aspirations; students having new experiences.

- *Ethos*: non-judgemental and nurture-based approach; high expectations; equality & fairness; preparing students for future life

An action plan was created to develop these positive factors within this school. So far, these are some of the following actions which have been carried out:

- More streamlined rewards system with greater consistency for how achievement points/rewards are earned by students
- Weekly 'Star of the Week awards' and 'Subject Achievement' awards
- Tutor time developed
- Talks from colleges for Y9-11 students being planned with (Post-16) service
- Increase in parental contact through weekly positive phone calls
- More personalised approach on progress day/home-school meetings as parents now just meet with form tutor
- Activities for wet break introduced, e.g. table tennis
- More reflection of mainstream practice, e.g. Christmas jumper days
- More large group activities organised, e.g. "one bounce"
- Student Engagement activities scheduled, e.g. local trips

It is hoped that this action plan can continue to be reviewed and that staff can continue to seek the views of the students to support this.

Implications: It is hoped that this study can help other young people within this Local Authority who have experienced school exclusion to be successful at school.

Further information: if you would like any further information about this study, please contact the researcher or her supervisor using the contact details above.

If you would like to find out more about people you can talk to outside of school about any problems or worries which you might have, you can contact these groups:

•YoungMinds: www.youngminds.org.uk

•The Mix: www.themix.org.uk ; phone: 08088084994

•Childline: www.childline.org.uk ; phone: 0800 1111

Thank you once again for your time and participation

Appendix Q: Summary of key findings

Table Q.1: Summary of key findings relating to each Research Questio

Research Question	Appreciative Inquiry Phase	Key Findings
1(a) What facilitative factors within educational provision are perceived to support engagement of students who have experienced FTE within an alternative provision unit in secondary school according to the views of students?	Discover	• Positive, supportive, mutually respectful relationships and communication with staff with high levels of pastoral support • An ethos underpinned by nurture, non-judgement, high expectations, equality and pragmatism • A conducive learning environment • Clear boundaries and expectations, supportive systems for behaviour management • A relevant, meaningful and novel curriculum, of which students have ownership and which prepares them for the future • Accessible, engaging lessons which offer high levels of learning support • Regular home-school communication which offers balanced and positive feedback • Empathetic, positive, supportive peer relationships • Development of feelings of security, competence, autonomy and belonging • Personal choice and the development of intrinsic motivation
1(b) What facilitative factors within educational provision are perceived to support engagement of students who have experienced FTE within an alternative provision unit in secondary school according to	Discover	• An ethos underpinned by the view that behaviour and learning are intrinsic, high expectations, equality, strong staff dedication, student empowerment and an individualised approach which seeks to prepare students for life • A motivating curriculum which prepares students for the future • Positive and supportive staff relationships and communication • Positive peer relationships facilitated by empathy and supportive structures • Regular, respectful and positive home-school communication to build trusting relationships • A well-structured, supportive learning environment which operates clear rules and consistent boundaries

Research Question	Appreciative Inquiry Phase	Key Findings
the views of school staff?		• Learning support characterised by highly differentiated, engaging lessons and exam support • Positive, supportive, trusting staff-student relationships facilitated by pastoral support systems, information-sharing and empathetic, respectful communication • Systemic factors including strong leadership, staff retention, links with mainstream, early intervention and attendance requirements
1(c) What facilitative factors within educational provision are perceived to support engagement of students who have experienced FTE within an alternative provision unit in secondary school according to the views of parents*?*	Discover	• An ethos underpinned by strong staff commitment and an individualised approach • An engaging, motivating, practical curriculum • A learning environment underpinned by supportive, well-structured systems and effective leadership • Positive peer relationships and dynamics, facilitated by provision initiatives and management • Supportive, encouraging and nurturing staff who offer learning and pastoral support which facilitates trusting staff-student relationships • Regular home-school communication through facilitative systems, which offers balanced and positive feedback to parents which support trusting relationships and positive behaviour change for students
4. *What are staff, student and parent views about how these positive factors and supportive strategies can be used to support improved*	Dream/ Design	• A range of ideas were put forward relating to development of the following: staff-student relationships, rewards systems; curriculum to support aspirations and motivation; home-school communication; empowerment of students; ownership by students of the learning environment; links to mainstream; engaging lessons; peer relationships

Research Question	Appreciative Inquiry Phase	Key Findings
outcomes for young people at risk of exclusion?		
5. *In what ways is an action research approach effective in effecting organisational change in mainstream schools for young people who have experienced school exclusion?*	Deliver	• A range of short-term outcomes were implemented as a result of the action plan developed from the AI • Experience of the AI approach was seen as a positive, shared experience which created a sense of celebration and motivation for participants, generating energy for potential change • Current barriers at the macro-systemic level impede positive change for students deemed 'at risk' of school exclusion

Appendix R: Additional participant quotations

Student Participants

Lessons

…we're doing like different stories which we've never heard before and it's interesting (Sophie)

…she'll normally stick a piece of paper in our book and we'll have three or four different colours... And we know what's what…then, if we've got a test…we can just look at the key (Sophie)

The lessons. They're not too hard and they're not too easy……the teacher gives us the work which is to our standard… to our ability… she'll give us challenge tasks…cos some people are faster than others. (Sophie)

I like it cos it's like challenging…I don't like it when it's too easy… I feel like it's not too simple and it's not hard so it's alright (Kieran)

Learning Environment

you get smaller classrooms… it's quiet (Callum)

I get more work done than in a bigger class... there's not much messing about down here…the teacher can keep an eye on everyone (Sophie)

cos there's not like that many of us they've got more time for us (Mia)

There's no bullies in my class… in (main school) building, it would take you a long time to know everyone (Callum)

Curriculum

It's good cos …you get to go outside and see all the animals (Kieran)

in mainstream, they didn't trust me at all with art…they kept kicking me out every time I went in… and that's one of my best things in here…it's what my best focus is (Brandon)

Systems

… Fridays are rewards…you can do anything, football, basketball…I can choose what I want like laptops and…tennis court, astro, board games (Callum)

…if we're doing something good, he'll let us do something extra (Kieran)

I want to go back to mainstream and that's what we have to do be good (Kieran)

…they're not strict and like they're not too... harsh...they're not easy to follow but they're not too hard (Kieran)

You get more time on laptops (Callum)

…we get to play football (Jason)

Home-School Communication

normally if people ask like 'Can you tell my dad I've had a good day'… that's what they do in here… so when you get back, your Dad's there 'You've had a good day today'… like they do that for you all the time to be honest. (Brandon)

they always ring your mum and dad up (Brandon)

teachers…say that I've been really good, my work's been good, I haven't been as distracted today. Just good stuff like that…and she smiles... (Sophie)

My mum rings them to check as well (Kieran)

…good news and the bad news (Jason)

Peer relationships

…the person next to you…you'll help them and then you'll become friends with them (Sophie)

...football… we just hang around and speak (Jason)

like no one is a bad kid it's just how they're seeing things…like you know if they've grown up from a bad childhood… like in here no one isn't bad it's just they can't manage in mainstream… I can't either to be honest (Brandon)

Staff-Student relationships

if he didn't have done that I would be in a whole different situation…cos he took the time to actually listen to where I was coming from… instead of just going off what other teachers had said (Mia)

their body language…And their facial expressions. (Sophie)

like I know they're listening cos they're not talking so much (Kieran)

They would start off calm, but if the person doesn't listen to the teacher then their voice starts to get louder and they get… more frustrated… (Sophie)

the teacher always says well done... (Sophie)

I had a problem…and I just sat talking to my tutor about it and she was just listening (Mia)

(they)…talk to you and…tell you what's the matter (Callum)

…as soon as I told her, I could tell that ...she was going to do something about it... I could just see her like enthusiasm of like of...wanting to sort it…and then she did (David)

… if we've told them something, they would never go running phoning up our parents (Sophie)

Ethos

they all know that we can all come out with really good grades, it's just whether we put our minds to it…so…they're being like positive and like helping us to see the positivity they see… what they like expect

of us and they think we can come out with, they're trying to show us that we can do it (Mia)

they don't see us like that cos they've got to know us they see us as we just get distracted and we do stupid things when we get distracted, that's how they see us..so they see us in a different light…just as kids being kids really like (Mia)

…in mainstream you get your dinner yourself, but here they send someone to fetch dinner and they read your name out (Callum)

what they have got, they like help really well with it… (Mia)

Self

…I've learned not to be too silly… (Kieran).

Staff Participants

Ethos

student engagement activities…bring in learning that looks very different… the fire service…the sexual health clinic …trying to make the student a rounded person … I think that develops positive relationships because…the students feel like you're really trying for them, you're giving them these experiences…(Staff Participant 3)

a lot of them think they probably haven't got a chance so there's a lot of giving them self-belief…an awful lot of that (Staff Participant 4

Staff relationships and communication

…we just pop into (manager) and just say look…'I've noticed this', it's very much keeping your eyes open all the time… we have a meeting once a week …cos

something will erupt… we're always communicating things, try and tell each other everything...constantly monitoring it (Staff Participant 4)

Peer relationships

a lot of thought is put into how the children can learn …at their utmost…we try to take the distractions away from them… (Staff Participant 4)

the group dynamics are really important…it is essential that is looked at… (Staff Participant 6)

Home-school relationships

…a lot of our parents have had really bad educational experiences themselves and therefore…they come in with that barrier already and that negative feeling about education and about schooling… I think a lot of it is about being realistic…but then giving them a solution…(Staff Participant 3)

… I always start with 'this is a courtesy call, is it convenient to talk?' and to be honest I just think they like to talk to a human being level… not lecturing them… if you're involved with them on their terms and their language…(Staff Participant 2)

it helps them when something bad's happened...they believe you or if you've got any problems they'll take it on board a lot more… then you form a relationship with the parents don't you … if you're doing the whole picture… they'll believe you and take it on board (Staff Participant 4)

… I think a lot of it is about being realistic…but then giving them a solution… (Staff Participant 3)

Learning environment

…they're in uniform, there's ties, there's lessons…there's classrooms, there's dedicated staff…it's more operational…that's what they need, these kids need structure (Staff Participant 2)

(manager) has made this look…a lot more like…a working environment rather than a youth club…we have introduced a structure and…they've got proper timetables, proper lessons, designated teachers staff

at designated times and they…know the structure of the day which keeps them calmer (Staff Participant 4)

that's something we've all talked about in our meetings…you've got to have a structure otherwise you can lose them (Staff Participant 4)

…where there's been an incident, getting back to the norm as quickly as we can (Staff Participant 5)

…firm and fair with them…so they know if they misbehave what will happen (Staff Participant 4)

Learning Support

I think they like visual stuff…they don't like writing a lot so…really good visuals on the board …she gets them to speak about stuff instead of instead of asking them … to write it down…she'll discuss it throughout the lesson…and keeps them engaged in that way ...they do like visual stuff so anything that's visual is a good lesson really (Staff Participant 4)

Staff-Student relationships

they know we've got a system as well so if it's a safeguarding issue we've got to go through that but they're still prepared to talk to you about that and I think that is a big part of going forward and having that trust and they feel safe here (Staff Participant 2)

you naturally bond with different ones… or they come to you… you keywork the children...there is one young man who follows me everywhere and we chat… he seems to have attached to me so if he's about to flare up he comes and finds me and mostly I try to get it out of him and we have a walk and a talk…(Staff Participant 4)

we're talking about relationships and one of the teachers said to them what kind of relationships do you have with Miss and one of them said it's friendship, now although I wouldn't like to call them

my friends… I think that they do kind of perceive staff… they see us as humans (Staff Participant 5)

I think again it boils down to the relationships that you have with how much people trust you to give you that information… that's with everybody: staff, students, parents (Staff Participant 3)

they do respect the extra time and…support that they do get (Staff Participant 2)

here we tend to know what's going on in a child's life at home, relationships here, relationships out of school…things with the police, stuff like that…we've got … quite a good picture of what could be going on in that child's head…(Staff Participant 4)

Systemic Factors

… the support is increasing and that feels good, it feels right…we're linking in… the outcome is going to be better for the students… we're going to go to their meetings and we'll have access to their resources … this is more of a structure…for every subject which is going to benefit us as a unit…that's a real positive … it's like a bigger team…(Staff Participant 6)

Parent Participants

Curriculum

I think it occupies him…gives him something to do. He's one of them lads where he's got to be occupied (Parent Participant 4)

I think she was offered more opportunities here (Parent Participant 1)

Staff-student relationships

they're all nice, they've done really well (Parent Participant 4)

they do…bring her round and say look this is why we're doing this…so as long as they explain…why certain things are done, it's all good (Parent Participant 2)

… teachers taking time out for him… if he's got somebody to talk to, if he can't talk to me about something then he can talk to somebody…as long as he's getting whatever's on his chest off… when he keeps things in, I think it festers (Parent Participant 5)

Peer Relationships

...I was concerned about (my child) being hurt by certain people…I did talk to the teachers about it… I think it got resolved… Parent Participant 1)

Not messin' about with the wrong crowd… cos he's a bit easily led…he's in (the provision) now, they're over there…I don't have any problems… (Parent Participant 3)

Ethos

I think they're doing what they can to be honest…I think if they know something to do different they would…I think they try all sorts with them…they do their best to do what they can… I mean they could have left him there…to be the way he is and that but I think they've done really well (Parent Participant 3)

Learning Environment

I believe that because of the smaller classes that children …can function a lot better cos it's more structured… there's a really good set timetable… they have got the time to help a child that that maybe needs a little bit more… it's just the calmness and it's regimented… it needs to be to and I think the children…enjoy it being regimented (Parent Participant 2)

Home-School Communication

You can find out more about what he's like in social situations with other kids (Parent Participant 5)

… you know who the teachers are… (Parent Participant 3)

You're informed… it keeps you in touch with what's happening (Parent Participant 5)

They will contact you …if the situation happens to be good or bad…every opportunity they will inform you if there's an issue or if she's done well…They'll phone you when she's done really well as well which is good…Cos…all I got from the mainstream school was…negative phone calls all the time (Parent Participant 2)

it's a weight off me shoulders as well (Parent Participant 4)

…I think he's come out his shell a bit more… he's more talkative (Parent Participant 5)

Dreams

I think they're doing what they can to be honest…I think if they know something to do different they would… (Parent Participant 3)

Table R.1 Staff quotations relating to experience of the AI process and AI as action research

Staff observation	**AI Phase**	**Inference**
I'm just thinking out loud now… it might be worth looking at maybe whether the Year 11s actually mentor the younger ones…I've never really thought about that before, I'm just thinking about it now since we're talking	Discover	AI as an intervention, generating innovation for change through discussion
"This is really uplifting to hear" *"We need this at the moment"* *"boost"* *"injection"*	Feedback of Discover Phase	AI creating a sense of celebration, morale boost and motivation for staff

"perfect timing…morale's been bad…" *"it's nice that they see the big picture"* *"some of the parents' comments coming through are really nice to see…there is that feel that we're doing something right"* *"this is quite nice to feed back to the wider school isn't it"* *"…that the lessons are fun and they are actually enjoying them cos we put a lot of time into our lessons…at times you can lose that focus… but…it's put me back on"* *"Seems to me that they get what we're trying to do here"*		
"what impressed me the most was the maturity of the answers, cos we don't see a lot of that generally…it's probably credit to the questions that you asked…it shocked me in a positive way and impressed me the depth of some of the answers" *"…get more out of the students"*	Feedback of Discover Phase	Value of researcher as an objective, external party
"cos we are always aiming...we forget how young they are…they want to be kids…to have their own time and space to learn things the fun way"	Dream	AI increasing empathy for student views in staff
"(Dream) evolved over a couple of days, couple of weeks…nice process for them to go through…you can see the journey they have been on...we have made progress"	Dream	AI as a process and positive experience shared between staff and students

"staff got a lot out of Dream with kids" *"they got quite into it at the end"*		
"Throughout this, I've been thinking 'it would be nice to do this' but if we get special measures, we could be gone" *“A lot of people in education know what should be happening but can’t make it happen”* *“Ofsted and government don’t recognise or value any of this”* *“staff won’t have the say when the academy comes in…responsibility has been taken away”*	Design/ Deliver	Macro-systemic influences and impending change presenting a barrier to AI/ effecting positive change