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Primary school staff's understanding and perceptions of their own and the school role in meeting the social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs of all pupils: A grounded theory exploration.

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Abstract

Within the UK, awareness and concern regarding the importance of children and young people's (CYP's) social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) has gained momentum (DfE, 2015; DoH & DfE, 2017; The Guardian, 2017). Government policy emphasises the statutory role that school professionals have in promoting CYP's SEMH, with the importance of a whole-school approach stressed (DoH & DfE, 2017). Whilst literature related to school staff's views of issues relating to pupil SEMH is apparent, few studies have been focused on primary schools within the UK. Furthermore, they have failed to sample a range of staff roles. The present study aims to extend understanding and the evidence base through exploration of a range of primary school staff's perceptions of their own and the school's role in relation to all pupils' SEMH, while in turn aiming to provide practice implications for schools and educational psychologists (EPs) and help inform development at a wider level. The study employs constructivist grounded theory methodology, as guided by Charmaz (2014). Data was gathered through semi-structured interview with six members of primary school staff, who each had different roles. Data analysis followed processes advocated by Charmaz (2014), with theoretical sensitisation of outcomes facilitated through a focused review of literature. Through consideration of literature in organisational culture, theories of identity, social constructionism and organisational learning, a theoretical framework from grounded findings is provided. The grounded theory focuses on school ethos, culture and values as underpinning and perpetuating all actions and processes within schools that relate to how school staff engage with and promote pupil SEMH. The constructed framework also integrates notions of identities as educators, organisational growth, and adaption to challenge, change and demands and perceives communication as an integral, multi-functional tool. Insight provides implications for the professional practice of EPs and insight in relation to development within the local context of the local authority (LA). Limitations of the study are acknowledged, and recommendations for further research to address these are presented.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and interests of the author

From a personal perspective, the researcher had reflected upon her previous role as a primary school teacher, which she had left prior to the introduction of the term ‘social, emotional and mental health’ (SEMH) (DfE, 2015). Looking back on her time as a teacher, she is unable to recall receiving training relating to developing her own or other staff members’ understanding of pupil social and emotional wellbeing and mental health. Conversely, she recalls attending internal and external training regarding reading, writing and maths. In addition to gaps presented in research and the changing political and social scene, the researcher’s experience as a teacher led her to personally reflect upon how staff understood and made sense of their role in relation to pupil SEMH. The researcher’s interest in children and young people’s SEMH was further fuelled in her following role as an assistant educational psychologist. Within this role she was often commissioned by schools to engage in a range of work with children who presented with troubled and challenging behaviour. This experience further led the researcher to question how school staff understood pupil SEMH and their own and the school’s role in relation to this.

The explorative nature of this study and its social constructionist epistemology appealed and aligned strongly with the researcher’s own beliefs and way of thinking about and viewing the world. From this perspective, the researcher holds the view that the social world can only be understood as multiple, subjective, personal constructions. Consequently, the researcher considered and recognised herself as integral to the processes of data collection and analysis, viewing meaning and outcomes as being socially constructed through their interactions with interviewees and data and resultant from her personal and subjective interpretations throughout the research process.

1.2 Context and positioning of the current study

Aligning with the exploratory purpose of the research, the present study adopts a social constructionist epistemology and a relative ontology. Driven by the social constructionist paradigm, the current study aimed to explore and explain

the social phenomenon of primary school staff members' understanding and perceptions in relation to all pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) through constructivist grounded theory methodology. From the researcher's personal perspective, it was advocated that exploration and examination through a social constructionist view of the world would illuminate and provide deeper understanding of the studied research topic.

The present research reflects current governmental and societal priorities regarding the promotion and improvement of children and young people's (CYPs) SEMH and the role and responsibility of all schools and school professionals in relation to this. More so, employment of a comprehensive whole-school approach is asserted, with guidance and policy emphasising the need for schools to work preventatively and to effectively support CYPs SEMH through school culture and structures (DfE, 2016). Impetus for the SEMH of CYP is also reflected within the local context of the present research, with the researcher's placement local authority (LA) also focused on developing processes, structures and systems in relation to improving SEMH outcomes. It is advocated that, through application of their unique psychological knowledge and skills, educational psychologists (EPs) are ideally placed to positively contribute to the promotion of CYPs SEMH and are suitably qualified to work with schools (British Psychological Society, 2018). Despite this, they appear to be an underrepresented group within recent government proposals (DfE, 2016). This study was therefore considered particularly relevant and aimed to provide valuable practice implications for EPs. Creating further links between research and practice, the study also aimed to illuminate implications for school organisations and professionals and to provide informative insights at a strategic, LA level.

Employment of constructivist grounded theory methodology within the current research was driven by both the social constructionist epistemology and identification by the researcher of a need to develop awareness of the explored phenomenon through a more rigorous methodology (Charmaz, 2014). The research was conducted by a trainee educational psychologist within the LA in which she was on placement for the second and third years of her training. The

research was completed as part of her doctoral training at The University of Nottingham.

1.3 Overview of chapters

- Chapter 2 provides a first literature review that was conducted prior to the research process. The literature review is deliberately broad and provides background and contextualisation for the rationale and aims of the current study.
- Chapter 3 provides details of the methodology for the current study. Epistemological and ontological foundations of the study are discussed, and the details of constructivist grounded theory method and design employed within the study are presented. An evaluation of the study's quality and ethical considerations are also addressed.
- Chapter 4 presents the results from the researcher's analysis of obtained data. Findings are supported by direct quotations taken from interview transcripts.
- Chapter 5 presents a second literature review that focuses on theory and literature that provide insight into and understanding of areas of analysis considered pertinent.
- Chapter 6 provides the grounded theory for the present study, as was constructed through data gathered and analysed and consideration of the theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter 5.
- Chapter 7 presents the discussion. Critical reflection of the present study in relation to existing literature and research reviewed in Chapter 2 is presented. Discussion then turns to the distinct contribution of the present study, implications for EP practice and for the LA, evaluation of the study's quality, strengths and limitations, and areas for future research. Finally, the researcher presents her personal reflections of the research journey.
- Chapter 8 provides the conclusion to the current study. An overall summary is presented that highlights the study's findings, unique contribution and implications.

2 Literature Review – Part 1

2.1 Introduction

In grounded theory research, it is advocated that a review of existing research should not be conducted before data is collected (Nathaniel, 2006). Rather, theory should be constructed naturally from the collected data. From this perspective, it is suggested that completion of a thorough literature review prior to commencing research can lead a researcher's analysis to be constrained and imposed upon by existing knowledge of theoretical concepts and research evidence (Dunne, 2011; Nathaniel, 2006). Through delaying the literature review, researchers are inherently encouraged to develop and articulate their own ideas, rather than force their data into pre-existing ideas and concepts (Charmaz, 2014).

Despite such an approach being advocated, it is acknowledged that this recommendation can often cause tension for postgraduate students, with funded degrees and ethics committees typically requiring the researcher to justify their research by demonstrating knowledge of the field of inquiry through a literature review (Ramalho, Adams, Huggard & Hoare, 2015). Furthermore, when considering the grounded theory methodology employed in the current research, it is asserted that researchers cannot be removed from their existing knowledge and need to situate themselves and their work within the current discourse (Charmaz, 2006). However, through proactive focus on the data and active, ongoing acknowledgement and accounting of their preconceptions, Charmaz (2006) advocates that researchers can ensure their work is grounded.

Recognising the need to fulfil doctoral expectations and considering the aforementioned standpoints, two reviews of literature are presented within the present doctoral thesis. The researcher firstly conducted a purposefully broad literature review, which was completed prior to the research project. Whilst ensuring their influence from previously conceptualised theory and research findings from studies remained limited, the first literature review provides all stakeholders with clear context, background and rationale for the present study. An initial literature review was also needed to provide evidence that there was a gap in research, thus ensuring the current research, or something similar, had

not been conducted before. Such contextualisation supported a rationale for conducting the study and highlighted the unique contribution towards the evidence base (Hallberg, 2010).

Following the conventions of grounded theory methodology, a second literature review was conducted once all data had been collected and analysed. This was undertaken to facilitate and endorse the development of arising theoretical codes and conceptual categories and to support theoretical sensitisation towards development of the study's final grounded theory (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014).

2.2 Terminology

Aiming to ensure clarification and a shared understanding of the term social, emotional and mental health (SEMH), its use in this study and commonly associated terms, an exploration of terminology is provided.

In defining social, emotional and mental health (SEMH), the revised Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (SEND CoP) (DfE, 2015) states that:

> *6.32 Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour. These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other children and young people may have disorders such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder.*
>
> (DfE, 2015, p.98)

Superseding the terms social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, it is argued the that term SEMH shifts focus away from behavioural difficulties being viewed as a special educational need (SEN) and towards a shared understanding that behaviours are symptomatic of underlying and unmet social, emotional and mental health needs (DfE, 2015; Nasen, 2015).

Within the contexts of education and health, a variety of terms, including ‘emotional wellbeing’ and ‘mental health’ (DfE, 2016; House of Commons, 2017; Public Health England, 2015) are widely presented within government guidance, policy and agendas and often used interchangeably. Traditionally the term ‘mental health’ has often been criticised for the associated negative public stigma it creates and the resulting impact this may potentially have upon opportunities that define the quality of life (Corrigan & Watson, 2002). However, the Mental Health Foundation (2016) provides a broader conceptualisation of ‘mental health’, one that moves away from associated negative stigma and encompasses concepts of creativity, social functioning and emotions. It is considered that all of these concepts can also be understood through the term SEMH.

For this study, the term SEMH will predominantly be used, providing an overarching term that reflects increased national focus on the concepts of social wellbeing, emotional wellbeing and mental health being understood and perceived as intrinsically integrated. Reflecting terminology presented in literature, guidance and policy, the terms ‘mental health’ and ‘emotional wellbeing’ are also referred to. However, this is within the understanding they can be understood within the umbrella term SEMH. Given the data collection method employed in the current study, other terms may also be used to express and represent the views and beliefs of others, including terms such as ‘mental wellbeing’.

In this study, the term ‘primary school’ refers to educational establishments in England for children typically aged 4–11 years old (Jackson, 2014). Within the present study, ‘primary age’ is defined by the ages of children typically attending primary school. This includes Foundation Stage (4–5 years), Key Stage One (5–7 years) and Key Stage Two (7–11 years) (Jackson, 2014).

2.3 Prevalence and impact of the issue of SEMH

2.3.1 Prevalence

Statistics published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in 1999 (Meltzer, Gatward, Goodman & Ford, 2000) and 2004 (Green, McGinnity, Meltzer, Ford & Goodman, 2005) reported that 10% of all CYP aged between 5–16 years of age

had some form of clinically significant mental health condition that impacted upon their ability to function purposefully. Disorders most commonly diagnosed included conduct disorders, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and emotional disorders, such as anxiety and depression (Public Health England, 2016). Furthermore, the survey reported that 7.7% of children aged 5–10 years old had a mental health disorder. More recently published statistics generated from a survey completed in 2017 (NHS Digital, 2018), which examined the mental health and wellbeing of CYP, found that one in ten primary aged children living in England have an SEMH disorder, with behavioural and emotional disorders identified as most common.

A growing body of evidence has presented statistical information regarding the prevalence of SEMH-related difficulties in children within primary school education. Findings published from the Millennium Cohort Study (Patalay & Fitzsimons, 2017), a longitudinal study that explored mental health amongst children aged 3, 5, 7 and 14 years old, provide recent figures on the prevalence of SEMH difficulties. Overall, findings demonstrate rising levels of SEMH needs amongst primary aged children. It was reported that emotional difficulties, such as feeling anxious and depressed, increased yearly throughout childhood for both boys and girls. Conduct and behaviour problems were also shown to have increased slightly between the ages of 7 and 14 years, across both sexes.

Research evidence presented by Place2Be (2017), a national charity providing emotional support to children in schools, further illuminates prevalent SEMH issues in primary-school aged children. In a sample of 705 children in their final year at primary school, two thirds of children reported that they ‘worry all the time’, with the top three concerns identified as being related to family, friends being okay, and not doing well at school. Furthermore, 30% of children reported that they can’t stop worrying once they start and, when feeling worried, one fifth shared that they didn’t know what to do. Such evidence highlights a national concern that deserves further exploration.

2.3.2 Impact of the issue of SEMH

Research suggests the SEMH competencies of CYP are highly influential in determining both short term and future outcomes across the lifespan.

The negative impact of SEMH difficulties on educational experiences and outcomes are illuminated within research and literature, with it being documented that such difficulties are associated with lower academic competence and achievement (Deighton et al., 2018; Moilanen, Shaw & Maxwell, 2010; Nelson, Benner, Lane & Smith, 2004; Obradović, Burt & Masten, 2010). Furthermore, cascading effects are apparent, with some SEMH needs in early and middle school-aged periods contributing to lower academic achievement during adolescence (Moilanen et al., 2010; Obradović et al., 2010).

In addition to impacting learning and academic outcomes, there are indications that SEMH needs during childhood and adolescence are also correlated with negative, long term effects on later life outcomes. Studies indicate that individuals who experience SEMH issues during childhood can experience a range of difficulties during adulthood, including finding it much harder to secure and maintain employment (Goodman, Joyce & Smith, 2011; Wagner, Newman, Cameto & Levine, 2005), being at increased risk of early adult mortality (Jokela, Ferie & Kivimäki, 2009) and experiencing lower levels of life satisfaction (Richards & Huppert, 2011).

A body of research has also evidenced that long-term, negative life trajectories are associated with experiencing SEMH needs during primary school age. SEMH related difficulties experienced at the ages of 5 and 10 are both correlated with increased risk of obesity at the age of 30 (White, Nicholls, Christie, Cole & Viner, 2012). From their review of literature, Goodman, Joshi, Nasim and Tyler (2015) assert that SEMH related difficulties during primary age are a powerful predictor of SEMH problems during adulthood. SEMH related difficulties during childhood have also been found to lead to increased risk of substance abuse, suicidal acts, anxiety disorders and of committing a criminal offence in early adulthood (Fergusson, Horwood & Ridder, 2004).

2.4 The national context

2.4.1 Context of policy and legislation

Within the UK, there is growing awareness and concern regarding the importance of CYP's SEMH, both within the media and within national

government policy, agenda and guidance (DoH & DfE, 2017; The Guardian, 2017; Webster, 2017). Furthermore, the SEMH of primary-aged pupils is increasingly publicised within the public domain (Busby, 2018; Rudgard, 2018; Westbrook, 2018). The role of schools and all school staff in supporting the SEMH of all CYP is also emphasised and prioritised within health and education documentation (DfE, 2016, DoH & DfE, 2017). In addition, the importance of early intervention within schools is established (DoH & DfE, 2017; House of Commons, 2014), with increased focus upon preventing SEMH problems from developing or escalating.

It is evident that focus on CYP's SEMH has gained momentum over time, with elevated attention apparent within the current political climate (Children and Families Act 2014; DfE, 2015; DfE, 2016; DoH & DfE, 2017). Nearly 20 years ago, the government issued guidance for LAs, schools, early years settings and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), asserting the importance of a collaborative and integrated approach to working between health and education. The aim of this was advocated as being to help promote the mental health and emotional wellbeing of all CYP (DfEE, 2001). Since then, subsequent policy and guidelines have continued to advocate for the promotion of CYP's SEMH, reinforcing the value and crucial nature of multi-agency working between health and education (DfE, 2015; DfE, 2016; Public Health England, 2015). More recently, significant changes have been brought about through the Children and Families Act 2014 and publication of the revised SEND CoP (DfE, 2015), which emphasises recognition of SEMH as a category of special educational need.

At the moment, CYP's SEMH remains a high priority within government development; highlighted through recent publication of *Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: A Green Paper* (DoH & DfE, 2017). Reflecting ever-increasing impetus being placed on CYP's SEMH, this agenda sets out proposals to help ensure all CYP have access to high-quality SEMH support in order to live happy and fulfilling lives. The document proposes a new approach to supporting and promoting CYP's mental health and emotional wellbeing, one which promotes joint working between schools, colleges and health providers and introduces the concept of 'Mental Health

Support Teams' and identification of a 'Designated Senior Leader for Mental Health' in every school and college. Whilst acknowledged as ambitious, these proposals aim to be rolled out to at least 20-25% of the country by the end of 2022/2023. Ultimately, such proposals could introduce a new era for how pupil SEMH is understood and they underpin a need for schools, school professionals and external agencies to redevelop and reconsider how they engage with and address such issues. Consequently, the current study presents as timely, with the aim of adding to the evidence base through exploration of primary school staff's understanding and perceptions of their own and the school's role in relation to pupil SEMH. In doing so it is aimed this will provide valuable implications for professional practice within schools and for external agencies.

2.4.2 The role of schools in relation to pupil SEMH

Literature emphasises the important role that schools have in promoting and supporting CYP's SEMH. In particular, it is advocated that pupil SEMH is 'everyone's business' (Weare, 2015); insisting that all school staff have a statutory duty to be involved in the promotion of all CYP's wellbeing, including those with SEN (DfE, 2015; Education and Inspections Act 2006; Public Health England, 2014; Weare, 2015). Given the high proportion of time CYP spend within a school environment, it is asserted that schools are a key place to shape CYP's wellbeing and that they have a duty to create environments that are conducive to promoting and supporting positive SEMH development (World Health Organisation, 2003).

Notably, the importance of a 'whole-school' approach is stressed by both health and education (DoH & DfE, 2017; House of Commons, 2017; Public Health England, 2015). Public Health England (2014) defines a whole-school approach as 'one that goes beyond the learning and teaching in the classroom to pervade all aspects of the life of a school' (Public Health England, 2014, p. 10).

Encompassed within a whole-school approach, the organisational features of a school and coherent working between all staff are emphasised. Such characteristics are deemed vital in assisting development of a school culture, ethos and environment that helps improve SEMH outcomes for all CYP (Public

Health England, 2014; World Health Organisation, 2003). In relation to school organisation, it is stated that aspects such as clear policies in key areas of school functioning are of great importance in promoting CYP's SEMH (Hornby & Atkinson, 2003).

Guidance for schools regarding their role in supporting and improving targets for pupil emotional and behavioural development was first provided by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2001 (DfES, 2001). In addition to setting criteria for how to assess pupils' emotional and behavioural development, the document emphasised the importance of school-wide understanding and planning in supporting wider improvement processes. Proceeding from this, various government strategy papers and other published guidelines further stressed the duty of schools in supporting CYP's SEMH (DCSF, 2010; DCSF & DoH, 2008; NICE, 2008). In 2008, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE, 2008) published guidelines for promoting social and emotional wellbeing in primary education. This document also specified the need for primary school settings to promote all CYP's social and emotional wellbeing through adoption of a comprehensive, whole-school approach.

Reflecting national efforts and schools' potential role in supporting CYP's SEMH, several whole-school, evidence-based initiatives and policies have been published, focused on early intervention and prevention, for example, *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning* (DfE, 2005), *Targeted Mental Health in Schools* [TaMHS] (DCSF, 2008) and *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003). These have targeted schools' responsibility to create a culture that promotes every child's SEMH. Research evidence from targeted programmes strengthens the assertion that work embedded within a whole-school approach that changes organisational environments and instils positive changes throughout a school is most effective in promoting SEMH (Banerjee, Weare & Farr, 2014; Greenberg, Domitrovich & Bumbarger, 2001; Weare & Nind, 2011).

The importance of early intervention within schools is also highlighted, with school staff being considered well positioned to identify pupils who may be presenting with behaviours that suggest they are experiencing SEMH difficulties and to ensure actions are taken to prevent these from escalating and becoming

clinically significant (Weare, 2015). However, rather than short-term intervention, it is claimed that for prevention to be successful and long-term benefits to be observed, an ongoing approach must be fostered by schools, one that is characterised by classroom- and school-level organisational changes that provide continuous encouragement, reinforcement and instruction that enables the positive development of SEMH in all pupils (Greenberg at al., 2003). Correspondingly, the importance and effectiveness of early identification and ongoing intervention, particularly within pre-school and primary school, is emphasised (Green, Howes, Waters, Maher & Oberklaid, 2005; Greenberg et al., 2001; Hall, 2010; Wolpert, Humphrey, Belsky & Deighton, 2013).

Recognition of the importance of early intervention and whole-school promotion around SEMH is illuminated in more recent publications (DfE, 2016; Public Health England, 2015), with specific evidence and information regarding intervention for primary school pupils being provided in *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools: Departmental Advice for School Staff* (DfE, 2016). This document advocates the need for all schools to inhabit cultures and structures that effectively support CYP's mental health and emotional wellbeing. Additionally, documentation further stresses the formal responsibility of all school staff to identify and provide provision for CYP's SEMH needs (DfE, 2015). Nevertheless, Weare (2015) acknowledges the critical nature of school staff members' own wellbeing and the impact this may have on their capacity and ability to promote the SEMH of pupils. Consequently, as part of a whole-school approach, recognition is given to the importance of schools embracing a climate and ethos that acknowledges staff stress and that takes measures to ensure the SEMH needs of all teaching staff are met.

In summary, the educational scene is continuing to evolve, with ever-increasing focus upon the importance of improving CYP's SEMH explicitly within current government policies, guidance and initiatives. At present, emphasis continues to be placed upon the roles and responsibilities of schools in promoting the SEMH of CYP. Distinctly, the importance of employing a whole-school approach is evident, with significant responsibility placed upon schools in taking an active role in facilitating and ensuring the early prevention of SEMH difficulties. Additionally, the obligation placed upon all school staff for promoting pupil

SEMH is abundantly apparent. In respect of increasing responsibilities placed upon schools and teaching professionals and governmental priorities in relation to CYP's SEMH, it appears timely to try to develop greater insight into how school staff understand and perceive their own role and the whole school's role in relation to all pupils' SEMH. Therefore, the present study is considered pertinent and warranted, with completion of the research aiming to illuminate understanding in this area and provide practice implications for schools in relation to pupil SEMH.

2.5 The local context

Within the context of the LA of the current study, development priorities for the next three years have recently been set out within departmental strategic plans for services to children and families. Such plans are driven by the LA's vision, mission and values and are focused on the development of services and practice, which the educational psychology service (EPS) falls under. This includes continually developing to ensure all CYP within the LA are safe and reach their full potential, and that positive outcomes are promoted. This includes improving health, wellbeing and life chances. One strategic priority is focused on improving the SEMH of every child and young person within the LA. Whilst focus on improving CYP's SEMH is already established within the LA, plans assert that the prevalence and impact of poor emotional health and wellbeing on children and young people is not yet fully understood by the range of LA agencies working with children and their families. Consequently, reflecting evolving governmental priorities, such strategy advocates the need to continue to develop structures, processes and provisions that ensure the SEMH needs of all CYP continue to be met.

In addition to these plans, the LA has also established strategic plans specifically related to special educational needs and disability (SEND). Plans include developing the EPS and the traded offer in order to support mainstream schools to develop their SEND provision. Focus is also placed upon considering the development of SEMH provision across both primary and secondary schools. Consequently, as well as being in line with the national context, the current research also aligns with local priorities. Thus, further exploration

around the topic of CYP's SEMH is warranted, aiming to contribute knowledge and learning to both EPS practice and wider LA development.

2.6 A role for educational psychologists

It is asserted that, through application of their psychological knowledge and skills, EPs are well placed to make a unique contribution within the education system (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009). The range of work to which EPs can apply their theoretical knowledge in order to create positive change is highlighted, including their role within promoting CYP's SEMH (Dawson & Singh-Dhesi, 2010; Roffey, 2015). Whilst traditionally the EP role had been conceptualised as functioning at the level of the individual child or young person, it is recognised that EPs partake in a breadth of work, utilising their psychological knowledge and skills across a range of different contexts and levels and with a variety of role partners (Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010). This includes using their psychological expertise to be agents of change for SEMH in schools (Roffey, 2015). Through therapeutic intervention, assessment and consultation and work across individual, group and organisational levels (Atkinson, Bragg, Squires, Wasilewski & Muscutt, 2012; Farrell et al., 2006), it is postulated that EPs are a key resource for working with schools to support CYP's SEMH (Atkinson, Corban & Templeton, 2011).

Review of EP practice has illustrated how the structure and operationalisation of the role is influenced by the socio-political context (Fallon et al., 2010; Farrell et al., 2006; Love, 2009; Stobie, 2002). Reflecting rising levels of CYP presenting with SEMH difficulties and increased waiting times and shortfalls in CAMHS availability for delivering therapeutic intervention (Stallard, Udwin, Goddard & Hibbert, 2007), Rait, Monsen and Squires (2010) highlight the consequential impact of this in changing the face of EP work. Combined with schools' obligations to promote CYP's SEMH, they note that such factors will result in schools seeking work from EPs. Such demand is arguably reflected in government survey data published in 2013 (DfE, 2014), which indicated that EPs reported greater demand for non-statutory services from schools. However, although the exact nature of this work was not detailed, a recent small-scale study conducted by Lee and Woods (2017) corroborated the assertion that EPs are 'filling in the gaps' created by other services.

Despite the unique knowledge and skills they possess, the contributions they can make and government emphasis on the crucial nature of multi-agency working in tackling difficulties related to SEMH, the EP role appears underrepresented and overlooked. Seemingly, within most recent government publications EPs are either excluded entirely (Public Health England, 2015) or referred to only once (DoH & DfE, 2017). Indeed, in response to current government proposals (DoH & DfE, 2017), concern has been raised over this matter, with EPs being described as a professionally trained workforce who are most suitably qualified to work directly with schools (British Psychological Society, 2018). Furthermore, it is argued EPs play an integral part in such agenda and are well placed to make a positive contribution; using their knowledge and skill set to support schools in relation to SEMH education (Association of Educational Psychologists, 2018). Considering the assertion that EPs are ideally placed to make a positive contribution in relation to CYP's SEMH but are minimally recognised in recent government publications, it is clear that further research which may provide implications for EP practice is warranted. Through exploration of primary school staff members' understanding and perceptions in relation to their own and their school's role with regard to pupil SEMH, it is considered that the present study may provide valuable insight into the unique practice that EPs can offer in relation to pupil SEMH.

2.7 Theoretical perspectives

This section aims to briefly present the theoretical perspectives that have informed the current study. It is felt important by the researcher that such theoretical perspectives are considered at this stage, supporting the rationale for the purpose and design of the current study. During the time of writing the current literature review, the researcher was engaged in the taught 'Strategic Psychology in Schools' module of the doctoral training course. It was considered by the researcher that their existing knowledge regarding systems and organisational theory could not be ignored, but, reflecting the methodology employed, they could ensure methodological integrity and grounding of the present research through ongoing reflexivity and the prioritising of data over their own assumptions and pre-understanding of theories (Charmaz, 1990; El Hussein, Kennedy & Oliver, 2017).

2.7.1 A systems perspective

From a systems perspective, focus is placed upon viewing systems as a whole. Rather than pathologising individuals, behaviours are considered as being resultant from complex functioning, relationships and interactions between various parts of the system (Dixon, 2007). Fundamentally, such a perspective asserts that schools can be viewed as ecologies, where dynamic interactions and interplay between different parts of the system underpin behaviour, actions and processes (Tinajero & Páramo, 2012). Such a perspective provides a theoretical lens through which to understand pupil SEMH, whereby it can be considered as not being caused by individual factors but underpinned by the broader social system, such as the school context (Hanley, Winter & Burrell, 2017).

Reflecting upon the SEMH of pupils, a systems perspective is relevant to the present study in providing consideration of the impact and influence of relational elements within a school system. This includes consideration of the sample within the current study, as presented in section 3.3.2. Indeed, literature highlights the notion that pupil SEMH is embedded within school structures and the myriad of connections and interactions between stakeholders that occur everyday in a school (Roffey, 2008; Roffey, 2016).

2.7.2 An organisational perspective

Considering the literature presented thus far within this review, an organisational lens is also suitable for the present study. From an organisational perspective, human behaviour is influenced by socially shared, recognisable structures. This is in line with the importance of educational organisations, whereby it is acknowledged that school structure and culture is pivotal in addressing issues related to SEMH (Spratt, Shucksmith, Philip & Watson, 2006). Within the literature, the organisational culture of a school is recognised as being a significant factor that provides a sense of identity, determines growth, shapes behaviours and creates a shared way of doing things (Brown, 2004; Teasley, 2017). Furthermore, organisational culture is asserted as underpinning the success of an organisation (Brown, 2004; Teasley, 2017).

Consequently, given the current socio-political climate, where whole-school approaches, organisational ethos and culture and school environment are highlighted (DfE, 2016; Public Health England, 2014), it seems relevant and pertinent to consider this through completion of real-world research, thus, providing further rationale for completion of the present study.

2.8 Literature exploring the perceptions and views of school staff in relation to pupil SEMH: an overview

Within the remit of this literature review and to ensure the present research makes a unique contribution, the researcher explored previous research relating to school staff's perceptions of pupil SEMH. In particular, research focused on primary schools within the UK. Reflecting grounded theory methodology employed within the present research, findings from these studies were not accessed by the researcher, so as to ensure the researchers analysis was not constrained and imposed upon by existing knowledge of theoretical concepts and research evidence (Dunne, 2011; Nathaniel, 2006). However, as discussed previously in section 2.1, the researcher considered it essential to search for and include such studies within this initial literature review to ensure the current research or something very similar had not already been completed. Thus, supporting the rationale for the present study and illuminating its distinct contribution, purposefully broad methodological details about the research studies identified by the researcher as similar in focus to the current research are presented below.

Several studies regarding the perceptions, views and understanding of school staff have focused on secondary schools, conducted both within and outside of the UK (Ekornes, Huage & Lund, 2012; Kidger, Gunnell, Biddle, Campbell & Donovan, 2010; Sandler, 2016; Tuffin, Tuffin & Watson, 2001). Through grounded theory methodology, Sandler (2016) explored how secondary school staff engaged in thinking and talking about pupil SEMH. The perceptions, views and understanding of various school staff within primary schools have also been explored internationally (Corcoran & Finney, 2015; Danby & Hamilton, 2016; Graham, Phelps, Maddison & Fitzgerald, 2011; Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri & Goel, 2011). A body of literature has been conducted in primary schools

outside of the UK (Askell-Williams & Lawson, 2013; Graham et al., 2011; Reinke et al., 2011; Roeser & Midgley, 1997).

Some literature focused on primary schools within the UK is also apparent (Corcoran & Finney, 2015; Danby & Hamilton, 2016; Rothi, Leavey & Best, 2008). Drawing upon a combined total sample of 17 primary and secondary school staff occupying a range of roles in the UK, Corcoran and Finney (2015) used semi-structured interviews to explore perspectives regarding how staff position themselves for a range of concerns within education, including mental health. They analysed their data using a form of discourse analysis informed by ontological constructionism. In an earlier UK study, Rothi, Leavey and Best (2008) also examined teachers' experiences in light of the growing expectation placed upon school staff in relation to identifying and supporting CYP's mental health. Sampling teachers from primary, secondary and special schools, they collected data using semi-structured interviews and analysed it using thematic analysis.

Within the UK, Danby and Hamilton (2016) conducted a more recent small-scale qualitative-exploratory study. Focused within two Welsh primary schools, they employed questionnaires and proceeding interviews to gain insight into how school practitioners understand, support and promote the mental health and wellbeing of children. Their sample of 18 practitioners consisted of teachers, teaching assistants and additional learning needs coordinators. They analysed their data using a general inductive approach, that is, an approach that is not guided by any established qualitative research methodology (Liu, 2016). Consequently, a gap in research is identified, with their research utilising a methodology which can be criticised for not being based on an established qualitative methodology (Lui, 2016) and failing to incorporate perspectives from a range of roles typically existing within primary schools.

In summary, whilst literature related to school staff's perceptions, views and understanding of issues relating to pupil SEMH exists, few studies have been focused on primary schools within the UK. Some UK studies have not solely focused on primary school practitioners and have included participants from primary, secondary and specialist schools within their sample (Corcoran & Finney., 2015; Rothi et al., 2008). UK studies have also not incorporated a

range of staff roles in their samples; therefore, failing to provide conceptualised understanding of SEMH that encapsulates views from a range of practitioners within schools. Given the statutory duty placed upon all school staff to have a responsibility to support and promote all pupils' SEMH, further exploration is warranted, aiming to provide insight from a much broader, more representative sample of school staff within primary schools and through utilisation of a more rigorous methodology. Furthermore, Corcoran and Finney (2015) explored a range of topics, not just SEMH, and Danby and Hamilton (2016) referred to exploring 'mental health and wellbeing', therefore, not referring to current discourse in which the term SEMH is emphasised. The present study aims to address such gaps in the literature and provide a distinctive contribution through exploring of primary school staff's understanding and perceptions of their own and their school's role in relation to all pupils' SEMH; sampling from a range of professional roles internal to the school setting; and employing a rigorous, inductive qualitative research methodology.

2.9 Rationale

In light of the literature presented above, rationale for the current research is presented. Such rationale is positioned within the current socio-political context and existing research, considering the prevalence and impact of SEMH difficulties, changing discourse around SEMH, the role of schools and all school staff in relation to meeting the SEMH needs of all CYP, and the practice of EPs. Theoretical perspectives provide further justification for the present study by illuminating the timely need to explore in greater detail the understanding and perceptions of primary school staff within a range of roles regarding pupil SEMH.

Statistics reveal the prevalence of SEMH difficulties in CYP, with recent data illustrating rising levels of SEMH needs amongst primary-school aged children (Patalay & Fitzsimons, 2017). Reflecting such data and awareness regarding the potential impact of SEMH difficulties, the SEMH needs of CYP remain high on the UK government's agenda (DoH & DfE, 2017). Indeed, recent release of a green paper in December 2017 (DoH & DfE, 2017), demonstrates how prioritised and relevant the issue of CYP's SEMH currently is. Within government policy and initiative, great emphasis is placed upon the importance

of promoting all CYP's SEMH to ensure they are able to live happy and fulfilling lives (Children and Families Act 2014; DfE, 2015; DfE, 2016; DoH & DfE, 2017). More specifically, the importance of early and ongoing intervention in pupil SEMH throughout primary school is asserted, since it is deemed the time most effective for impacting long-term outcomes (Green et al., 2005; Greenberg et al., 2001; Hall, 2010; Wolpert et al., 2013).

UK policy and guidance also explicitly emphasises the importance of whole-school approaches in promoting and addressing pupil SEMH and the statutory responsibility that all individual members of school staff have (DfE, 2015; Weare, 2015). Reflecting theoretical insights, the importance of organisational functioning and coherent working between all staff is asserted, aspects considered vital in assisting development of a school culture that promotes positive outcomes for all pupils' SEMH (Public Health England, 2014; World Health Organisation, 2003). Despite this, it is acknowledged that changes within educational cultures can take time, something which is deemed pertinent in relation to the potential impact of changing discourse and agenda on the social processes and whole-school and individual staff functioning.

Consequently, there is a need to extend conceptualised understanding of pupil SEMH from a systems perspective. Additionally, considering current government proposals, recent introduction of the term SEMH, increasing prevalence of SEMH difficulties in primary-aged children and the assertion of the importance of early intervention, it is deemed both timely and pertinent to explore primary school staff's understanding and perceptions of their own and their respective school's role in relation to the SEMH needs of all pupils. Whilst some studies have explored views and perceptions of primary school staff in relation to pupil SEMH, samples have not been representative of a range of roles, thus presenting a gap in research. Therefore, further exploration that considers the perceptions of a range of staff roles and is reflective of the assertion that pupil SEMH is 'everyone's business' is warranted. Extending the work of Sandler (2016), it is aimed that exploration through more rigorous methodology will provide credible new findings. It is hoped this will increase current understanding to inform practice and intervention within primary schools.

Furthermore, given the unique skill set and knowledge EPs can contribute in relation to promoting and supporting pupil SEMH, but their underrepresentation within current government proposals, it is hoped such exploration will help illuminate the role that EPs can have in contributing to positive SEMH outcomes for CYP. It is also hoped that findings will contribute to priorities within the local context; helping to inform wider LA strategic planning.

2.10 Research aims and question

The proposed research aims to make a distinct contribution by exploring primary school staff's understanding and perceptions of their own and the wider school organisation's role in relation to all pupils' SEMH. Within the context of political and societal change, introduction of the term SEMH, statistics regarding prevalence of SEMH difficulties in primary aged children and gaps in research, the present study aims to contribute distinct findings that are pertinent to the current climate. In turn, it is hoped that this will not only help illuminate and enhance practice and support within schools, but also inform the practice of EPs and provide insight that is valuable in informing LA strategic development in relation to effectively supporting and promoting pupil SEMH in primary schools within the local context.

Based on the above information, the following research question was developed:

- How do primary school staff understand their own and the school role in relation to all pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH)?

Reflecting the grounded theory methodology employed within the present study, the research question is explorative in nature to ensure that data is not forced into preconceived ideas or conclusions (Charmaz, 2006).

2.11 Chapter summary

The chapter presented a purposely broad literature review. The chapter began by providing a definition for social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and defined other key terminology. Attention then turned to the prevalence and impact of the issue of SEMH. The national context in relation to CYP's SEMH was then focused upon, providing an overview of government legislation, policy and initiative and exploration of the roles of schools, school staff and EPs in

relation to pupil SEMH. Description of the local context of the research followed. The chapter continued by briefly discussing theoretical perspectives that are considered pertinent to the present research. As a way of emphasising to the reader the unique contribution of the present study, a broad overview of previous research relating to staff perceptions and understanding of pupil SEMH was then provided. Finally, the chapter concluded with the rationale for the current study within the presented context, followed by research aims and questions. Chapter 3 will present the methodology for the current study.

3 Methodology

3.1 Epistemological and ontological orientation

Epistemology can be defined as the ‘study or science of knowledge’ (Horrigan, 2007, p. viii), providing a ‘lens’ which informs how a researcher approaches their research design and theorises meaning from their data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Ontology is identified as being concerned with the nature and form of knowledge and reality (Scotland, 2012). It is advocated that for a researcher to ensure a rigorous research design, the research paradigm they select must reflect their own personal philosophical and theoretical beliefs regarding the nature of reality (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006). Given the implications a researcher’s philosophical orientation has in relation to every decision made throughout the research process, the following section considers prevailing paradigms in order to support the methodological rationale for the present study (Mertens, 2015).

3.1.1 Positivism

From a positive epistemological standpoint, it is considered that objective knowledge and a view of the world can be obtained, whereby scientific methods can be used to separate fact from values (Robson & McCartan, 2016) and reality is viewed as universal, fixed and predictable (Ward, Hoare & Gott, 2015). Therefore, researchers maintaining a positivist stance argue that there is a shared reality that all individuals can identify and ‘see’ (Darlaston-Jones, 2007). Positivism maintains a realist ontology, whereby it is asserted that reality is driven by unchallengeable, factual laws and that a single reality exists independent of a researcher’s perspectives or beliefs (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, positivism lends itself to experimental and manipulative methodology, with an inquirer aiming to answer and verify their research questions and hypotheses through empirical tests that carefully control confounding conditions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). However, the positivist paradigm is criticised for being reductionist, deterministic and self-contradictory (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Quine, 1980).

3.1.2 Post-positivism

Post-positivists maintain a continuing commitment to objectivity and also assert that a 'truth' and universal laws exist (Robson & McCartan, 2016). However, unlike positivists, post-positivists believe that, in today's world, it is untenable to discover absolute truths because what is observed is influenced by theory, hypotheses, knowledge and values of the researcher (Levers, 2013; Robson & McCartan, 2016). Therefore, within this paradigm, post-positivists employ theory driven methodology that tests hypotheses and research questions through objective, quantitative measures in an effort to strengthen and refine conclusions and bring us closer to the truth (Levers, 2013; Robson & McCartan, 2016).

3.1.3 Social constructionism

Social constructionism maintains that all knowledge, and therefore meaning, is socially constructed by individuals within social contexts (Andrews, 2012). This paradigm is underpinned by the relativist ontology, which asserts that multiple realities exist that are local and specific in nature (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Relativism emphasises that nothing can ever be known as fact and that truth about social phenomena can only be understood through multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Relativism supposes that knowledge is subjective, created through the co-construction of interpretative understanding of social interaction and context, between the researcher and individual research participants (Scotland, 2012).

From a social constructionist perspective, individual understanding of the world is not objective, but is theorised as being the product of social processes and interactions between people, rather than through the lens of separate existences (Burr, 2015; Robson & McCartan, 2016). Rather than viewing psychology as a science which discovers 'the truth', it can provide social meaning, whereby a researcher and participants can construe knowledge collaboratively to obtain a shared understanding of a research topic (Durrheim, 1997; Mertens, 2015). As such, social constructionist approaches take an interpretivist stance, recognising the role the researcher plays in constructing the reality of the social world with participants and remaining aware of

subjectivity, reflexivity and the need to consider difficulties in the contexts within which they occur (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Social constructionist researchers are more likely to utilise qualitative research methodologies, aiming to provide understandings for meaning and realities of the world (Mertens, 2015).

The present study aims to explore perceptions and understandings of primary school staff in relation to all pupils' SEMH. Aligning with the study's social constructionist epistemological paradigm, the researcher maintained a relativist ontology and aimed to complete an inductive exploration of the research topic. It was considered by the researcher that the capturing of subjective, multiple realities of the social world would be best captured through the flexibility offered by constructivist grounded theory methodology.

3.2 Qualitative research methods

The research design employed by the researcher was underpinned by their epistemological and ontological worldview, the issue they wanted to explore and the questions they were aiming to answer (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research is concerned with how individuals construct and attribute meaning and make sense of the world; it aims to interpret social phenomena through the naturalistic capturing and interpretation of participants' experiences and perspectives (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Willig, 2013). This is unlike quantitative research methods, which aim to measure variables in a quantifiable way and typically seek objectivity and the generalisation of findings (Biggerstaff, 2012; Mertens, 2015; Robson & McCartan, 2016). Use of qualitative methods is in line with the purpose of the present research, which aims to make sense of social worlds through capturing the subjective views and perspectives of primary school staff.

Another key principle of qualitative research is the notion of reflexivity, whereby such an approach acknowledges and embraces the existence, influence and value of the researcher. The concept of researcher reflexivity and its positioning and relevance in relation to the present study is considered more comprehensively in section 3.5.

The quantitative approach to research, which states hypotheses and research questions from the outset, doesn't align with the interactive and inductive nature that qualitative research methods can offer. Thus, the 'bottom up' approach is embraced, in which research questions are provisional; typically evolving and being refined throughout the process of data collection and analysis (Biggerstaff, 2012; Maxwell, 2013; Willig, 2013).

Given the present study's foundation within a social constructionist paradigm, it was considered by the researcher that a qualitative method would be most appropriate in addressing the research aims and in answering the broad, explorative research question.

3.2.1 Qualitative research methods considered for the current study

A range of qualitative approaches to research exist that are concerned with exploring, describing and constructing meaning about the personal and social experiences of participants. With several different approaches to qualitative psychology available, it is argued that it is important for researchers to explore and carefully consider which qualitative method is best suited to answering their research questions (Ashworth, 2015).

Although considered initially, thematic analysis was discounted as an appropriate research method for adequately addressing the present study's research question. The researcher considered that it lacked depth and rigor by providing descriptive summaries and categories of frequently occurring themes within the content, rather than producing more abstract, theoretical knowledge (Biggerstaff, 2012). Since the present study aims to deliver a more in-depth investigation in order to provide conceptualised understanding, the use of thematic analysis was rejected. Thematic analysis was also rejected on the grounds of it being criticised for being linked to a particular theoretical framework (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015).

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was also considered. Through detailed exploration of an individual's lived experiences and how they make sense of personal and social worlds, IPA seeks to provide understanding of a phenomenon (Mertens, 2015). However, IPA typically generates detailed descriptions about participants' experiences, rather than attempting to explain

the ‘why’s’ of a phenomenon (Willig, 2013). Furthermore, IPA does not consider the influence of social and material structures on participants’ experiences (Willig, 2013), therefore inhibiting researchers from moving to an explanation of findings and a greater depth of understanding. Consequently, it was deemed IPA would not provide the level of exploration required to fully understand the complexity of primary school staff’s understanding and perceptions of pupil SEMH.

3.2.2 Grounded theory methodology

Originating from sociology in the 1960s, grounded theory is a qualitative methodology that is concerned with generating explanatory theory that is ‘grounded’ in data collected from a study (Robson & McCartan, 2016). This contrasts with alternative research methods which aim to test or verify pre-existing theoretical propositions and ideas (Mertens, 2015). Grounded theory affords psychologists an invaluable, rigorous and systematic, yet flexible approach to studying empirical actions, interactions and processes (Charmaz, 2014) and complex social phenomena in applied contexts (Birks & Mills, 2015). Through the capturing of participants’ experiences, grounded theory methodology aims to provide a valuable and unique perspective of the social situation under study (Charmaz, 2006).

As presented in section 2.8, research methods employed within previous studies have failed to move beyond exploration and description. Therefore, grounded theory was considered an appropriate methodology for providing a more in-depth, conceptualised understanding of primary school staff’s social world as they experience it in relation to both their own and the whole school-role in meeting the SEMH needs of all pupils.

Since the initial development of grounded theory by Glaser and Strauss (2017), epistemological shifts and developments have occurred (Mills et al., 2006) and variations of grounded theory methodology have been developed (Kenny & Fourie, 2014). Classic grounded theory, Straussian grounded theory and constructivist grounded theory are three approaches often cited within literature and research (Evans, 2013). It is asserted that, before embarking on a study, researchers understand the differences between different versions of grounded

theory methodology and can identify their own ontological and epistemological positions (Mills et al., 2006). Thus, helping to ensure they feel theoretically comfortable and can make clear and consistent methodological choices throughout the research process (Breckenridge, Jones, Elliott & Nicol, 2012; Mills et al., 2006).

Glaser and Stauss (2017) established classic or 'Glaserian' grounded theory from their own research. Stressing the need to generate theory arising from social research, as opposed to testing existing theory, they developed an alternative approach to research (Birks & Mills, 2015). This version of grounded theory is positioned within positivism. To this extent, it is claimed an objective truth of external reality can be obtained through systematic and exacting data collection and analysis (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Kenny & Fourie, 2014). From this standpoint, the researcher is an 'unbiased observer' who is separate from research participants and their realities (Charmaz, 2006). However, such positivist philosophy has been criticised for failing to acknowledge the importance of the mutuality and partnerships between the researcher and the participant in co-constructing data (Charmaz, 2006).

Straussian grounded theory is another approach that is commonly used within research. Developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), Straussian grounded theory offers a much more structured approach that emphasises deduction, verification and validation within its procedure (Evans, 2013). However, the approach has been criticised for being too rigid, limiting the potential of data and analysis by forcing data into pre-conceived categories (Charmaz, 2008; Charmaz, 2016). Consequently, is has been contended that Straussian grounded theory is an entirely new methodology and it is not merely a modification of grounded theory (Bryant, 2002; Evans, 2013).

Introduced by Charmaz (2003), constructivist grounded theory provides an alternative to the approaches proffered by Glaser and Strauss (2017) and Strauss and Corbin (1990). Constructivist grounded theory challenges the notion that an objective 'truth' exists, thus maintaining a relativist ontology. Rather than unfolding an objective reality, constructivist grounded theory assumes emergent realities (Hallberg, 2006). Central to this variant of the methodology is the idea of rendering participants' lived experiences by

capturing their voice and focusing on meaning, action and process in the social world (Breckenridge et al., 2012; Charmaz, 2006). Furthermore, it is asserted that social reality is discovered through an iterative process of co-construction between a researcher and a participant and an interpretive understanding of a participant's meanings (Charmaz, 2003; Mills et al., 2006). To this extent, Charmaz (2008a) asserts that constructivist grounded theory focuses on addressing *what* and *how* questions by going beyond trying to identify latent patterns of behaviours in the data and providing interpretive understanding of studied phenomena within socially situated contexts. Aligned with social constructionism, another key tenet of Charmaz's (2014) methodology is researcher reflexivity, whereby researchers acknowledge, examine and rigorously scrutinise their own perspectives, knowledge and theoretical preconceptions through the process of data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2008b).

3.2.3 Rationale for methodological approach in the present study

Whilst other methodological approaches were considered, given the aims of the research, it was deemed that constructivist grounded theory methodology was most appropriate for the proposed research. Constructivist grounded theory enables the exploration and nuanced interpretation of the complex social process and interactions within local contexts (Charmaz, 2008b), linking to the goal of the proposed research. The approach goes beyond descriptive interpretation and is useful within applied fields (Robson & McCartan, 2016) by dynamically analysing and making sense of interactional social processes between individuals.

Such an approach reflects the epistemological and ontological stance of the researcher, a factor considered crucial before conceptualising a research study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In relation to the present study, the researcher holds the philosophical belief that social processes and interaction can only be understood through the capturing of multiple realities (Breckenridge et al., 2012). Furthermore, it was considered that constructivist grounded theory methodology reflects the researcher's awareness of their involvement and reflexivity (Charmaz, 2008b).

Finally, Sutcliffe (2016) states that constructivist grounded theory is well suited to being carried out by EPs within research. Miller (1995) states that EP practice utilises many of the core skills required for the processes within grounded theory research, including taking an analytical approach, being transparent and rigorous and maintaining reflexivity.

3.3 Design

3.3.1 Stakeholders

'Stakeholder' refers to those people who have a stake in the outcomes of a piece of research and will be affected by its results (Mertens, 2015). Within the present study, this included the LA EPS, the LA, the University of Nottingham and the schools and participants who took park in the research.

To promote engagement with the EPS, discussions regarding the proposed research were held with the EPS's Principal EP and the researcher's placement supervisor. Discussion was also held with the head of the SEND department within the LA to consider the positioning and potential contribution and value of the research within the wider context. It was considered that the present research complemented the EPS's focus on taking a lead on SEMH and the LA focus on developing processes and practice to improve the SEMH of every child and young person within the LA. To promote partnerships, overall findings, conclusions and professional implications for the research study were committed to be shared with the EPS and the head of the SEND department upon written completion of the current thesis.

The researcher committed to present broad, overall findings to the schools from which school staff had participated within the data collection process upon written completion of the current thesis. This agreement aims to build rapport and promote engagement with schools, which is considered vital within research (Brown & Danaher, 2019).

3.3.2 Purposeful sampling of participants

Within grounded theory, sampling is guided by the phenomenon being studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Within constructivist grounded theory, sampling typically follows a sequence of purposive sampling followed by theoretical sampling (as detailed within section 3.4.2.4) (Charmaz, 2014).

Reflecting the rationale and aims of the study in which a system representation of staff perspectives was sought, initial purposive sampling was used to access a range of roles within mainstream primary schools. It is acknowledged that, within a grounded theory study, for theoretical saturation to be reached, data from purposeful sampling is firstly undertaken (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009).

Given the researcher's knowledge of the population, purposeful sampling was initially limited to at least one participant from each of the following roles:

- A member of the senior leadership team
- Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo)
- Teacher
- Teaching Assistant (TA)/Learning Support Assistant (LSA)

Purposive selection of these roles was based upon the rationale that they would be representative of the range of roles typically found within the primary school system and was 'fit for purpose', affording theoretical insight and propositions into the studied phenomenon by looking at it from multiple angles (Boddy, 2016). In addition, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were set, as presented in

Table 3.1.

Participant inclusion criteria	**Participant exclusion criteria**	**Rationale**
Members of staff who are internal to school and are employed to have explicit educational responsibilities.	Members of staff who are internal to school but who are not employed to have explicit educational responsibilities.	Those members of staff who meet exclusion criteria are not deemed to have been employed in an educational capacity or have explicit educational responsibilities – for example, school caretaker, catering staff.

Members of staff who have been in post for more than one year.	Members of staff who have been in post for less than one year.	It is considered that those members of staff who meet inclusion criteria have greater experience to reflect upon.

Table 3.1 - A table showing inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants.

Whilst the four key roles (as listed above) were initially purposefully sampled, inclusion and exclusion criteria lent themselves to participants with different roles within the school being eligible to be included in the study.

The recruitment of participants was initiated through sending out an email to EPs within the EPS. This email asked EPs to share with the researcher any mainstream primary schools within the LA they thought would be interested and committed to working with a trainee educational psychologist (TEP) in a research study focused on exploring staff perceptions of their own role and their school's role in relation to pupil SEMH (Appendix 1). Given that this study is not concerned with whether schools are deemed as 'good' or 'poor' in supporting pupil social, emotional and mental health, it was made explicit in the email to EPs that schools did not need to be suggested on this basis. An email was then sent to the Head Teacher of each recommended school to determine initial expressions of interest (Appendix 2). In total, emails were sent out to Head Teachers across seven schools. Of these, no replies via email were received. Therefore, follow-up calls were made by the researcher to each of the Head Teachers that had been emailed. From this, three Head Teachers across three schools showed expressions of interest during the purposeful sampling stage and individual meetings were arranged with them at their schools to provide details of the research, including issues relating to recruitment procedures and ethical considerations.

From these meetings, all three Head Teachers volunteered and provided written informed consent for the school to take part in the research during the stage of purposeful sampling. Paper and emailed versions of the research Invitation Letter (Appendix 3) were then provided to Head Teachers to distribute to those

job roles as indicated within the opening of this section. Namely: members of the senior leadership team, teachers, SENCos and teaching assistants/learning support assistants. However, it was also highlighted to Head Teachers that there may be other job roles within their schools that also fulfil the inclusion and exclusion criteria and could therefore be eligible to take part in the study. The Invitation Letter (Appendix 3) asked potential participants to email the researcher to express their interest to take part.

Potential participants from these schools who emailed the researcher expressing interest to take part in the study were then emailed by the researcher to confirm their job role and years of experience within this role. This ensured inclusion criteria were fulfilled. In the instance that multiple potential participants from the same job role expressed interest in taking part in the study, the researcher sampled participants using a 'first come, first served' approach. Excess potential participants were emailed by the researcher, informing them that their participation was not currently required but that it would be greatly appreciated if the researcher could contact them at a later date, if needed. Those members of staff who agreed to be contacted at a later date, should their participation be required, were added to a waiting list.

For those members of staff taking part in the study, a date and time convenient to them was arranged to carry out a semi-structured interview at their respective school. The Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 4), containing details of the study's aims and ethical considerations, was emailed to the proposed participants prior to the arranged date for their individually conducted semi-structured interview. They were asked to carefully read through the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 4) prior to the interview and informed by the researcher that time would also be allocated before the start of the semi-structured interview to further go through aims, the rationale and ethical considerations for the study.

A final sample of six participants was obtained across three different mainstream primary schools within the LA. The final sample included one Head Teacher, one SENCo, one Teacher, one Cover Supervisor, one Assistant Head Teacher and one Learning Support Assistant.

Given the relatively small sample size and the need to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants, the researcher considered it appropriate to limit participant details to those presented in

Table 3.2. Although years of experience for the participants' current role was maintained as a measure for inclusion and exclusion, five of the six participants had previously had either different job roles within the same school or had had the same job role within a different educational setting.

Years of experience within their current role	Number of participants
1-5 years	5
6-10 years	1

Table 3.2 - A table detailing the research participants' years of experience within their current role

3.3.3 Sample size

Constructivist grounded theory does not define an optimal number of participants, but emphasises that sample size is guided by data 'saturation' (Charmaz, 2006). Saturation is defined as being reached when categories and their properties are considered by the researcher as sufficiently dense and fresh data no longer reveals new patterns, properties or theoretical insights (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009; Charmaz, 2006). Therefore, it is recommended that researchers continue to expand their sample size until categories developed from the data are considered robust and fully accounted for, with no new properties of categories emerging from new data (Charmaz, 2014; Kenny & Fourie, 2015).

In the present study, it was proposed that at least six participants would be recruited to ensure the sample was representative of different key roles typically encountered within primary schools and was considered practical in relation to the time and capacity constraints presented within a doctoral thesis. However, reflecting the notion of saturation, this number served as a guide and the researcher remained open to the potential need to recruit fewer or greater participant numbers. Charmaz (2014) argues that, within studies where research questions relate to a focused area of applied practice, a study of

lasting significance can be produced by a very small sample size. Furthermore, Charmaz (2006) asserts that data saturation is aided by the researcher remaining open and flexible to what is going on in the field, using old and new data to find solutions and using grounded theory guidelines to help support, not lead, the process.

Further rationale for the sample size was established in relation to the resources surrounding the conduction of the research. As determined by Bonde (2013), salient factors such as short timeframes and unavailability of participants can influence a researcher's decision to recruit a smaller sample size. Considering the intense analytical processes of grounded theory and the narrow timeframe presented in relation to thesis submission, through supervision with the researcher's research tutor, it was rationalised that a smaller sample size was appropriate.

3.4 Procedure

3.4.1 Initial data collection: Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data. Semi-structured interviews are advantageous in providing researchers with considerable flexibility and freedom, both in relation to the sequence of questions and in allowing further questioning to be given to interesting responses (Robson & McCartan, 2016). This is particularly helpful within grounded theory, whereby further questions can be used to clarify and extend meaning, prompt elaboration and explore emerging themes (Charmaz, 2006). Interviews also allow vast amounts of data to be collected (Kolb, 2012) and promote social interaction, thus supporting sensitivity, empathy and rapport building with participants (Edwards & Holland, 2013).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants on an individual basis, in a private, suitable location within their school setting and at a time convenient to them. In the process of obtaining informed consent, it was reiterated to potential participants that interviews were audio recorded using a digital voice recorder. All recordings were anonymised, stored securely and not shared with other people. As guided by Charmaz (2014) interviews were intensive whilst interactive and conversational in style, utilising open-ended and

some focused questions to facilitate the elicitation, exploration and elaboration of participant experience. As guided by Robson and McCartan (2016), who assert that interviews of less than half an hour are unlikely to be valuable and interviews over an hour might oppress interviewees by making unreasonable demands, it was proposed that interviews would last up to one hour.

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed with reference to the schedule of Sandler (2016), given the similar nature of this study and the aim to extend their research (Appendix 5). A script was also developed and utilised by the researcher to act as a guide for the introductions section of the semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix 6). The schedule was also guided through reflection upon those developed by Kidger, Gunnell, Biddle, Campbell and Donovan (2010) and Charmaz (2014). Whilst broad questions structured around key themes relating to the research question were developed according to constructivist grounded theory, the interview process was flexible, allowing additional or adapted questions to emerge based on the researcher's sensitisation to the meanings of an interviewee's responses that they brought to the situation (Mertens, 2015). Associated prompts were also developed and presented alongside initial topics and broad questions. However, reflecting guidance for semi-structured interviews and constructivist grounded theory methodology, it was acknowledged prompts may not necessarily be used, depending on the researcher's theoretical sensitisation and the considered direction of questioning (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

Development of the semi-structured interview schedule was assisted through completion of a small pilot study of the schedule. Mertens (2015) and Robson and McCartan (2016) suggest that the pilot testing of instruments is especially important in qualitative studies, not only in helping the researcher to review and adapt their framework and questions, but also in providing the opportunity to evaluate their performance as an interviewer.

Piloting of the interview schedule was carried out with an Associate Head Teacher on 27th September 2018. The Associate Head Teacher was a friend of the researcher and therefore selected on an opportunity basis. Following the pilot interview the researcher recorded reflections in their thesis diary. Several

considerations were highlighted and helped inform the development and use of the semi-structured interview schedule. This included:

- Rewording or removing questions where it was considered that they were repetitive of other questions.
- Heightened recognition of the flexible nature of the semi-structured interview schedule. This helped the researcher to remain aware that there is not a need to answer all questions on the schedule in the instance they have already been addressed through the natural course of the conversation. The researcher considered that, when the schedule was used in a flexible way, it would aid the fluency and conversational tone of interviews.
- Adding in contingency time at the end of the interviews so as to ensure participants don't feel they have been 'cut off' at the end of an hour and that additional views they wanted to share have been oppressed.

3.4.2 Data analysis

Charmaz (2006) defines coding within grounded theory as essential. It provides a fundamental link between collecting data and data analysis that enables researchers to define what is happening in the data, begin to explain what it means and construct their grounded theory. As guided by Charmaz's (2014) social constructivist approach to grounded theory coding, data was analysed through initial and then focused coding and categorising. However, reflecting the flexibility of constructivist grounded theory, coding did not call for progression through a linear process, but allowed for emerging themes and data to prompt the revisiting of earlier data (Charmaz, 2014). Figure 3.1 provides a visual representation of the stages that were followed within the current research, as guided by Charmaz's (2014) constructivist grounded theory model.

Data analysis within grounded theory is threaded throughout the iterative process of data collection and data analysis (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Unlike other qualitative methods where analysis begins once all data has been collected, a fundamental component of grounded theory is that researchers using this method commence analysis as soon as data starts to be collected

(Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). However, within the time and capacity constraints presented by the doctoral thesis, the researcher was not able to transcribe and then complete initial coding and focused coding for each interview in turn before proceeding with the next interview. Therefore, the researcher engaged in a process of transcribing each of the five purposefully sampled interviews, initially coding each interview and then, finally, focused coding each interview. Subsequently, this then gave way to theoretical sampling, with a sixth participant sampled to fill the properties of a category in order to reach theoretical saturation. The processes and stages of the grounded theory process employed within the current research are presented in further detail below.

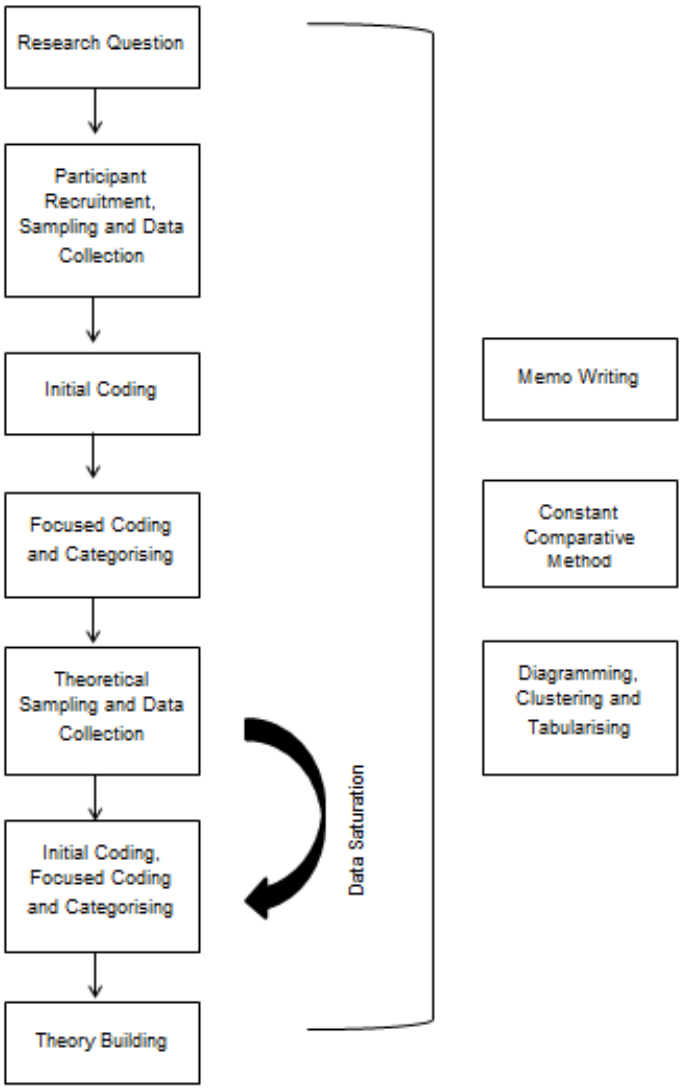


Figure 3.1 - A visual representation of the constructivist grounded theory process taken within the present study, as guided by Charmaz (2014).

3.4.2.1 Transcription of semi-structured interviews

Prior to any coding of data, all semi-structured interviews were transcribed by the researcher and aided using the transcription software 'Transcribe'. The software aided transcription by automatically transcribing interviews that were dictated aloud by the researcher as they listened to them. To immerse themselves in the data, the researcher listened to each interview audibly several times. This also enabled the researcher to check that automatic transcriptions were accurate and to make amendments where necessary. In accordance with the purpose of grounded theory methodology (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005), transcription focused on verbatim depiction of the spoken word and focused upon capturing the information shared in the interviews, rather than non-verbal and additional linguistic features.

3.4.2.2 Initial coding

Initial coding was the first stage embarked upon by the researcher in the process of analysing the transcribed interviews. At this stage, the researcher interacted closely with the data by coding fragments of data, including coding by lines and segments with precise labels in order to evoke, capture and condense analytical meanings and actions (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz, 2014). The researcher also endeavoured to use simple and short codes to protect against data being forced to fit codes. Through studying the data in this way, the researcher generated as many initial codes as possible based on what was implied by the data (Charmaz, 2006). Coding in such a way also aided the researcher in developing new lines of enquiry to pursue and deciding what kinds of data to focus upon collecting in later interviews (Charmaz, 2014).

Particular focus was placed on the use of gerunds to capture actions and processes, rather than coding based on types of people (Charmaz, 2014). As asserted by Charmaz (2014), coding with gerunds provided the researcher with a heuristic device with which to critically examine each line on their data within an interactive process. Additionally, doing so afforded the researcher with control over their data; this helped ensure codes stuck closely to the data and, whilst keeping an open mind protected them from applying pre-existing concepts, experiences and theories, consequently, aiding the researcher to go

deeper into the studied phenomenon and discern implicit connections. In-vivo coding was also used when considered appropriate. Treated with the same analytical and comparative treatment as other types of codes, in-vivo codes quoted key statements from participants to help preserve and uncover the meaning in their views and actions (e.g. *'singing from the same song sheet'*).

As guided by Charmaz (2014), the researcher placed focus on engaging in initial coding thoroughly, but with speed and spontaneity. To aid speed, the researcher completed initial and all following stages of coding by hand. The researcher felt most at ease and competent in using this method, rather than using computer-based software. As such, raw data is provided within this thesis when referring to exemplars as it is considered that this provides primary evidence of the interactive coding processes engaged in. To maintain precise and analytical initial coding, a note was made by the researcher of any data that they felt they were unable to code at first glance. These gaps in coding were then referred back to at a later time, when the researcher could consider them with new insight and fresh thinking. Initial coding was aided through the researcher being flexible with initial coding, assigning multiple codes to data that conveyed multiple messages and removing codes where it was deemed fitting and helpful (Charmaz, 2014).

As guided by literature, initial codes generated during this stage were provisional (Charmaz, 2014). Thus, the researcher remained open to other analytical possibilities and nuances, meaning codes were adapted and new ones created based on the emerging insights implied by new data and the method of constant comparative analysis (Charmaz, 2014). Through employment of the constant comparison method, an inductive process was engaged in, with data being compared in various ways to reveal the properties of abstract concepts and theories (Charmaz, 2014). This process included making iterative comparisons between and across singular and sets of initial codes within and between interviews. An example of initial coding completed by the researcher can be found in Appendix 7.

3.4.2.3 Focused coding and categorising

During the stage of focused coding and categorising, large amounts of data collated during initial coding began to be sorted, scrutinised, evaluated and synthesised. The researcher engaged in a process of making decisions with regard to which initial codes made the most analytical sense. This included identifying those initial codes which occurred most frequently and those which were perceived as having the greatest significance (Charmaz, 2014).

As with initial coding, this stage in the coding process was facilitated through employment of the constant comparison method, with focused codes being tested against large batches of data in order to identify which codes had more strength analytically (Charmaz, 2006). Those focused codes considered as having higher conceptual values and synthesised multiple layers of meaning and action were raised to tentative categories (Charmaz, 2014). Thus, coding advanced theorising; condensing and honing the emerging analysis to provide better conceptualisation of meanings and the interconnections within and between categories that are grounded in data (Hallberg, 2006). However, this stage of coding was not linear, and, through the emergence of new insights and connections, the researcher worked flexibly in referring back and forth between different participants data to study data afresh and explore tentative insight previously considered too implicit (Charmaz, 2006). Through these actions, focused coding also helped the researcher to check their preconceptions about an emerging topic. An example of focused coding completed by the researcher can be found in Appendix 8. Appendix 8 is comparable with Appendix 7, showing the movement and difference between initial coding and focused coding on the same data exemplar.

3.4.2.4 Theoretical sampling

Deemed as a distinguishing feature of grounded theory methodology, grounded theorists engage in theoretical sampling in order to gain clarity over their ideas, fill out and develop properties of tentative categories and clarify and plan relationships between them (Charmaz, 1996). In the process of theoretical sampling, researchers apply greater selectiveness over who they seek to

include in their sample and the type of data they are wishing to obtain (Charmaz, 1996).

Within the practical limitations and pressures of the doctoral thesis, the researcher within the current research pursued theoretical sampling once tentative abstract categories had been developed. Sampling at this stage also reflected recommendations made by Charmaz (1996), whereby it is advocated that, to avoid premature closure of analysis, theoretical sampling is conducted later in the research process.

Theoretical sampling was undertaken to address questions that were raised by the researcher through memoing regarding the properties of one tentative category following data collection through purposeful sampling (see Appendix 9 for the related memos before and after theoretical sampling). Whilst the researcher had aimed to sample a member of support staff during purposeful sampling, and theoretical sampling is not concerned with sampling participants from a certain population, questions arose in relation to the role of support staff (Appendix 9). It was considered by the researcher that theoretical sampling of a member of support staff was necessary to elaborate meaning and help answer the 'why' questions which they held around emerging analysis.

During theoretical sampling, the procedure undertaken by the researcher for recruiting participants was similar to that conducted during purposeful sampling (see section 3.3.2). A further email was distributed to EPs within the EPS, asking for recommendations of mainstream primary schools within the LA they thought would have a member of support staff who would be interested in and committed to taking part in the present research (Appendix 10). An email was then sent by the researcher to the Head Teacher of each of the recommended schools to determine initial expressions of interest. The email was adapted to indicate an interest in recruiting a member of support staff (Appendix 11). From this, one Head Teacher expressed interest and the researcher met with them to provide details of the research and obtain their written informed consent.

Paper and emailed versions of the research Invitation Letter (Appendix 3) and the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 4) were provided to the Head Teacher to distribute to support staff. From this, two members of support staff

demonstrated interest to take part in the study. Only one volunteer fulfilled the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Therefore, the researcher arranged a convenient time and date to meet with them to carry out the semi-structured interview at their school setting.

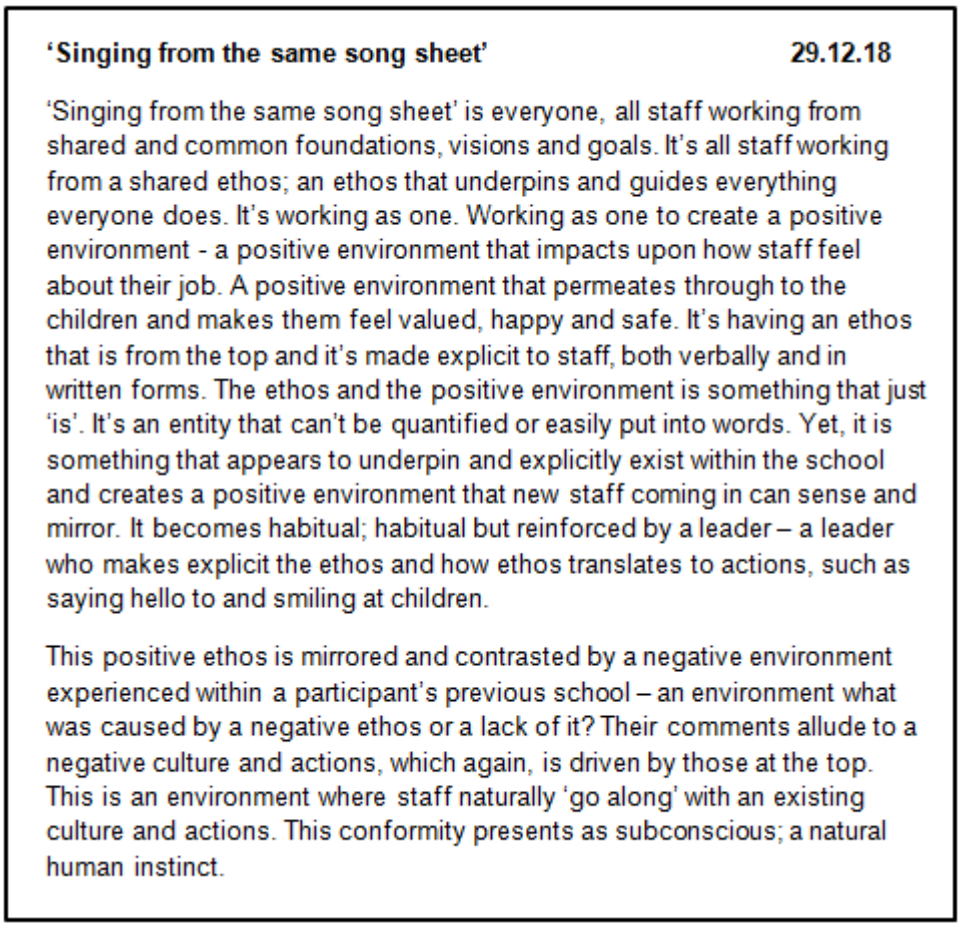
As before, the researcher utilised the existing semi-structured interview structure as a guide (Appendix 5). It was considered that existing guiding questions relating to perceptions of their own role in relation to pupil SEMH would address the questions held in relation to the tentative category. As illustrated in Appendix 9, questions were posed around how support staff themselves perceived their role and whether any new dimensions of the category may be obtained through capturing their voice. Given the nature and purpose of grounded theory interviewing, the researcher pursued theoretical themes and ideas within the interview, based upon responses and insight provided by the participant. The interview lasted approximately one hour.

As before, the interview was audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher using the software 'Transcribe'. Data gathered was then analysed using the analysis processes detailed in section 3.4.2. The new codes generated from the data obtained through theoretical sampling were examined against existing analysis. This included giving further analytical consideration to the existing dimensions of the category in light of the new data. No new categories emerged following theoretical sampling. Details of the results of analysis and the place of theoretical sampling within this can be found in Chapter 4.

3.4.2.5 Memoing

Memo-writing is considered a vital and intrinsic activity to be completed throughout the grounded theory process (Kenny & Fourie, 2015). Through the writing of successive memos, researchers construct analytical notes that capture ideas, conjectures, deliberations and reflections relating to codes, categories, comparisons and connections (Charmaz, 2015; Kenny & Fourie, 2015). Memos provide researchers with a conceptual tool and interactive space with which to actively engage. Charmaz (2008b) asserts the critical process of memo-writing in enabling researchers' interpretation of explored phenomena and the construction of theory.

Throughout the grounded theory process, the researcher recorded memos in the form of written text, pictorial representations and diagramming. Memos varied in length and detail. Some constituted brief notes, whilst others provided detailed narratives of conceptualised categories and the processes subsuming them. To aid the development of the grounded theory, the researcher engaged in a process of revisiting and comparing memos throughout the research process. Figure 3.2 presents an example of a memo about an in-vivo code drafted during the analysis process.



'Singing from the same song sheet' **29.12.18**

'Singing from the same song sheet' is everyone, all staff working from shared and common foundations, visions and goals. It's all staff working from a shared ethos; an ethos that underpins and guides everything everyone does. It's working as one. Working as one to create a positive environment - a positive environment that impacts upon how staff feel about their job. A positive environment that permeates through to the children and makes them feel valued, happy and safe. It's having an ethos that is from the top and it's made explicit to staff, both verbally and in written forms. The ethos and the positive environment is something that just 'is'. It's an entity that can't be quantified or easily put into words. Yet, it is something that appears to underpin and explicitly exist within the school and creates a positive environment that new staff coming in can sense and mirror. It becomes habitual; habitual but reinforced by a leader – a leader who makes explicit the ethos and how ethos translates to actions, such as saying hello to and smiling at children.

This positive ethos is mirrored and contrasted by a negative environment experienced within a participant's previous school – an environment what was caused by a negative ethos or a lack of it? Their comments allude to a negative culture and actions, which again, is driven by those at the top. This is an environment where staff naturally 'go along' with an existing culture and actions. This conformity presents as subconscious; a natural human instinct.

Figure 3.2 - An example of a memo written by the researcher during the analysis process

3.4.2.6 Diagramming and clustering

In addition to memo-writing, Charmaz (2014) asserts that diagramming provides researchers with a further way to interpret and frame their data. Through creating concrete images of ideas and visual representations, it is argued that diagrams enable the power, scope, direction and connections between categories within a researcher's analysis (Charmaz, 2014). To aid sense

making of codes and conceptualisation of categories within the present study the researcher employed visual representations throughout analysis. This included the clustering of focused codes around tentative categories (Appendix 12), mind mapping (Appendix 13) and, in the later stages, tabularising focused codes, final focused codes and categories (Appendix 14). In conjunction with memoing and the constant comparative method, utilisation of visual strategies aided the researcher in analytically considering and reconsidering the properties of tentative categories. The process of analysis was flexible and ongoing, with visual strategies prompting the removal, introduction, collapsing, expanding and rearranging of codes.

3.5 Considerations of research validity and quality – part 1

In qualitative research, it is important for researchers to consider how they can increase the rigour of their design by increasing reliability and validity (Franklin, Cody & Ballan, 2010). Unlike quantitative research, specific tests and measures cannot be applied to establish reliability and validity. However, researchers can take several precautionary measures to enhance the reliability and validity of their research (Kolb, 2012).

Reflexivity is considered a key approach to improving validity within grounded theory research. Through reflexivity, researchers remain aware of their own active involvement throughout the entire research process (Kolb, 2012). In grounded theory, reflexive strategies and actions employed by the researcher serve to minimise the forcing of their data through the influence of their preconceptions and biases. Charmaz (2014) suggests that, rather than asserting objectivity, researchers should remain conscious of, and actively acknowledge their own assumptions and pre-conceptions. Within the present study, several strategies to maintain reflexivity were employed throughout the research in order to reduce bias and improve validity. This included consistent memo-writing, diagramming and clustering and ongoing critical thinking.

Charmaz (2014) also outlines several evaluation criteria that can enhance the quality of grounded theory studies.

Table 3.3 summarises the measures taken by the researcher within the present research to improve and then evaluate their research design. Evaluation of the

current research through further employment of these criteria will be completed and presented in Chapter 7.

Evaluation criteria	Measures taken by the researcher
Credibility	Due to the research being carried out within the LA in which the researcher was a TEP, they gained familiarity with the setting. The researcher achieved familiarity with the research topic through accessing and engaging in related teaching and activities in their capacity as a doctoral student. They had also gained insight and familiarity with the topic of pupil SEMH through reading of literature and discussions with other professionals within their LA placement setting, including EPs and the head of SEND services. Participants were sampled from a range of roles and across three settings. The principle of data saturation was also utilised by the researcher to ensure that data collected was sufficient and rich. In-depth exploration through interviews lasting up to one hour also contributed to the wealth of the data. Adherence by the research to the constant comparative method and ongoing engagement with memoing in order to provide a reflexive and analytical audit trail and the demonstration of procedural logic throughout the research process.

Originality	See Chapter 7
Resonance	
Usefulness	

Table 3.3 - A table showing measures taken to improve the quality of the current grounded theory study, based on evaluation criteria outlined by Charmaz (2014).

3.6 Ethical considerations

In accordance with the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009) and Code of Human Research Ethics (2010), ethical issues for the present study were considered comprehensively. Ethical approval for the present study was gained by the Ethics Committee at the University of Nottingham in September 2018 (Appendix 15).

3.6.1 Informed consent

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to taking part in the research. To ensure all participants understood their role in the research and what would be done with the information collected, the researcher provided detailed verbal and written information regarding the research before interviews took place. This included emailing potential participants the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 4) prior to their arranged interview date and providing details of the study, further information regarding ethical considerations and the opportunity to address any questions or queries, in person. Ethical considerations addressed included details regarding confidentiality, anonymity, the right to withdraw, data protection and the researcher's right to withdraw participants' invitation to take part should no further data be required. The researcher also talked through the consent form (Appendix 16) with each participant prior to them giving written informed consent. Such strategies aimed to ensure that participants entered the research study of their own accord and that their rights were protected.

3.6.2 Confidentiality

Anonymity was ensured, including using pseudonyms for participants within the thesis and the anonymised storage of audio-recording, transcripts, observation notes and any personal thoughts or feelings shared during the interview. In

accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018), data was stored securely within a password-protected folder on a computer. To further protect the identify of participants, full transcripts were not included in the thesis. Interviews were conducted in a mutually agreed and appropriate private place within their school. If safeguarding or malpractice concerns were raised, regarding the participant or others, confidentiality would be overruled, and information shared with the school's safeguarding lead.

3.6.3 Debriefing

All participants were debriefed at the end of the interview. Participants were provided with a debrief form (Appendix 17) and asked by the researcher to read it carefully and to ask any questions they may have following this. The debrief form included information about the purpose of the study, details regarding what would happen next and how their data would be used. Furthermore, to ensure participant wellbeing, the debrief form provided details of people and organisations they could contact should they have any questions or require support. This included contact details for the researcher. Participants were invited to share their thoughts and reflections regarding the interview and the research, the aim being to ensure concerns were addressed and discussed and any questions answered.

3.6.4 Minimising harm

Reflecting the nature of grounded theory, interviews were conversational in style and the researcher aimed to build rapport and reduce any potential feelings of anxiety participants might have by including general, not research focused, discussion at the start of all interviews. In addition to debriefing strategies, interviews would be terminated if it was felt the participant may be feeling anxious, distressed or stressed. Participants had the right to terminate the interview in the unlikely instance they were feeling anxious or distressed. LA safeguarding procedures would be followed if it was felt the participant, or others, were at risk of harm. As detailed in the section above, to ensure the wellbeing of participants, they were all provided with contact details for the researcher, their university tutor and for the Samaritans, should they need to seek support.

3.6.5 Right to withdraw

Prior to meeting with potential participants, they were emailed a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 4), which provided details of their right to withdraw from the study. At the start of interviews, each participant was again reminded verbally and in written form via the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 4), about their right to withdraw up until the point the researcher has begun to process their data. They were also reminded that, should they withdraw from the study, they would not be expected to justify or explain their decision and their data would be destroyed, with no negative consequence occurring as a result of their withdrawal. The researcher provided participants with a final date by which they were able to withdraw their data. This date was recorded, in writing, at the top of the debrief form given to participants (Appendix 17).

3.7 Chapter summary

Chapter 3 discussed the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the present study's methodology and considered qualitative research. Upon presentation and consideration of alternative qualitative research methods, it was rationalised that constructivist grounded theory methodology reflected the research aims. The researcher then provided a detailed account of the methodology, including participant sampling and data collection and analysis procedures. Strategies to ensure reflexivity and rigor were also then presented, and the employment of memo-writing and diagramming and clustering discussion. Finally, strategies employed to improve the validity and rigor of the present research were addressed and ethical considerations were discussed.

4 Results

4.1 Introduction

The present study aims to develop a theoretical understanding of how primary school staff perceive and make sense of their own and the whole school role in relation to all pupils' social, emotional and mental health. This chapter presents the final analysis of the data that reflects accounts obtained through semi-structured interview with six primary school practitioners through both purposeful and theoretical sampling. Presentation below provides detailed examination of the six constructed conceptual categories that were developed through the various stages of the grounded theory analysis process as detailed within section 3.4.2 (i.e. initial coding, focused coding, the constant comparative method and memoing). Through completion of a second review of literature and theoretical sensitisation, the conceptual categories as addressed in the chapter comprised emergence of the study's grounded theory. This will be presented in following chapters.

Table 4.1 provides an outline of the conceptual categories developed during the grounded theory analysis process. Developed through an analytical step within the grounded theory methodology, the six categories detailed below were codes selected by the researcher as having greater analytical value – those that demonstrated overriding significance, made most analytical sense and subsumed several focused codes into more abstract, theoretical concepts. The categories developed within this study were considered most relevant in unfolding underlying individual and larger social processes and relations involved with individual staff and the whole-school role in relation to all pupils' SEMH within the real world.

Category number	Conceptual category
Category 1	Investing in Shared, All-Encompassing Ethos, Culture and Values
Category 2	Constructing Knowledge and Facilitating Change Through Communication
Category 3	Striving to Manage External Challenge and Identities as Educators
Category 4	Seeking and Engaging in Personal and Organisational Growth
Category 5	Promoting Positive Outcomes Through Implicit and Explicit Behaviours
Category 6	Nurturing and Managing Staff SEMH

Table 4.1 - A table showing the six conceptual categories constructed during the analysis of the present study.

An account of each category is provided, with each category broken down into the subsections depicting the focused codes it was built upon. To construct a rich picture of each category and to further demonstrate and support an account of the emergent grounded theory, examples of direct quotations from participant transcripts have been provided. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used for all participants and full transcripts are not included.

Whilst the six categories are presented in turn, as is reflected within constructivist grounded theory, categories are not seen in isolation but are perceived and understood as integrated and interactional (Charmaz, 2015). Reflecting the immersive analysis process engaged in by the researcher in which categories were conceptualised and constructed in interaction with each other, meaningful conceptualisation and understanding in relation to the research question can only be achieved through understanding each category as one complementary component of a totality of the analysis. As such, the researcher refers to other focused codes and categories where it is considered such interactions support consideration and demonstration of the grounded theory analysis.

4.2 Category 1: Investing in shared, all-encompassing ethos, culture and values

Figure 4.1 provides a visual representation of the final focused codes that constructed Category 1. A list of focused codes that were developed during analysis and which led to the final focused codes can be found in Appendix 14.

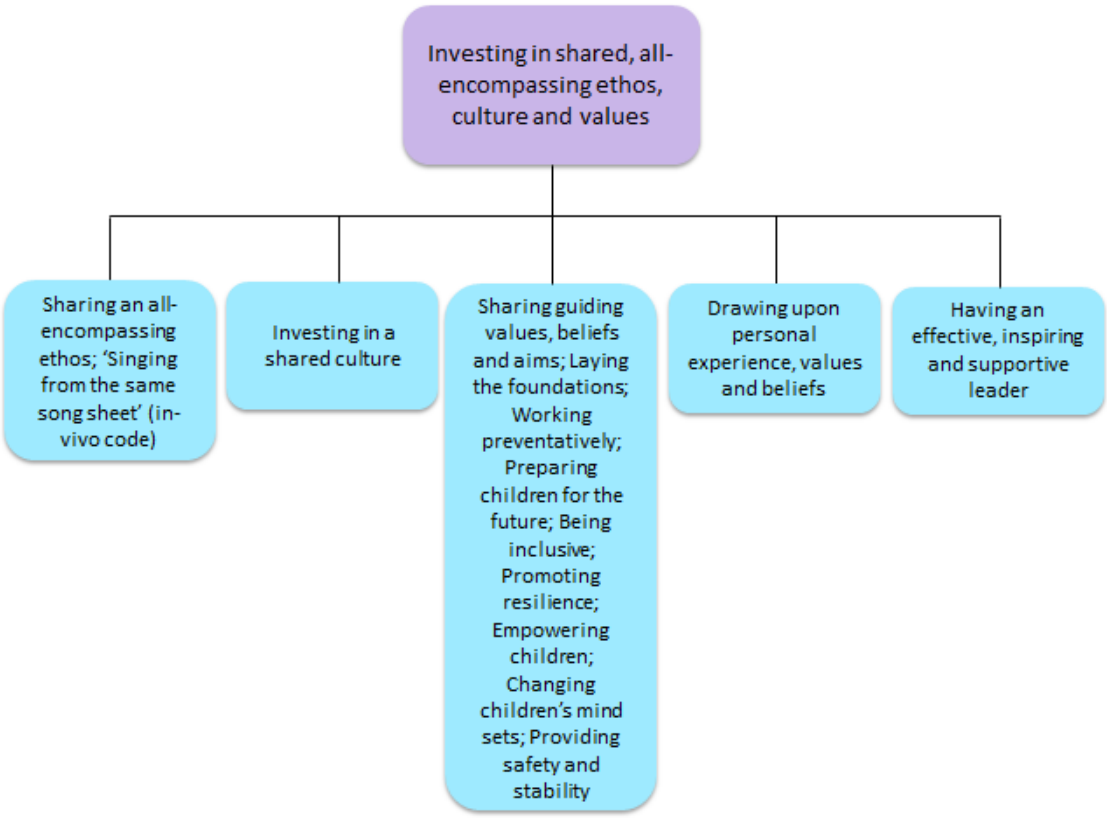


Figure 4.1 - Category 1: Investing in shared, all-encompassing ethos, culture and values.

4.2.1 Focused code: Sharing an all-encompassing ethos

Although identified as hard to label, ethos was referred to by five participants as an underpinning and fundamental aspect of the school that aids the support and promotion of pupil SEMH.

The ethos is considered to be shared by all members of staff. It is perceived as something which can't be easily labelled or described, as demonstrated in the following excerpt.

> *And I've often been asked about our ethos here and how it's created because we really do have a very (...) it was likened (...) a*

> *visitor once said we have, you have a small school feel even though you're massive and trying to label what makes that and how (…) you know if you could bottle it what would you sell (...) and this is tricky to quantify it as such but I do think it is the ethos, it's that everyone cares and we talk about it being 'you've got it, you've got it, you've got the [school name]'.* (Claire, pp. 12-13, 513-523)

As illustrated in the quotation below, ethos was perceived by one participant as impacting several aspects within the school which, ultimately, impacts upon pupil SEMH.

> *It [ethos] has an impact on the atmosphere, it has an impact on the staff and how the staff feel about working here because they're in a positive environment and then obviously it has an impact on the children because they're in a positive environment with staff who care.* (Emma, p. 5, 165-170)

Ethos is also implicitly perceived as a key aspect underpinning and guiding processes and functioning in relation to effectively managing curriculum demands to ensure SEMH is taught and embedded creatively.

> *(…) you can have a school ethos and system that no matter what you are teaching, whether it be science, English or maths, you can embed some of those emotional and mental health themes.* (Harry, p. 18, 836-839)

'Singing from the same song sheet´ refers to all staff having shared understanding of their school's ethos, as illustrated in the following excerpt.

> *Emma: So yeah communication (…) so on teacher days when you've got the head talking to everybody so everybody is singing from the same song sheet (...)*
>
> ***Researcher: So is that important that everybody is...***
>
> *Emma: Yeah everybody is clued up to what the ethos of the school is.* (p. 5, 178-185)

Emma also draws links with Category 2, identifying the role of communication in conveying and promoting ethos.

In the excerpt below, Harry defines ethos as comprising the core characteristics considered to contribute to typical human development.

> *Because our whole ethos is about the characteristics that go to make up a good (…) well what we consider to be a normal functioning, there's that word again normal, and age-related functioning, healthy, happy human being.* (Harry, p. 8, 338-342)

He also later described ethos in terms being constructed by school characteristics, mentioning *'(…) and we teach it [SEMH] again through these words and the ethos of our school about school characteristics (…)* (p. 12, 569-570).

4.2.2 Focused code: Sharing guiding values, beliefs and aims

The overarching focused code '*sharing guiding values, beliefs and aims'* refers to the participant's descriptions in relation to organisational values, beliefs and aims that guide their processes and behaviours in relation to pupil SEMH.

Many participants implicitly talked about a range of organisationally shared values, beliefs and aims. The quotation below from Louise also suggests how aims are implicitly intertwined with ethos. When asked 'Do you feel that's [ethos] important?', she commented:

> *Yeah, very important yeah. Just like I said before the looking out for each other thing is important. Our Head is a very powerful leader but in a very gentle way and he gets across his ideas really, really well and they do filter through to different people in our school. Yeah he's really strong. You probably saw or all of our aims when you were sitting out and he will regularly bring those up in this assembly or walking around (…)* (Louise, p. 23, 907-916)

The above excerpt also illustrates how aims are shared with adults and children. As illustrated below, organisationally agreed and shared values and beliefs are also communicated to members of staff through non-verbal means.

> *The head teacher has a sign in the staff room that we've all agreed (…) we've got a few things up and around the room (…) and it, I can't quote it directly, but it says 'the children shouldn't be getting in the way of what we do at school, they are the reason why we are here'.* (Claire, p. 16, 671-677)

Trish also talks about 'empowering words' being on the wall for pupils to see, with words depicting the shared desired outcomes and aims for children.

> *(…) as you go around the school you will see lots of sort of empowering words that we want the children to be so it's yes of course we have those goals that we want the reading, the writing, for maths but we also are trying to create the whole person so looking at the confidence and the self-efficacy.* (Trish, p. 2, 56-61)

A range of different values, beliefs and aims were implicitly acknowledged by participants. The focused codes *'laying the foundations', 'providing safety and stability', 'working preventatively', 'preparing children for the future', 'being inclusive', 'promoting resilience', 'empowering children'* and *'changing children's mind sets'* refer to the implicit guiding principles commonly identified by participants. Aspects of these are illustrated in the following excerpts. This includes the underlying, driving belief that pupil SEMH lays the foundations for development and is integral for other areas of development.

> *I think the biggest thing we can teach them is resilience, regardless of everything else, that they can be resilient whatever comes their way, they can deal with it.* (Emma, p. 1, 10-13)

> *Yeah, there's nobody that's better than somebody else.* (Louise, p. 24, 923-924)

> *Pupils' social, emotional and mental health (…) well, it's just I suppose really when you really dig down it's the foundation of everything isn't it because you can't learn or move on if you're unhappy.* (Harry, p. 19, 914-918)

(…) as with anything in the school environment you're preparing children for their adult life and what we do here is hopefully give them ways of managing their emotions so that they can do that. (Trish, p. 16, 750-754)

(…) dealing with social, emotional mental health in terms of preventative, just normal life, so how we talk about things like an assembly and self-esteem and confidence and relationships with everybody else (…) (Claire, p. 2, 52-57)

Yeah, we are a safe place for many of our children and we're the constant. (Claire, p. 8, 311-312)

4.2.3 Focused code: Investing in a shared culture

The focused code '*investing in a shared culture'* refers to all members of staff consciously ensuring they are working in way a that reflects and conveys shared understanding between staff and embeds guiding values, beliefs and aims within practices, interactions and processes that support and promote pupil SEMH.

The excerpt below demonstrates how Harry identifies school culture as a contributing factor to staff confidence. Through the belief that problems need to be talked about, a culture where people talk about problems is generated. This draws integral links with Categories 2 and 6, whereby communication and staff SEMH are relational to school culture.

Researcher: Do you think there are, if any, internal or external factors that contribute to staff confidence?

Harry: Well you need to, you need to generate a culture where they can talk about it (…) so the school culture is 'if you've got a problem talk about it' and that's conveyed to parents as well. (p. 15, 681-685)

Another participant also talks about how people 'stick out like a sore thumb' if they don't follow through and fully invest in shared school processes that promote pupil SEMH.

And it's not necessarily every time but it's more of your attention, like at break time if something happens you'll come and talk to us, you'll follow it through (...) and people who don't get that, they just (…) they stick out like a sore thumb. (Claire, p. 13, 526-531)

4.2.4 Focused code: Drawing upon personal experience, values and beliefs

This category refers to the process by which participants talked about their engagement with pupil SEMH being informed and influenced by their own personal experiences, beliefs and values. Participants mentioned personal aspects and experiences impacting upon staff practice in relation to pupil SEMH, as is illustrated in the following excerpts.

(…) and I think the children, when they can relate to something, they can see someone who's come out the other side (…) when they're facing those things themselves it's not as scary (…) (Trish, p. 6, 272-277)

Yeah I mean if someone has children or not, any experiences that you've had in life make you who you are so whatever experiences you have are going to impact on how we see things (…) (Emma, p. 2, 59-62)

And so past experience, it sounds like that impacts on their [staff] understanding and role?

Absolutely. So it might be their own schooling themselves. Yeah it could be their own schooling (…) (Claire, p. 19, 810-815)

4.2.5 Focused code: Having an effective, inspiring and supportive leader

'Having an effective, inspiring and supportive leader' was implicitly and explicitly acknowledged to be a key influential factor in the construction, promotion and embedding of shared, all-encompassing school ethos, values and culture.

Emma described the core role of the head teacher in relation to the development and communication of shared ethos and values and the processes staff need to engage in to effectively promote and support pupil SEMH.

> *Yeah everybody is clued up to what the ethos of the school is. The employee handbook (…) you can just feel what the Head is trying to get across. It's in there that we should smile at the children and that we should say good morning to them.* (Emma, p. 5, 184-189)

When asked about the impact of ethos, Louise also identified the role of the Head Teacher in relation to this, acknowledging the core role in filtering the ethos and values across to people within the school.

> *Our Head is a very powerful leader but in a very gentle way and he gets across his ideas really, really well and they do filter through to different people in our school. Yeah he's really strong. You probably saw all of our aims when you were sitting out and he will regularly bring those up in this assembly (…)* (Louise, p. 23, 909-915)

> *He [Head Teacher] believes that we're all of equal worth, that's one of his things. And our children would talk you about that as well if you talk to them about it.* (Louise, p. 24, 918-921)

4.3 Category 2: Constructing knowledge and facilitating change through communication

Category 2 is constructed on the following final focused codes as presented in Figure 4.2. A list of the focus codes during the analysis which led to these final focused codes can be found in Appendix 14.

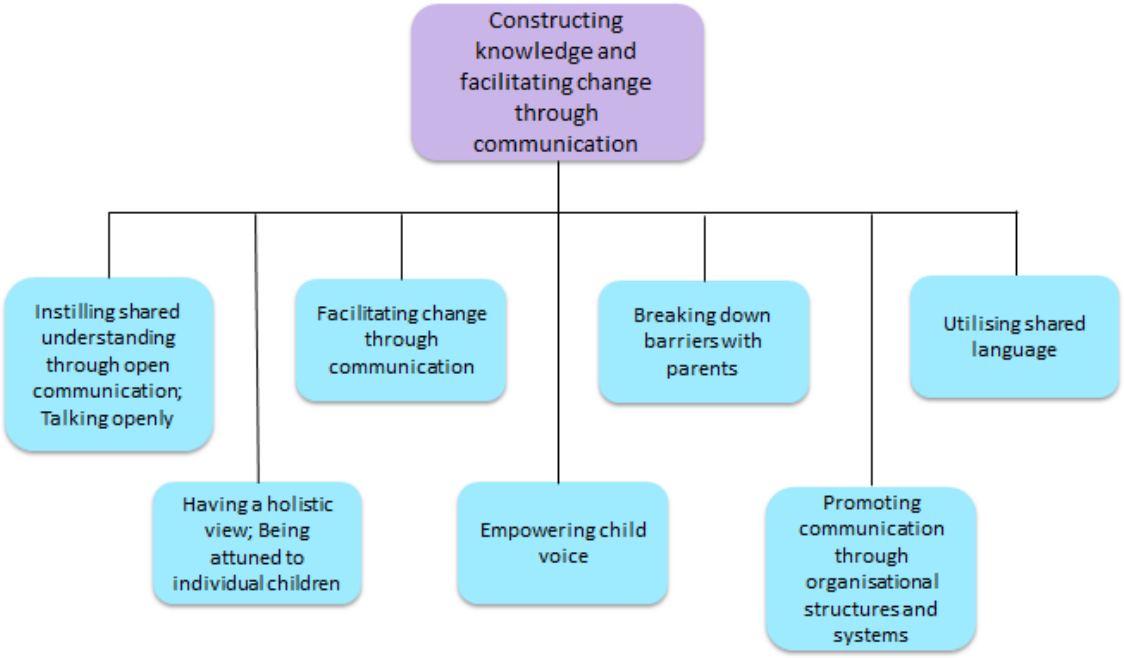


Figure 4.2 - Category 2: Constructing knowledge and facilitating change through communication.

4.3.1 Focused code: Instilling shared understanding through open communication

This focused code refers to the process of staff ensuring they communicate openly and honestly with each other and with parents, outside agencies and children, to obtain shared understanding about both pupil and staff SEMH. The following excerpt illustrates one participant's perceptions on engaging in open communication with a range of different people.

> *(…) but equally it's having that almost openness in the school of speaking to children about 'these might be your thoughts and feelings' and there's no shame in that whether you're male or female wanting to be gender fluid it's all acceptable and it's just about speaking to those children honestly really.* (Trish, p. 3, 102-107)

As illustrated in the excerpt below, through open communication and sharing of information by all members of staff, staff develop holistic understanding and awareness of a child's SEMH needs.

> *So everybody's opinion is important and trusted so it builds to this bigger picture of the children. So someone might think it's a throwaway comment but actually added into the mix (…)* (Claire, p. 17, 730-734)

Shared understanding is also illuminated as promoted not only verbally, but via non-verbal communication strategies. The following excerpt demonstrates how communication extends to talk with parents and children and how such understanding leads to staff '*being attuned to individual children'* (see section 4.3.6).

> *(…) they [staff] are aware through training, they are aware because we disseminate information between each other, they are aware because we touch base every week on the TLC board and they are aware because they deal with and talk to parents and children every single day. So none of our staff are trained to ignore someone looking sad or hyperactive and looking amazingly happy, that might be another reason.* (Harry, p. 11, 503-511)

Harry and some other participants also talked about promoting communication and shared understanding through '*talking openly'.* Employment of an open talking culture is described as serving several purposes and applies to staff, children and parents.

> *When you talk about something and you get it out there everyone understanding (…) is on the same wavelength and there can't be any confusion and that's an ideal world (…)* (Harry, p. 7, 331-333)

> *Our senior leadership team are really good at that, yeah they have, the doors are open and we can just go and talk if we need to. So it's good for us as well isn't it, for our mental wellbeing but particularly for the kids because then we can see (…) we feel supported by them you see.* (Louise, p. 6, 245-250)

As illustrated above, not only does this process help build a holistic understanding and awareness of children, as Louise indicates, it is also beneficial for the management of staff SEMH which is implicitly

acknowledged as impacting upon pupil SEMH. One might consider links with processes in Category 6, with communication also playing a role in nurturing and managing staff SEMH.

4.3.2 Focused code: Empowering child voice

The focused code *'empowering child voice'* refers to actions staff engage in to help pupils to feel enabled to communicate their worries and concerns.

One way participants talked about staff empowering child voice was through being available and accessible should pupils want to talk. They also discussed the importance of listening actively to children. Other participants mentioned providing pupils with the time needed to talk but identified external challenges impacting upon this. Relating to this, some described the role of support staff as being enabled to provide pupils with time to talk.

> *So I think talking or being approachable is possibly the biggest benefit a learning support assistant can give to children in the school setting.* (Ayla, p. 10, 407-409)

> *And I don't have to ensure that targets are met in the same way that a teacher does so I have more time to listen (…)* (Ayla, p. 4, 139-141)

> *(…) or could be something so simple as just spending a bit more time with that child and listening and having a chat with them and giving them that time (…)* (Claire, p. 4, 129-133)

Emma considered that, through giving time to talk and listen to pupils, school staff create a positive environment that provides pupils with a sense of safety.

> *(…) just to have some time out so someone's listening to him and maybe feel sort of giving him some pointers if he gets angry 'this is what you could do' or 'it's nice that you've had a happy day' or so hopefully they'll go away knowing that it's a positive environment they feel safe and that people will listen to them.* (Emma, p. 4, 124-131)

The above quote implicitly acknowledged the links between this category and Category 1. Communication presents a process that enables and promotes the embedding of organisational values, including providing a positive environment and wanting to ensure pupils feel safe.

4.3.3 Focused code: Breaking down barriers with parents

The focused code '*breaking down barriers with parents'* refers to how staff listen to, talk openly to and interact with parents in order to promote shared understanding, collaboration and positive change in relation to a pupil's SEMH. Harry talked about the role he plays in breaking down barriers with parents, with the description below drawing links to the way open communication and interaction contributes to this.

> *(…) I pride my myself personally with the fact that I am approachable, I am very liberal in my views and the way I work and the fact that I will leave the door open (…) I will give my email out, I will meet parents there and I will meet and greet them by first name so all those things break down those barriers. I know for example that just because I've gone out of my way and said hello Sue or Fred or whoever it may be (…) they (…) that first initial meeting is a 'oh right, he's not like my head teacher' or 'he's not just because he wears a suit and tie doesn't make him' (…) you know first impressions last.* (Harry, p. 5, 220-231)

Trish also talked about role and responsibilities in relation to supporting and facilitating parents in accessing SEMH services.

> *Quite often my role is with the parents and it will be in relation to specific learning needs so it might be a diagnosis of ASD or a diagnosis of ADHD and I'll support the parents in them finding that and accessing things like CAMHS so I'm the person who would sort of facilitate that for them.* (Trish, p. 3, 125-131)

4.3.4 Focused code: Utilising shared language

The focused code '*utilising shared language'* refers to how participants engage with language in relation to pupil SEMH. It reflects the different ways in which staff use language mindfully.

One participant talked about how, reflecting the needs of a child, staff remain mindful of and use language carefully in the instance of a pupil's situation.

> *I've had many children that have lost a father so we need to know for the next 6 weeks that we have to be careful about the words that come out of our mouths when we talk about daddies.* (Harry, p. 14, 656-659)

Language was also seen as important in helping to promote shared understanding for staff, parents and pupils.

> *(…) but he's [pupil] got that language as well, so in time we're helping him to, in a supportive role, make better choices in the future.* (Claire, p. 18, 762-765)

Another aspect of language that participants mentioned was related to avoiding negative constructions. Through positive language use and communication, and avoiding negative constructs of behaviour, pupil SEMH is promoted.

> *(…) and we try and praise all the time (…) we try and praise them writing a word, whether it's right or wrong, that's the first thing* (Harry, pp. 8-9, 387-389)
>
> *So rather than tell them off for not sitting still, recognise that this is how they are.* (Emma, p. 18, 693-695)

4.3.5 Focused code: Promoting communication through organisational structures and systems

This focused code refers to the organisation's structures and systems participants described using, to ensure effective communication. Through these structures and systems, school staff ensure they pass on and disseminate information appropriately in order to raise awareness and understanding of

concerns and factors relating to a pupils SEMH. Thus, '*having a holistic view'* enables staff in '*being attuned to individual children'* and *'facilitating change through communication'.*

Communication was perceived as being facilitated through clear structures, systems and procedures with regard to passing on information between staff to ensure awareness and understanding of matters relating to pupils' SEMH. Participants also identified the role of clear communication systems in relation to passing on safeguarding concerns.

> *Yeah the system is very, very clear in terms of safeguarding which often crosses over with mental health and emotional. The system is very clear. Identify it, recognise it ok, make a note of it, bring it to the designated safeguard lead (…)* (Harry, p. 14, 644-649)

> *Yeah I mean any anything, any concerns raised by the children to the ELSA [emotional literacy support assistant], the ELSA will then always speak to the class teachers about them and they're not safeguarding concerns (…)* (Trish, p. 4, 165-168)

The sharing of concerns in relation to matters concerning a pupil's SEMH were also identified as being promoted through structured opportunities for staff to pass on information, such as allocated meetings.

> *(…) before we get our new class we always have allocated meeting time with the class teachers so any, any concerns, academic or anything is always passed on.* (Louise, p. 6, 231-235)

4.3.6 Focused codes: Having a holistic view, being attuned to individual children

Through '*instilling shared understanding through open communication'*, staff are enabled in '*having a holistic view'* of a child. That is, they are aware of and recognise the multiple factors that may be contributing to and impacting upon their SEMH.

Several participants refer to needing to have knowledge of the personal backgrounds of pupils; knowledge which is obtained through staff

communication and interaction with various people, including parents and external agencies.

> *(…) the staff visit the nurseries or the preschool setting for the child so they will come back with information so for example this year I've (…) so this year we had three or four children that I knew I had to be aware of (...) talk to parents (…) talk to various outside agencies already to get the full history (…)* (Harry, p. 3, 126-131)

Holistic knowledge of pupils' lives was seen as aiding staff in understanding and being attuned to pupil SEMH needs.

> *I think all of the staff understand the relationship between a child's personal background and how they perform in school and they understand that this can have that effect on them.* (Trish, p. 8, 338-341)

4.3.7 Focused code: Facilitating change through communication

This focused code refers to how, through open communication, staff facilitate change in order to develop and promote positive outcomes for pupil SEMH. One participant described how, through observing that a change had occurred in practice and 'something had been done', they would know that communication between staff had been effective.

> *(…) when I communicated to the teacher, if her response is positive and she's able to juggle things about a bit then yeah, action has been taken to help this child out (…)* (Emma, pp. 9-10, 356-360)

> *(…) how would I know my communication has been effective, well because something has been done.* (Emma, p. 9, 328-330)

4.4 Category 3: Striving to manage external challenge and identities as educators

Category 3 is constructed on the final focused codes as presented in Figure 4.3. A list of the focus codes during the analysis which led to these final focused codes can be found in Appendix 14.

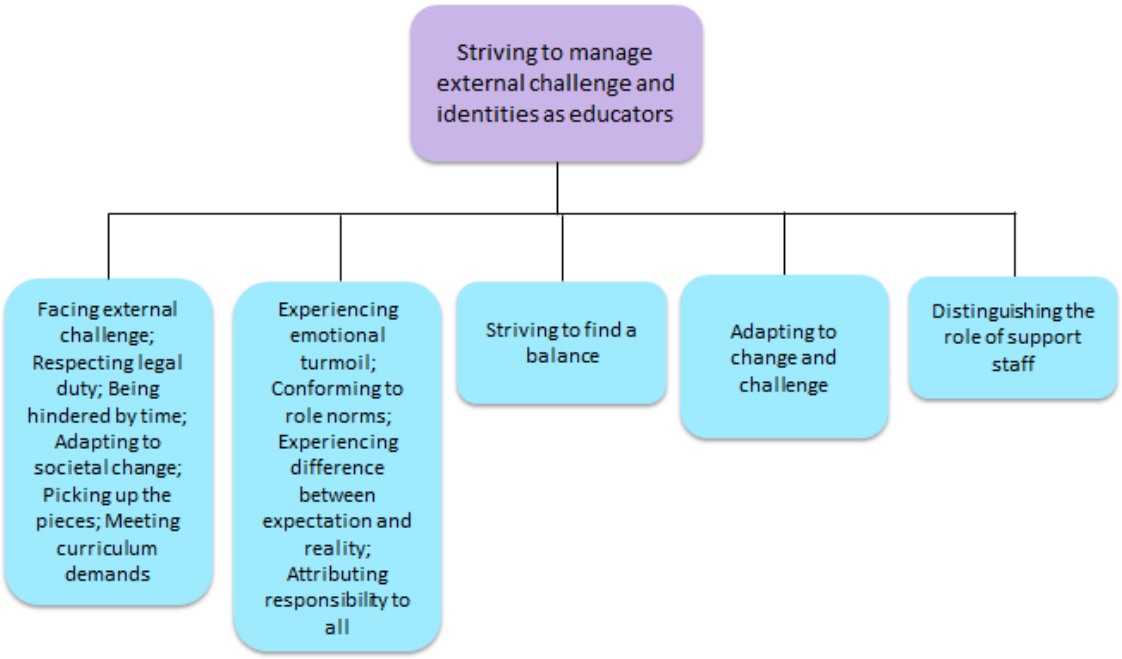


Figure 4.3 - Category 3: Striving to manage external challenge and identities as educators.

Whilst this category was developed during the coding and analysis of data from initial interviews, the researcher identified unanswered questions and gaps in relation to the function and role of support staff. Consequently, through theoretical sampling, conceptualisation around this aspect of the category was enhanced. The researcher's thoughts before and after theoretical sampling are shown in their memos in Appendix 9.

4.4.1 Focused code: Facing external challenge

The overarching focused code '*facing external challenge'* relates to the various external challenges participants reported experiencing and shaping their engagement with pupil SEMH. Cited external factors include '*respecting legal duty', 'being hindered by time', 'adapting to societal change', 'picking up the pieces'* and '*meeting curriculum demands'.*

Participants talked about the constraints of time as a general hindrance in relation to their ability to promote and support pupil SEMH. They also talked about time in relation to increased workload and a need to manage a range of competing demands.

> *Time is one, time is a real hindrance. It really is.* (Claire, p. 13, 546)

> *Time limits my role and obviously all of the other stuff that has to be done in a day limits my role (…)* (Ayla, p. 12, 478-480)

Another external challenge frequently mentioned by participants was in '*meeting curriculum demands'* – again, a pressure particularly referred to as being experienced by teachers. This included the need to demonstrate the academic learning and progress of pupils in accordance with the taught curriculum.

> *But the pressure as a teacher is huge to get through the curriculum and keep everybody on track and keep on going (…)* (Louise, p. 13, 499-502)

> *(…) and then running alongside that a hindrance is the curriculum in the sense of so much to have to teach.* (Claire, p. 13, 551-553)

> *(…) teachers do have to think about the whole child but they have targets and things that need to be met.* (Ayla, p. 4, 136-138)

A third aspect of external challenge relates to some participants' recognition of societal focus on SEMH, societal pressures experienced by pupils and perceived need for staff to respond appropriately in respect of this. Ayla discussed societal pressures in relation to social media.

> *(…) there are a mountain of pressures on these children that we didn't have. So the internet for example didn't exist when I was a child. I can't imagine what it would have been like to have to deal with cyberbullying and things like that. It's unimaginable to me. Thankfully. But these have all this to deal with so I think it's really, really important that we make them mentally strong.* (Ayla, p. 16, 653-660)

Harry talked about their role being shaped by legal demands and responsibilities. This included fulfilling safeguarding and statutory curriculum requirements.

> *(…) but my responsibility is to be firm but fair but it is also to recognise the legal responsibilities that a child has as well.* (Harry, p. 5, 243-236)

> *Well there is a national curriculum there that legally, as a maintained school, you know and most schools, we have to adhere to.* (Harry, p. 16, 755-757)

The final aspect of external challenge related to '*picking up the pieces'*. One participant described the added responsibilities placed upon schools in supporting pupil SEMH due to lack of availability and access to certain external agencies.

> *Yes, in terms of counsellors, CAMHS (…) those kinds of things really do impact back in school and so we need to pick up these children whereas before maybe they were talking to GP's or things like that. Actually, that's us (…)* (Claire, p. 25, 1042-1047)

4.4.2 Focused codes: Experiencing emotional turmoil, conforming to role norms, experiencing difference between expectation and reality, attributing responsibility to all

These focused codes refer to the complexity of professional and personal identities reportedly held by staff; the values, beliefs, emotions and role expectations underpinning them; and the need to navigate these as educators.

When talking about staff roles and responsibilities, many participants' descriptions were *'attributing responsibility to all'*. This is illustrated in the following excerpt.

> *It's just a general how we are the children and they, our head, you know often reiterates this, we've all got a responsibility to the children, we're all teachers because we all teach the children something so right from the cleaners, the caretaker, the preschool staff, covers, teaching assistants, teachers, whoever (…) we all impact on the children.* (Emma, p.3, 84-91)

The excerpt above also reflects relevance of Category 1. Emma talks about the place of the Head Teacher in communicating and embedding guiding values and beliefs, which then influence processes and the way staff engage and impact upon pupil SEMH.

Contradictions arise in comments made by participants relating to their own and other staff members roles and responsibilities in relation to pupil SEMH. Dissonance between perceived and actual role links to *'facing external challenge'* – how external challenges and demands impact and shape different staff roles. This excerpt illustrates tension between role expectation and reality:

> *I don't think on paper it would appear that we have different roles as far as emotional, social and mental health is concerned. I would say that it's everybody's role, regardless of what your role is in school to make sure that you are enabling a child to reach their full potential in school. So whether that be someone like the caretaker in school, or someone like the Head. It doesn't really matter, it's still (…) because you are within the school setting you (…) how you behave influences the children. You're a role model the whole time you are in the school. So I don't think on paper it's laid out to be different but I think in reality some people have more time than others.* (Ayla, p. 5, 165-169)

Several participants labelled staff roles and associated responsibilities in a way which that confirmed as '*conforming to role norms'*, engaging in practice typically associated with a role. The following excerpts illustrate how several participants associated certain expected behaviours and responsibilities.

> *I mean roles are different anyway, because teacher's teacher, TA's TA (…)* (Emma, p. 10, 378-380)

> *(…) it's almost the regulations of school isn't it (...) the teacher talks to the parents and that's their role.* (Trish, p.10, 451-453)

> *(…) a class teacher although can be amazingly sympathetic and listen and support and help, at the end of the day the responsibility is to teach 30 children, not just one (…)* (Harry, p. 13, 619-622)

Trish's description below further illustrates the dissonance between role expectation and role reality, thus *'experiencing difference between expectation and reality'.*

> *(…) because predominantly teachers come into teaching because they want to teach children and as time goes on you realise you're not just a teacher, you're a surrogate parent, you're a social worker, you're a mental health worker, you're a nurse, you're doing (...) it's all encompassing, every need of that child you're trying to manage but all you've had is the training to be a teacher.* (Trish, p. 13, 586-593)

'Experiencing emotional turmoil' refers to a final aspect related to staff roles and identity. Specifically, this relates to emotional difficulties some participants report experiencing in situations which create tension between their personal values, beliefs and morals and the expectation placed upon them to meet curriculum demands.

> *(…) but as a human, if a child's telling you something, you can't leave that so it's either you go and deal with this child who's just made this disclosure or you carry on teaching the other 29 children and that, that in itself is emotional turmoil for a lot of the staff because which one do you do.* (Trish, p. 14, 656-662)

In relation to personal values and beliefs, comments from Claire highlight that although putting SEMH needs first adds pressure to their role, they describe that it as something they have to do.

> *So even though it puts pressure on our roles and even though it might add to, it's just something you have to do. And we will do it. It can be tricky sometimes because you know you've got Ofsted wanting this that and everything else, when actually you know that they're talking about a child (…)* (Claire, p. 15, 628-634)

4.4.3 Focused code: Striving to find a balance

Resulting from *'facing external challenge'* and '*experiencing emotional turmoil*', some participants report that staff are constantly '*striving to find a balance'* between competing demands and identities. As illustrated below, Claire seems to desire the development and implementation of actions that marry SEMH and curriculum demands to ensure both are delivered

effectively. Additionally, she identifies that external change is ongoing; depicting a need to continually strive to balance competing demands.

> *(…) whilst that is a hindrance [the curriculum], I think here we acknowledge that and we will try to facilitate a way that makes it work for them [the children]. So it's acknowledging that, but it's things like me (…) so myself and [head teacher] often we have a list of things as everyone does in their diary and it goes out the window because actually a child's emotional needs might come first, so, and then it's trying to marry that'.* (Claire, pp. 13-14, 557-565)

> *(…) because meeting emotional needs isn't getting any less, it is increasing (…) which is a good thing, it really is a good thing, it's just how we marry that and meet those needs.* (Claire, p. 14, 568-572)

Another aspect relates to ensuring the focus on pupil SEMH doesn't become so great that it has a detrimental effect, thus asserting a need to ensure a balanced focus on pupil SEMH and other aspects of pupils' lives.

> *(…) I do think though we will need to be a bit careful that we don't overdo it [SEMH]. That we don't place too much importance on it [SEMH] because otherwise you become solely focused on just that and there are loads of other aspects to your life other than just that.* (Ayla, p. 18, 702-707)

4.4.4 Focused code: Adapting to change and challenge

Participants described several ways in which adaptations to practices and processes are made within the school in response to *'facing external challenge'*, *'experiencing emotional turmoil'* and subsequently *'striving to find a balance'*.

One adaptive approach participants identified was embedding SEMH creatively throughout the curriculum. Rather than teaching SEMH within an explicit lesson, aspects of social, emotional and mental health are integrated throughout teaching.

> *(…) if you have a curriculum which is inclusive and which is thinking outside the box, you can do that, you can have a school ethos and system that no matter what you are teaching, whether it be science, English or maths, you can embed some of that emotional and mental health themes.* (Harry, p. 18, 843-839)

Conversely, some participants expressed that it could be helpful to consider teaching SEMH more explicitly.

> *They're really useful [PSHE lessons], so we don't, yeah, we don't timetable those, so that could be something to look at.* (Emma, p. 20, 782-784)

> *We should just be identifying where we are doing more formalised planning, so certainly that is something we will be aware of, certainly from my role just looking forward, I will start with that.* (Claire, p. 29, 1208-1212)

However, both participants indicated PSHE (personal, social and health education) lessons would increase pressure on time and capacity. Below, Claire mentions how spending time on timetabled SEMH lessons would increase pressure on teachers and could impact their own SEMH.

> *(…) so spending a little bit more time on that which just puts more pressure and more impact on teachers and their time and then you end up having to look after your staff because they're so, you know (…) so it's an ongoing cycle of support and things (…)* (Claire, p. 31, 1295-1300)

Another adaptive approach mentioned was allocation of individuals and teams with specified roles for pupil SEMH. This includes both internal and external professionals.

> *(…) without having, sort of, an ELSA or a psychotherapist, there wouldn't be that time for that emotional outlet.* (Trish, p. 8, 376-378)

> *(…) but she is our trained ELSA in school and alongside that as well we then have our trained counsellor within the pastoral team*

and we work with the school nurse as well because more and more (…) (Claire, 11, 440-444)

A final process participants identified as engaging with in response to external challenge was in staff working collaboratively and as a team in order to move forwards. Whilst individual responsibilities are acknowledged, descriptions emphasise a need to work collectively. One might draw links to Categories 2 and 4, with collaborative communication acting as a tool for personal and organisational change and learning.

And then obviously our Head and Deputy Head feed into that as well, it's not just all my decision it's a whole team of people working together. (Louise, p. 4, 136-138)

It's never a standalone, it's not a 'yes you're given that and then you're the person who's got to help', it's a team of people. (Trish, p. 11, 516-518)

Yeah we plan collaboratively so for most of the subjects because it's three form entry here, for most subjects we'll meet together and plan a week's worth of work. (Louise, p. 17, 674-677)

4.4.5 Focused code: Distinguishing the role of support staff

This focused code refers to the key role support staff have in relation to pupil SEMH, a role shaped by external demands and pressures (*facing external challenge*) and role expectations (*conforming to role norms)*. Illumination of the distinct role of support staff was considered saturated after theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling with a member of support staff filled out the properties of the category by providing new theoretical insights that had not been captured during purposeful sampling.

Comments made by the participants during purposeful sampling described how support staff are less pressured and less accountable for ensuring pupils meet academic targets, have more time to spend with pupils, have fewer role demands placed upon them and have more opportunity to work pupils during smaller groups and on a one-to-one basis. Therefore, having greater opportunity to learn about pupils by being afforded time to actively listen and

talk to them. Additionally, some participants also reported that by being more available and having more time, support staff are often those members of staff pupils choose to share their thoughts and feelings with.

> *(…) but she [support staff] would be his [pupil] go-to person and she's not part of the pastoral team but he felt safe with her because he knew she'd listen (…)* (Claire, p. 12, 501-504)

> *Well I think it's just because she [teaching assistant] has a smaller group of children in a quiet setting and so they'll read together and chat about (…) well it could be about the book they are reading (…) but chat about other things as well.* (Louise, p. 12, 453-455)

> *(…) you know, because they hold so much more knowledge because of the less formal way they deal with the children.* (Claire, pp. 27-28, 1159-1162)

Theoretical sampling provided another dimension to this category. The quotation below notes how the role of support staff is something more than a role that is 'fallen in to' due to challenges experienced by other staff roles, but providing time for SEMH is a key duty.

> *And I, to be honest, I think that's my role. I think I have to make time.* (Ayla, p. 6, 209-210)

4.5 Category 4: Seeking and engaging in personal and organisational growth

Category 4 is constructed on the following focused codes as presented in Figure 4.4.

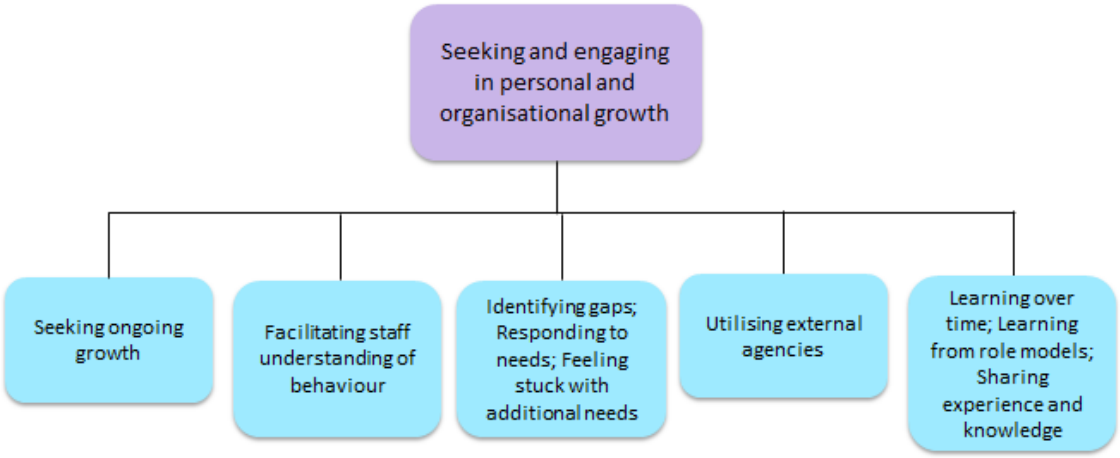


Figure 4.4 - Category 4: Seeking and engaging in personal and organisational growth.

Appendix 14 provides details of the focused codes that were developed during analysis and the final focus codes constructed following analysis (as shown above).

4.5.1 Focused code: Seeking ongoing growth

This focused code refers to staff recognising their own growth as ongoing and seeking strategies accordingly in order to develop their knowledge and understanding. Some participants mentioned that growth is continual, with a need to remain up-to-date.

> *There's always, always more educating that can be done, always.* (Trish, p. 15, 683-684)

> *So and I think it's being open to those kinds of things and not being insular (…) so we need to, you know whilst outside help is less and less and you have to buy it in you, need to put yourself out there to find out if you're hitting all the buttons and finding things out.* (Claire, p. 25, 1066-1069)

Drawing links with the focused code '*identifying gaps*', one participant described how through feeling uncertain about how to support a particular child's needs, they seek to develop their learning in their own time.

(…) because I don't know how to handle him and I've gone home and I've read about ADHD to try to come up with things that I can do (…) (Emma, p. 18, 704-706)

It is considered that the seeking of ongoing growth links to other focused codes within this category, including the identification of gaps in knowledge and understanding, and multiple strategies employed for promote this. Trish's comment below also draws links with Category 3, whereby she talks about the need for schools to keep in touch with the societal change and pressures on pupils and to think about what they can do to help.

Trish: I think in the change in climate you've got children who now are experiencing maybe wanting to cross dress at early ages and maybe not having social understanding and the world has moved forward hasn't it.

Researcher: It's evolving?

Trish: And I think it's, as a school, keeping in touch with that and how we can help rather than leaving the children to get to secondary school and not having any understanding of these things. (pp. 4-5, 182-195)

4.5.2 Focused code: Facilitating staff understanding of behaviour

The need to seek ongoing organisational growth and to engage in activities which promote this were talked about by participants as being somewhat underpinned by a need to be *'facilitating staff understanding of behaviour'.* In part, seeking and engaging in activities which developed staff knowledge and understanding were perceived as a way of changing staff mind-sets, attitudes and perceptions of behaviour. The two excerpts below from Ayla demonstrate her view of a need to re-educate staff, change attitudes and facilitate perceptions of behaviour to ensure pupils' SEMH needs are managed appropriately.

If I had an attitude of 'pull yourself together, there's nothing wrong with you' that would hugely hinder my role. I (...) that's the attitude I would take to children isn't it. That would mean that they wouldn't

> *ask me again, I would possibly make a child feel like they can't talk about this. And that is exactly how it was before. So my attitude hugely effects how, how much impact and how much help I can give to children, definitely.* (Ayla, p. 12, 482-490)

> *I think attitude is a big (…) it's probably the first thing to try and change because although these young children that we teach don't have these attitudes because they've come from (…) they've been born into a society which accepts that we're not all mentally well and we can do something about it and talk about it. The adults in these places are not from that era, so I think it's hugely important that we re-educate the adults within these settings.* (Ayla, p. 14, 547-555)

One might draw links to the focused code *'investing in a shared culture'* in Category 1, while Claire's comments below highlight how staff perceptions and attitudes around behaviour are intrinsically related to the need to invest in a shared culture in order to make work efficiently and effectively.

> *That understanding, they can't see it and so therefore you can't carry on in the job that doesn't work that way for you and yet actually if you truly understand it and invest it then it makes it easy, it does make it easy.* (Claire, pp. 19-20, 824-829)

4.5.3 Focused code: Identifying gaps

The overarching focused code *'Identifying gaps'* refers to the action of staff recognising limitations in their knowledge and understanding of pupil SEMH. Such identification of gaps of knowledge was considered to then lead to seeking, and engaging in, activities to develop these areas of needed growth.

The identification of gaps is a process performed on an individual staff basis and in collaboration with other staff. Accordingly, the excerpt below draws links to Category 2, demonstrating the role of staff communication in moving forwards.

> *The head teacher and I kind of create an agenda of things that we think we need to discuss but then we bring it to the middle leaders*

> *and say is there anything we've missed and they may well suggest something and so then we would bring it out and to the rest of the staff.* (Claire, p. 26, 1088-1093)

Some participants indicated *'feeling stuck with additional needs'*. Demonstrated in the excerpt below, Claire's comments indicate awareness of the limitations of staff knowledge, skill and confidence in supporting the SEMH of pupils with special educational needs.

> *I do think we struggle with, and I hold my hands up on this one, with regards to children with additional needs. So particularly maybe the autistic children who struggle anyway to understand socially and then meeting their emotional needs, that's coming to light quite a bit now in terms of meeting both of those needs and taking a struggle with how to move on with that one.* (Claire, pp. 21-22, 908-916)

The statement below also captures the lack of confidence some participants experience in relation to less familiar SEMH needs which they feel fall outside the remits of their role.

> *(…) I felt, almost out of my remit because things like self-harm are becoming more prevalent and although I could sit and I could talk to the children about those things you wanted to ensure that the person doing that was qualified to do so (…)* (Trish, p. 2, 83-87)

Linking to *'utilising external agencies',* Harry talked about activities engaged with as a way of '*responding to needs*, seeking development of staff knowledge and understanding in response to the needs of a specific pupil's SEMH needs.

> *For example we had an attempted suicide a year ago for a child so therefore I brought in my psychotherapist to give us some advice and talk to us about how we deal with our emotions and how other children because obviously other children found out about it how to deal with it and what to say to them should they ask (...) and I'm glad I did that because at the time it was all 'shock horror my goodness me' and then it was mentioned to me that actually, how*

do we tell other children, how do we relate that. (Harry, pp. 15-16, 729-738)

The above excerpt can also be seen as drawing links to Category 6, where Harry talks about the impact of such an event on staff emotional wellbeing and the need to manage staff emotions.

4.5.4 Focused code: Utilising external agencies

The focused code *'utilising external agencies'* refers to one of the strategies participants discussed engaging with in order to facilitate staff knowledge and understanding of pupil SEMH. Several participants noted the importance of cascading and disseminating formal training received from external agencies to all staff members to ensure upskilling throughout the school. This included sharing training with lunchtime supervisors.

> *We talk to support staff, any lunchtime supervisors (...) what we did then was that we disseminated that training to lunchtime supervisors so that has an impact because often the lunchtime supervisors bless them have the hardest job (…)* (Claire, p. 4, 148-153)

Many participants talked about receiving formal training through external agencies. Relating to the code '*identifying gaps'*, participants discussed training in terms of helping them attune to and gain greater insight and understanding of pupils' SEMH needs.

> *Now, in terms of development, we've had training courses on social and emotional impact, we've had trauma training for those children who have experienced trauma and how that may affect them now and in later life or affect them and they don't even know it.* (Harry, p. 10, 472-476)

Some participants also referred to working more collaboratively with external agencies in order to help develop their insights and understanding of individual pupils' SEMH needs.

> *I've had an outside agency coming to work with a child and they have observed the child and then we had a chance afterwards to*

talk together about what we've seen and ways to support their wellbeing further. (Louise, p. 5, 197-201)

Others refer to utilising professionals external to the school to work directly with pupils and their families.

(…) so we have a list of eight children and they go to see the psychotherapist. It's regularly reviewed. The psychotherapist also helps the parents so it's whatever practices are used within the school parents can also use. (Trish, p. 2, 87-92)

4.5.5 Focused codes: Learning over time, learning from role models, sharing experience and knowledge

These focused codes refer to the more 'informal' strategies illuminated as being engaged with in order to develop staff knowledge and understanding in relation to SEMH. Strategies described included '*learning over time', 'learning from role models', 'reflecting on practice'* and *'sharing experience and knowledge'.* The following quotations serve to illustrate this.

(...) when I knew he was going to be in a particular teacher's class, who is a very strong teacher, I've said to her 'I really want to see how you handle him so that I can mirror that'. (Emma, p. 18, 707-710)

(…) we will go to the class teacher and offer advice about how we can support and if either of us couldn't offer advice we'd go and find out together and move it forward in that way so. (Louise, p. 4, 157-161)

(…) but when you've worked with good role models and good colleagues it's quite easy to train and learn as you go. (Harry, p. 7, 317-319)

Louise's comments above also show the role of communication and staff talking and interacting collaboratively to move things forward. Thus, one could draw links to Category 2 and the role of communication in personal and organisational growth. In addition to sharing experience amongst staff, when talking about factors contributing to the development of staff

confidence, Harry described a process of sharing experience across schools.

> *(…) sharing of experience amongst staff and colleagues, across schools and within school (…)* (Harry, p. 15, 725-726)

4.6 Category 5: Promoting positive outcomes through implicit and explicit behaviours

Category 5 is constructed on the following final focused codes as presented in Figure 4.5. A list of focused codes generated during analysis that led to the focused codes presented below can be found in Appendix 14.

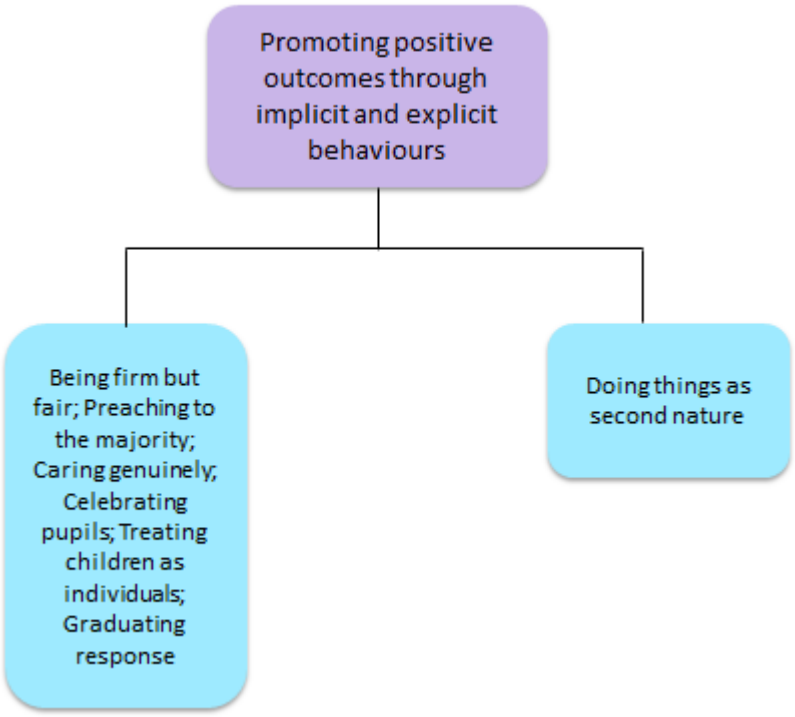


Figure 4.5 - Category 5: Promoting positive outcomes through implicit and explicit behaviours.

4.6.1 Focused codes: Being firm but fair, preaching to the majority, caring genuinely, being dependable, celebrating pupils, treating children as individuals; graduating response

These focused codes refer to the more explicit behavioural strategies participants identified as employing in order to embed implicitly acknowledged shared, organisational values in order to promote pupil

SEMH. Thus, links could be drawn to Category 1 and the influence of values, beliefs and aims in guiding actions.

Aiming to promote pupil resilience and independence, several participants talked about '*being firm but fair',* whereby staff acknowledged and sympathised with pupils' needs, but also enforced rules to promote implicit organisational values. Others talked about how delivery and embedding of SEMH was targeted towards all children and then '*treating children as individuals'* and *'graduating response',* differentiating approaches for those pupils needing additional SEMH support.

> *And we're consistent in our rules; we don't try and trick the children. We are strict in what we expect. Simple things like uniform and things like that because we want them to feel belonging.* (Claire, pp. 8-9, 340-344)

> *(…) what you try and do is preach to the majority (…) or not preach (…) you try to talk to or address or talk to the majority but also (…) it's like class teaching nowadays (…) you teach to the middle ground but you are aware that you need to do extra support for the lowers for whatever reason they're lower and you need to challenge a higher.* (Harry, p. 9, 426-431)

Other approaches participants mentioned employing included '*celebrating pupils'* – acknowledging and celebrating pupils' achievements.

> *(…) and tomorrow in assembly we're going to celebrate it and bring them [pupils] all up to the front. And that is literally a PSHE lesson, an emotional and mental health lesson in itself.* (Harry, p.18, 865-868)

The final aspects described by participants were coded as *'caring genuinely'* and *'being dependable'*. Some participants identified promoting pupil SEMH through promoting trust by following through with actions. Several participants mentioned the genuine care staff have for pupils, which children are aware of.

> *And there's an element of trust, that word. If we say we'll do something, we will do it (…)* (Claire, p. 16, 686-688)
>
> *We are so good to the children here and genuinely the staff care about the children.* (Emma, p. 4, 136-137)

As shown below, when asked what was happening within the wider school and between staff to create school as a 'safe place', Claire also mentioned staff caring genuinely.

> *I do genuinely think our staff care and the children know that.* (Claire, p. 8, 326-327)

4.6.2 Focused code: Doing things as second nature

This focused code refers to the way in which staff promote SEMH implicitly and unconsciously within their everyday practice. As demonstrated in the excerpt below, actions and processes become habitual. It is 'what is done' in the school. One might consider that this draws links to Category 1, with staff engaged in an organisational culture where staff actions and process reflect and embed guiding principles. The excerpt here serves to illustrate this.

> *I think a lot of it does come as second nature to us, to a lot of our staff, because that's how they see other people around our school behaving and being.* (Louise, p. 20, 776-779)

4.7 Category 6: Nurturing and managing staff SEMH

This final category refers to the actions and processes staff engage with in order to effectively manage their own SEMH, to ultimately ensure that their personal needs do not have a negative impact on pupil SEMH. It was constructed by the final four focused codes as presented in Figure 4.6.

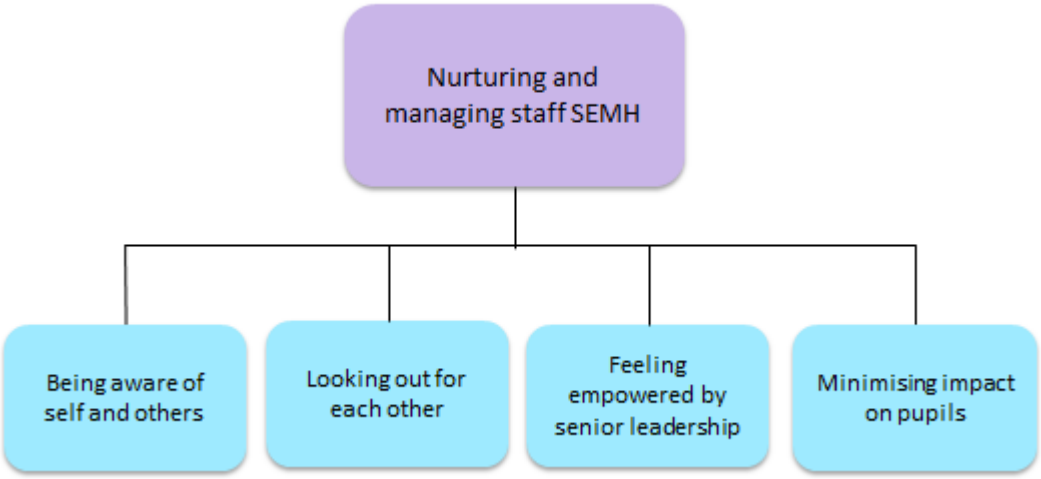


Figure 4.6 - Category 6: Nurturing and managing staff SEMH

Focused codes developed during analysis which led to the final focused codes shown above are presented in Appendix 14.

4.7.1 Focused code: Being aware of self and others

'Being aware of self and others' refers to staff being attuned to and recognising their personal SEMH needs and the SEMH needs of other staff. As Claire explains below, this awareness enables staff to be more attuned, sensitive and able to relate to the SEMH of pupils. This also enables them to be more aware of 'getting it right' for children and of the importance of providing all pupils with a good foundation.

> *I actually think it [staff SEMH] makes the staff very aware, self-aware, because the staff who so for example don't necessarily themselves have any heightened needs, so they, so you know they're quite happily (...) plodding along isn't the best word necessarily (...) but they understand, they recognise but it doesn't impact on them but they can see that somebody else has been struggling or is struggling in a day-to-day life and they see that in an adult and actually when you start and unpicking it (…) a lot of it does go back over years and things maybe not have been addressed so that it makes you very aware of 'well we've got to get it right for the children' in the school' so that you're building foundations. Again that muscle base, so that they've got a good*

foundation going forward to help them. So I think in working with colleagues who struggle with mental health it certainly makes it better to the children because we can see it in both areas. (Claire, p. 3, 101-121)

4.7.2 Focused code: Looking out for each other

The focused code '*looking out for each other'* refers to the actions participants report taking in relation to supporting and helping manage the SEMH of other staff members. Many participants talked about observation and being aware of when other members of staff might need support, 'checking in' with those members of staff who may be or are experiencing difficulties that are impacting upon their own SEMH, and giving staff 'time out' when needed.

Like today somebody, one of the girls said to me 'you look a bit pale are you alright', so we're looking out for each other as well and yeah. (Louise, p. 15, 566-569)

And we do provide debrief sessions, you know so if there has been an incident of some sort we will make sure that we go back and we'll make a cup of tea and insist they step out if there's been a flash point, so swap another member of staff in, have a cup of tea. (Claire, p. 23, 955-961)

Yeah everybody just checking in on each other. That [school name]-ness, that you can't define. And it's definitely there. (Claire, p. 23, 983-985)

The above excerpts draw links to Category 2, with Claire and Louise both describing the way in which staff communicate and interact with each other in relation to supporting staff SEMH. The second excerpt from Claire also reflects comments she made earlier in the interview regarding ethos (section 4.2.1). Therefore, one might draw links to Category 1, where ethos underpins processes relating to the management of staff SEMH. Claire also talked about how the action of staff looking out for each other also influences pupils, with staff actions directly impacting upon how pupils feel, and embeds values and aims related to making school a safe place.

And I think the children see staff looking out for each other and so then they know that we're going to look out for the children as well so they feel safe about that. (Claire, p. 8, 336-340)

4.7.3 Focused code: Feeling empowered by senior leadership

One participant talked about how, through effective leadership by a head teacher and collaborative curriculum planning by members of senior leadership, staff feel less pressured and more empowered. Subsequently, as illustrated in the second excerpt below, Louise indicates how such curriculum planning feeds down and impacts upon pupils.

I don't think so because like I said to you before because our Head is so keen on making our curriculum engaging the pressure isn't as great here as perhaps what it has, has been in other schools. I mean our senior leadership team will meet (…) they've been looking at the maths curriculum recently and they've been looking at things that are in the maths curriculum that ' do we need to be spending a lot of time on it?', 'probably not', so they're helping our children by taking out the bits that we don't need to spend a week on and perhaps having just a lesson on it so we've covered it but that's enough. So I think the teachers feel quite empowered by that as well because they're not thinking 'there's so much to get through'. We're very cross curricular here so everything is taught through topics so yeah. We do maths separately but everything else is. (Louise, p. 14, 527-529)

Well I think because it's quite an exciting curriculum at this school and so you look forward to coming in and doing it, so yeah, and the children pick up on that don't they so. (Louise, p. 14, 536-539)

Louise's comments reflect the relevance of Category 3, which is linked to the process involved in managing external challenge. Managing external challenge helps reduce staff pressure and promotes staff to feel empowered and excited about their role. Ultimately, these actions were perceived as being enacted in order to minimise the impact of external and personal challenge on pupils SEMH.

4.7.4 Focused code: Minimising impact on pupils

When talking about staff SEMH, several participants described the way in which staff worked to ensure that SEMH difficulties do not impact upon pupil SEMH. Through engagement in processes and actions to manage staff SEMH, they are ensuring they are '*minimising impact on pupils'.* Harry describes this in the following excerpt.

> ***Researcher: And how do you feel that impacts then on people with social, emotional and mental health?***
>
> *Harry: Well it doesn't because (…) they don't know why teachers (…) if a teacher was off because of stress for example or because of emotional mental health to do with their own life outside of the school the children don't know about that but in terms of a manager of staff in terms of teachers and my peer group it has a massive effect, it's happening right now in my school. One deals with that with the services that are available which we buy into a service so we point them in the right direction.* (pp. 12-13, 584-592)

One might draw a link between the above excerpt and Category 3. It can be observed how processes, such as buying in external services, are engaged with to manage and nurture staff SEMH.

4.8 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the findings for the present study, emergent through various data analysis processes and activities engaged with by the researcher. Detailed examination of the six conceptualised categories was presented, with focused codes from which they were constructed and supporting excerpts provided. The categories presented were considered by the researcher as most relevant in providing conceptualised explanation of the social actions, processes and relationships involved in the social phenomenon under exploration in the present study. A second literature review will now be presented in Chapter 5, which considers the above findings in relation to existing literature in order to promote theoretical sensitisation and help inform construction of the study's grounded theory.

5 Literature Review – Part 2

5.1 Introduction

Providing context and rationale for the current study, a purposively broad literature review was presented in Chapter 2. A second literature review was conducted by the researcher following completion of data analysis and the development of conceptual categories. Facilitating construction of the study's grounded theory, the review below assisted the researcher by informing further data analysis and theoretical sensitisation. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, through engagement with existing theories, the researcher located the study's grounded theory through connections in relevant literature.

The literature reviewed by the researcher was selected upon their perception that it was most relevant to the selected categories and focused codes that were considered vital to the study's emergent theory. Consequently, literature pertinent to the following categories and focused codes is discussed:

- Investing in a shared, all-encompassing ethos, culture and values
- Having an effective, inspiring and supportive leader
- Constructing knowledge and facilitating change through communication
- Striving to manage external challenge and identities as educators
- Seeking and engaging in ongoing personal and organisational growth

Given the interacting nature of all categories, as presented with the review below, categories are discussed and considered in relation to their connections to various areas of existing theory and literature. Therefore, key categories and focused codes are not presented in turn, but are illuminated when they are considered pertinent, relevant to reviewed literature and considered helpful in providing understanding of the subsequent grounded theory. Furthermore, whilst the literature review was developed upon the key categories and focused codes presented in the list above, indirect links to remaining categories are considered.

5.2 The role of ethos and culture in understanding organisational functioning

Guided by participants' frequent referral to the role of ethos and its importance in relation to the actions and processes of staff within schools, the researcher focused attention on theory and literature relating to ethos and culture to aid conceptualisation and development of the present grounded theory.

Despite the occurrence and centrality of the notion of ethos in organisational literature, it is asserted that it is a concept which is subjective, ambiguous and difficult to measure (Solvason, 2005). Furthermore, it is often described in relation to and interchangeably with other organisational concepts, such as culture and climate (Glover & Coleman, 2005) and understanding within literature in terms of what is meant by school ethos often presents as contradictory and inconsistent (Donnelly, 2000). Ethos is also described in reference to values and beliefs and as being intrinsically linked with culture (Donnelly, 2000; Garner, 2011; McLaughlin, 2005) and a concept frequently referenced and advocated within educational literature (Brown, Busfield, O'Shea & Sibthorpe, 2011). Whilst there does not at present appear to be one commonly agreed definition of ethos, McLaughlin (2005, p. 311) broadly describes it as 'the prevalent or characteristic tone, spirit or sentiment informing an identifiable entity involving human life and interaction'. Similarly, Solvason (2005) describes school ethos in terms of character and a 'feeling' that is experienced within an organisation. As implied by the descriptive qualities presented above, ethos is often denoted as something that is experienced and as an overarching concept that shapes the attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and depositions of humans (McLaughlin, 2005). Findings from educational research have illustrated the importance of positive school ethos in underpinning successful, whole-school practices in relation to supporting and promoting pupil SEMH (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000; Banerjee, Weare & Farr, 2014). Such descriptions resonate with comments made by participants within the present study, with ethos being identified as integral to school functioning but as a notion that is hard to coherently define and label. Nevertheless, one participant does refer to ethos as the characteristics that contribute towards supporting and promoting typical development in pupils. Furthermore,

participants often referred to ethos as the driving force of actions and processes within the school.

According to Schein (2004), culture can be defined as:

> *… a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.*
>
> (Schein, 2004, p. 17)

The culture of an organisation is perceived by Schein (2004) as an enduring, independent and dynamic phenomenon comprised of a pattern of espoused beliefs, value systems, assumptions, norms and rules that people refer to when portraying the behavioural characteristics of their organisation. Schein (1990) also emphasises the place of artefacts, with factors such as the physical layout of the school, photos, dress codes, wall displays and the way in which people address other each act as observable, tangible signatures of a culture. Leaders are viewed as central to Schein's (2004) concept of culture and research emphasises their place in permeating school culture (Furner & McCulla, 2018). In addition to creating organisational cultures, leaders are also deemed as change agents, key individuals who need to be able to manage and adapt culture effectively during times of dysfunction and environmental change (Schein, 2004). Organisational culture is also considered as determining direction and growth within organisations (Teasley, 2017). Whilst potentially causing feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and resistance, Schein (1996) asserts the need for organisations and its members to continually adapt and change cultural assumptions to ensure survival in the face of change in their environment (Lakomski, 2001). Commitment is considered an important closely related concept within Schein's (2004) model of organisational culture and an aspect which is imperative to systems functioning effectively. It is asserted that those members who strongly relate and adhere to organisational beliefs, goals and values demonstrate effort in organisational involvement, something which is underpinned by organisational culture (Schein, 2004).

Culture is a theoretical concept which has been applied to and studied widely in relation to schools, with the aim of illuminating the multiple dimensions of school culture and obtaining a better understanding of school functioning, performance and effectiveness (Devecchi & Rouse, 2010; Louis & Lee, 2016; Zhu, Devos & Li, 2011). School culture has been found to be related to teacher commitment and positive wellbeing, with a positive school culture driven by maintenance of shared vision, a sense of organisational belonging and attachment and clear orientation (Furner & McCulla, 2018; Zhu et al., 2011). Zhu, Devos and Li's (2011) results also draw links to the importance of leadership, reporting them as highly influential in shaping teacher commitment through embedment of a quality school culture. Research and literature also emphasise the need for schools to maintain a supportive culture that promotes collaboration and joint problem-solving between all staff members, concluding that such positive culture empowers staff at all levels, endorses school improvement and improves outcomes for pupils, including those with special educational needs (Carpenter, 2015; Waldron & McLeskey, 2010). Findings from Devecchi and Rouse's (2010) study further elaborate the importance of a collaborative school culture in promoting the inclusion of children with special educational needs, emphasising the integral nature of the inclusion of adults within the school organisation to achieve this, including teaching assistants. Furthermore, they assert that daily staff collaboration and interactions aid staff in defining their identities and responsibilities. Trust is also evidenced as being a pivotal dimension of school culture, with research illustrating how high levels of relational trust amongst staff drives collaborative relationships that effect school transformation in times of external volatility (Tschannen-Moran, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015).

Further insight as to the impact of school culture on pupil SEMH is also gained through consideration of the ecological framework development by Bronfenbrenner (1976). Adoption of this framework illuminates the complex interactional nature of school culture on the actions and interactions that occur between school staff, parents and pupils and how this ultimately impacts upon the learning and development of pupils. Comprised of the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem, Bronfenbrenner's (1976)

theory provides understanding of how interactions between different systems impact upon pupil SEMH. The organisational culture of a school can be understood as existing at the mesosystem and therefore, critically, interconnection with pupil outcomes at the microsystem (Godfrey, 2016). Furthermore, this framework provides conceptual understanding of the interactional influences of political and societal ideologies at the macrosystem and government policy and media influences at the exosystem on school culture (Godfrey, 2016).

The notions of culture and ethos and the intrinsically related concepts of values and beliefs provide valuable insight into the perceived role of school staff and the whole school in relation to all pupils' SEMH. Organisational culture provides conceptual insight into staff and school functioning in relation to pupil SEMH. Results suggest that actions and processes are underpinned by patterns of shared values, beliefs, vision and aims that are invested in by all members of staff. Organisational culture is also reflected in the way participants talked about the lead role of the head teacher in promoting and embedding beliefs, aims and values across the school. Drawing understanding from the literature reviewed above, results of the study suggest that ethos, culture and, more so, the values and beliefs tied to these are overarching, with Category 1 permeating and critically influencing actions and processes in all other categories. For example, as suggested from data presented in section 4.3.1, school culture promotes the process of having open communication, which, in turn, impacts upon staff SEMH, whereby staff wellbeing is nurtured and they feel supported through such an approach. This, in consequence, leads staff to feel more able to nurture and promote pupil SEMH.

5.3 Making sense of multiple identities as educators

The following sections present various theoretical perspectives of identity. Whilst theoretical discourse regarding the nature of identity is wide ranging, only those defining theories and concepts that were pertinent to development of the grounded theory for the present study are discussed below. Namely, consideration is given to the conceptualised application of social identity, personal identity and, briefly, identity theory in relation to how these influence

and shape the personal, professional and organisational identities of school staff.

5.3.1 Understanding the social identity of self and groups

Social identity theory and the concept of self-categorisation both presented as important theoretical notions to explore in relation to Categories 1 and 3, where school staff present as maintaining and trying to manage a range of identities as educators. As explored in greater detail in the section below, this includes identifying oneself socially as a member of their school as an organisation, with such identity being underpinned by the sharing of group values, beliefs and aims.

From a social-psychological perspective, social identity theory provides consideration and understanding of intergroup relations, group processes, group membership and self-concept (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995). Social identity theory asserts that individuals derive self-concept through membership in social categories and groups, defining themselves in terms of group characteristics and associating themselves to those they feel they belong (Terry, Hogg & White, 1999). Through adoption of group characteristics and acceptance of externally assigned categories, the subjective self emerges from the internalisation of social group memberships (Barreto & Ellemers, 2003; Stets & Burke, 2000). It is also theorised that it is possible for individuals to assign themselves to multiple social categories. Ashforth and Mael (1989) explain that social groupings can include (but are not limited to) categorising oneself in terms of organisation, department, work group and formal roles. When aligning to groups, it is also suggested that people are driven by the desire to associate themselves with social groups that enhance self-esteem, self-worth and a sense of positive regard (Hogg, Abrams, Otten & Hinkle, 2004; Tyler & Blader, 2001).

Elaborating the cognitive aspect of categorisation, self-categorisation theory is asserted as being a central component of social identity theory (Hogg et al., 2004; Turner & Reynolds, 2011). Self-categorisation theory states that people cognitively assign the self and others into in-groups and out-groups through prototypes – sets of subjective, interrelated attributes, perceptions, feelings and

behaviours (Hogg et al., 2004; Hogg & Terry, 2000). In turn, categorisation of the self sets out how one should act as a group member; prompting people to embody behaviours, values, beliefs and attitudes that reflect normative, group identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg, Abrams & Brewer, 2017). Such embodiment is theorised as 'depersonalisation' (Hogg et al., 1995), with research findings supporting the assertion that, through self-categorisation, individuals perceive both the self and others as prototypical group members, rather than as individuals (Hogg & Hardie, 1992). In this context, it is argued self-categorisation promotes positive outcomes, including aspects such as group conformity, trust, belonging and empathy (Hogg et al., 2004; Hogg & Reid, 2006). Furthermore, depersonalisation is purported to underlie phenomenon, including group cohesion, cooperation, emotional contagion and collective behaviour (Hogg et al., 1995). A body of research demonstrates the effects of social categorisation and identification, with in-group identification being shown to produce greater levels of group security (Palmonari, Pombeni & Kirchler, 1990), collective action (van Zomeren, Postmes & Spears, 2008), cooperation (Cañadas, Rodriguez-Bailón & Lupiáñez, 2015; Tyler & Blader, 2001), commitment (Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 1997), participation in group culture (Ethier & Deaux, 1994) and in-group favouritism (Tarrant et al., 2001). Research has found that when individuals identify more highly with a group they demonstrate increased likelihood to respond to a perceived sense of injustice through managing feelings collaboratively and collectively with others in the in-group (Grant & Brown, 1995).

The notion of self-categorisation also provides a value framework for understanding professional identity, a concept presented as particularly pertinent in relation to the current grounded theory study. As a social identity, professional identity can be understood as the way in which an individual assigns themselves to a professional group based on the shared attributes, values and beliefs that one ascribes to it (Sachs, 2001). Reflecting the notion of salience, a self-categorisation framework considers that, depending on which identity is considered more important within a given social context, individuals shift between personal and social identities (Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 2002). Discussed in greater detail in section 5.3.3, personal identity is perceived as

those beliefs, values, norms and attributes that belong to and are personal to the individual (Friesen & Besley, 2013).

The researcher considers professional identity as relevant in relation to Category 3, specifically in relation to the emotional turmoil participants reported experiencing in trying to manage both their professional responsibilities and their personally held values and beliefs. Understanding of personal values, morals and emotions in relation to primary school staffs personal sense of self is considered in section 5.3.3, where personal identity is discussed in relation to concepts and categories within the present study.

5.3.2 Social identity theory as a lens for understanding organisational identity and the role of leadership

The conceptual components of social identity theory and self-categorisation theory also provide understanding of organisations. In this context, the seminal work of Ashforth and Mael (1989) advocates the notion of organisational identity, proclaiming that organisations act as a social category that embodies prototypical characteristics (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Indeed, given the conceptualisation of organisations as internally structured groups comprised of complex intergroup relations, the value social identity theory can provide in understanding social behaviours in organisational contexts is emphasised within their work (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2000). Christ, van Dick, Wagner and Stellmacher (2003) present research that supports social identity theory's premise that action and behaviour are underpinned by shared identity. Through analysis of cross-sectional questionnaires completed by German school teachers, they concluded that organisational identity fosters behaviour in individuals that promotes the effective functioning of the organisation.

Ashforth and Mael (1989) also note that, within an organisation, the behaviour of group members is impacted upon by their need to make sense of and manage multiple social identities and the inherent conflicts that can exist between the values, beliefs, norms and demands attributed to each organisationally situated identity. For example, members may experience tension between their social and personal identities, which they then strive to try and resolve, by either ordering identities by defining themselves in terms of their

most salient identity and attributes; or deferring to the identity that has the most environment pressure placed upon it; or performing each identity in sequence (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

When considering organisations, much emphasis has been on leadership processes in relation to social identity theory, with organisational theorists proposing that leaders act as a motivating force in communicating and creating a sense of shared, organisational identity (Ellemers, De Gilder & Haslam, 2004; Hogg, 2001). According to Haslam, Reicher and Platow (2011), leaders must create a sense of 'us', shaping social identification that incorporates, manifests and promotes the beliefs, values and interests of the in-group in order to realise shared goals. Indeed, research within the business sector demonstrates that leaders are more effective when they are perceived by group members as being prototypical in the stereotypical properties of the group (Cicero, Bonaiuto, Pierro & van Knippenberg, 2008; Hirst, van Dick & van Knippenberg, 2009). For example, based on the data of 115 matched pairs of employee–leader ratings from members of a pharmaceutical company, Hirst, van Dick and van Knippenberg (2008) found that when leader prototypicality was high, group creative effort and motivation was high. Literature and studies have also focused on the role transformational leaders play in shaping group identity through communicative strategies and behaviours (Hogg, 2018; Keblusek, Giles & Maass, 2017), with it being asserted that transformational leaders promote group cohesion through careful management of symbolic interactions (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). From findings obtained in their study of communication and commitment in organisations, Postmes, Tanis and de Wit (2001) concluded that organisational members' sense of belonging is fostered by positive managerial communications. In addition, the loyalty and cohesion of group members can be manipulated by leaders through their verbal and symbolic communication in defining organisational values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and vision (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Within leadership literature, research analysing discourse of speeches has evidenced the way in which leadership rhetoric constructs social identities and promotes collective actions (Reicher & Hopkins, 1996a; Reicher & Hopkins, 1996b). Employment of positive language and communication by leaders has

also been shown to promote positive leadership perceptions and mobilise collective action (Seyranian, 2014). The concept of transformational leadership has been applied to schools within a review of research conducted by Leithwood (1993) which indicates that leaders who promote social identification elevate the aspirations, beliefs, confidence and collaborative nature of school staff through development of a strong school culture that is embedded in organisational intents. In their study exploring the role of motivation, organisational factors and leadership in relation to teacher practice, Thoonan, Sleegers, Oort, Peetsma and Geijsel (2011) found that transformational leadership motivated teachers to want to improve organisational conditions of their school and also facilitated their professional learning.

The literature and theory considered above relates to Category 1 and provides insight relating to the focused code *'having an effective, inspiring and supportive leader'.* Exploration of organisational identity and the role of leadership develops contextual understanding of the school as being a social group that all group members are committed to and feel a sense of belonging to; maintaining and employing the values, beliefs, attitudes, goals and other characteristics of the organisation and engaging in behaviours and processes that mirror and embed these. The literature reviewed above can also be perceived as relevant in relation to Category 2. In the context of schools, according to the literature above, symbolic and verbal communication can be used by leadership as a tool with which to embed organisational values, beliefs, attitude and visions in relation to pupil SEMH. Subsequently, group cohesion, cooperation, commitment, loyalty and a shared identity that facilitated the delivery of pupil SEMH by staff is underpinned by actions, approaches and processes that reflect organisationally shared guiding principles. Therefore, relational links to Category 5 can be drawn, with the implicit and explicit delivery of positive outcomes being underpinned by organisational values, beliefs, aims and vision.

5.3.3 Personal identity

Personal identity was also considered by the researcher as highly relevant to the current research study, by providing understanding of the personal dimensions of identity presented in Categories 1 and 3. Specifically, it is considered as pertinent in helping understand the emotional aspects linked to

one's own values, beliefs and morals and how these drive individual behaviour (Hitlin, 2003) and the tensions placed on identities by environmental demands and pressures. Through a psychosocial lens, Erikson's (1950) theory of human development provides foundational understanding of personal identity development, a theory which Marcia (2002) argues is applicable beyond late adolescence and provides understanding of identity development throughout adulthood. Central to Erikson's (1950) theory is the notion of one's search for and development of a sense of self through the unity of various identities. Therefore, differing from role, group and organisational identities, personal identity constitutes a unique, attribute-laden self at an individual level (Vignoles, Schwartz & Luyckx, 2011).

Pivotal in linking values with both social identity theory and identity theory, Hitlin (2003) theorises personal identity as being anchored within ones values and not exclusively resultant from role obligations, expectations or self-comparisons. Hitlin and Piliavin (2004) emphasise the critical nature of values in guiding actions, maintaining that one's behaviour is motivated by individual autonomy and the desire to achieve conceived ideals and desirable goals. Through the conceptualisation of value structures being at the core to personal identity, it is understood that they are fundamental in shaping sense of self and in driving associated behaviours within different situations (Verplanken & Holland, 2002). Although the place of social grouping and categorisation is acknowledged, Hitlin (2007) argues identities are not merely passively acquired through social influences, but are constructed and enacted around personal value commitments and morals. This assertion reflects the theoretical conceptualisation offered by Deaux (1993) regarding multiple identities, where social identity is perceived as being infused with personal meaning.

Research studies have aimed to explore and illuminate the interaction between social and personal identities (Hitlin, 2007; Pillen, Beijaard & den Brok, 2013; Troman, 2008). Linking social identity theory, in a longitudinal study examining identity, value and self-esteem in relation to university students' views of volunteering, Hitlin (2007) found that greater feelings of self-esteem and positive self-regard in students were indirectly related to them successfully being able to align their social identity with their personal sense of what is

considered valuable and moral. Within the context of school staff, literature and research focused on the professional identity of teaching professionals asserts that, in the instance of conflict between social and personal identities, teaching professionals may grapple with their sense of agency (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2010). That is, one's perceived capacity to act on various self-conceptualised identities is shaped by larger, external forces, such as policy and dominant discourses (Buchanan, 2015). Developed from their grounded theory study of university students understanding and experiences of their own identity, Jones and McEwen (2000) provide an integrative, conceptual model for understanding the multiple dimensions of identity. This includes personal identity as existing at the core, providing an inner identity and sense of self. Surrounding this core are other socially constructed identity dimensions and contextual influences, with the impact of a person's life experiences, home and family background and sociocultural conditions emphasised as being integral in the construction of identities. Illumination of contextual factors in relation to identity construction can be perceived as relevant to the present study with regard to the focused code *'drawing upon personal experience, values and beliefs'* and the way participants detailed being influenced by their life experiences.

The drive for school professionals to align personal and professional identities is presented within educational literature (Pillen et al., 2013; Troman, 2008). Tension in the professional identity of teachers new to the profession was studied by Pillen, Beijaard and den Brok (2013). Through analysis of teacher questionnaires and interviews, they found tension resulted from a sense of unbalance between personal and professional aspects of teaching. Moreover, teachers often reported tensions stemming from feeling conflicted between their desired practice and the reality of teaching. In a similar vein, in a qualitative exploration of teachers' understanding of their job commitment, Day, Elliot and Kington (2005) concluded that teaching staff's core values, relating to wanting to ensure children are both cared for and learning, come under challenge in the face of government reform and change. Troman's (2008) research indicates that, in the midst of ongoing social, economic and cultural challenge and change, teachers are faced with having to manage complex role identifies. However, whilst adapting to commitments, some of Troman's (2008) research

findings appear to suggest that teachers prioritise holding on to their personally held values and self-esteem. In relation to the present study, it is considered that attention to core, personal values provides understanding of how, in the midst of adversity, tension exists between wanting to meet SEMH needs but also wanting to ensure children are learning. Troman's (2008) findings are also pertinent in relation to Category 3 and participants reporting that, even though pressure is high, supporting pupil SEMH comes first.

5.3.4 Identity theory

Identity theory provides further insight into the formation and enactment of identity. Whilst the researcher gained much insight towards development of their theory from the perspective of social identity theory, identity theory was also considered briefly in that it aided the researcher's theoretical sensitising in relation to Category 3. Specifically, it facilitated the researcher's sense making in relation to how participants defined roles. Within the present study, evidence of members of staff feeling defined by their role identity emerged. Participants noted expectations placed upon particular roles in order to conform to their role norm. Notably, teachers' roles were emphasised as being shaped by the need to meet curriculum expectations.

Although various theoretical frameworks for identity theory exist, there is general consensus of it having some grounding within symbolic interactionism, which asserts society is resultant from social action and individual level interactions (Cinoglu & Arikan, 2012). From a general perspective of identity theory, the self is considered a multifaceted construct, with a collection of discrete self-identities existing based on the different role, group and person positions people occupy (Hogg et al., 1995; Stets & Serpe, 2013). It is proposed that role, group and person identities provide the self with a standard, an internal goal to reach in social situations in order to achieve a state of equilibrium between behaviour, standards and feedback (Hitlin, 2007).

According to Stets and Burke (2000), identity is formed through a process of self-categorisation, whereby as a result of structural role positions, people internalise the self in relation to expected roles. This leads to the assertion that identity affects social behaviour, with action being influenced by the role-related

meanings and expectations attached to each identity (Stets & Serpe, 2013). Consequently, identity theorists conceptualise the group as made up of individuals whose performance with the associated roles and interrelatedness creates social structures (Burke & Stets, 2009). Links have also been theorised between identity theory and emotions, whereby emotions relate to how effectively one's role expectations and ideals have been fulfilled (Stets, 2005).

5.4 Understanding social constructionism

Social constructionist theory, which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, provides a framework with which to understand the construction of knowledge and how people describe, explain and account for the realities of the social world, including themselves (Burr, 2018; Gergen, 1985). For Gergen (1985), it is only through the merging of psychology and sociology that insight can be gained into how humans understand and make sense of the world in which they live. Taking a critical stance against objectivist paradigms, social constructionism holds the philosophical assumption that meaning is socially created, resultant from the relationships and daily interactions that occur between people (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013). In this way, Gergen (1985) argues there is no one true view of the world. Instead, through social processes of inquiry, everything known and understood about the world is subjective, individualistic and understood through multiple realities. He also argues that all knowledge is embedded in cultural and historical values and practice (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013; Gergen, 1973). Such a notion considers that, against an ever-evolving and changing political, societal and economic backdrop, it is only ever possible to understand and account for people and the social world within the present time (Gergen, 1973). Social constructionism also stresses the importance of language within social processes as a powerful role in producing and sustaining knowledge (Burr, 2015; Gergen, 2009a). In this way, it is suggested that people's experiences are influenced by the way they talk about themselves and the world around them (Raskin, 2002). Such a framework provides valuable insight into Category 3 by showing the way in which actions that enable communication and interaction between staff and with parents, pupils and external agencies lead to the development of knowledge and understanding regarding the SEMH of pupils.

5.4.1 Application of social constructionism in understanding organisational knowledge, change and learning

Social constructionism provides a theoretical lens with which to understand and address organisational knowledge, change and learning (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). Through integration of underpinning concepts as presented above, it is argued that organisations can be understood as engaging in a process of ongoing sense-making and development (Gergen, 2009b). A process that Gergen (2012) advocates provides radical understandings for educational practice and procedures. It places focus on the part of rituals, roles, cooperation, negotiation and rhetoric in creating shared meaning amongst professionals working within educational settings and in coordinating their actions (Wortham, 2001).

As a micro-level theoretical framework, symbolic interactionism is considered to contribute important understanding to social constructionist thinking (Burr, 2015). Central to symbolic interactionism is the way in which individuals use language and symbols within communication and interaction. The tenets of social constructionism are therefore reflected from symbolic interactionist thinking, whereby it is theorised that society is defined through the subjective meanings that emerge from meaningful and ongoing interactions among individuals (Carter & Fuller, 2016). Drawing links to social identity theory, communication is theorised as being an effective construction tool within organisations (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013). Through an ongoing process of interaction, dialogue and symbolic communication, shared, organisational realities are continuously created, deconstructed and recreated. Consequently, through the co-creation of new realities and the building of new meaning, transformational thinking is generated, new professional practices are created and group members are provided with a sense of belonging (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013).

Reflection upon the concept of new sense-making and transformational thinking was considered particularly relevant by the researcher in helping to understanding Category 2 and the process of change that is facilitated through communication and the co-construction of knowledge. Social constructionist theory provides understanding of how written and verbal communication and a

network of interaction between school staff, parents, pupils and external agencies builds a holistic picture of individual pupils and alters staffs ways of thinking. Subsequently, enabling staff to change and develop professional practice in order to promote positive outcomes for pupil SEMH.

In an ever-evolving world in which organisations are faced with a range of external challenges and pressures, it is considered that social constructionism offers an approach to understanding organisational adaptation, change and learning (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013). Indeed, literature emphasises the conceptualisation of organisational learning as being socially constructed through interactions at group and organisational levels (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013; Hosking & Bouwen, 2000; Louis, 2006). This includes application within the context of schools as organisations, with shared social constructions providing a vehicle for organisational learning and change (Louis, 2006).

Senge's (2006) concept of the learning organisation provides understanding of organisational learning and change that emphasises the place of inter-relationship constructs and defines learning as a social invention. Such concept is considered highly relevant to the current research by guiding thinking as to the interactional nature of categories and the way in which different processes are conducive to an organisational whole. For Senge (2006), against a backdrop of external change, organisational members must continually learn, adapt and change together to obtain desired shared goals. Senge (2006) identified organisational learning as being underpinned by five disciplines: systems thinking, personal mastery, building shared vision, mental models and team learning. Subsuming all other disciplines, systems thinking provides a conceptual framework for understanding organisational learning as resulting from interrelated actions and processes within the system. Personal mastery refers to personal growth and what Senge (2006) argues is an individual's personal motivation and commitment for ongoing learning and the development of their professional competency. Building shared vision is marked as the need for organisational members to be committed to reaching a common future that is embedded in shared values, goals and philosophy. In the face of challenge, Senge (2006) postulates that for organisational change and adaption to be

successful, the individual members' mental models of the world need to be addressed. He argues that, in doing so, people obtain new insight and are facilitated to perceive new opportunities. Finally, through team learning people are described as looking beyond their own perspectives and contributing to team leaning through communication patterns, where ideas are explored collaboratively and interaction is widespread (Jordan, 2004). From a social constructionist perspective, through collective perceptions and shared understanding, a common sense of identity is achieved (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006).

The literature reviewed above affords insight in relation to Category 2, in the sense of providing the researcher with greater understanding of the role of written and verbal communication and interaction in developing knowledge and facilitating functioning at a systems level. Reflection upon organisational learning and Senge's (2006) five disciplines also offers understanding of the relationships between Categories 2 and 4, whereby communication and interaction can be perceived as key factors in organisational change, adaptation and learning within schools in order to ensure effective promotion of positive SEMH outcomes for pupils. Presented literature also illuminates connections to Categories 1 and 4, where it can be motioned that shared school values, aims and vision facilitate all staff members to engage with and be committed to ongoing organisational learning and growth in the face of external pressures, change and demand.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter presented a second literature review, conducted following the development of conceptualised categories. The literature reviewed in this chapter aided the researcher's theoretical sensitisation and construction of the study's grounded theory. Review of relevant theoretical frameworks, models, ideas and research studies supported the researcher's conceptualisation, understanding and knowledge of key ideas emergent from their data. Notably, literature reviewed focused on developing insight and understanding into organisational knowledge, development, change and learning, theories of identity and social constructionism. Relevance of the literature to categories as

well as the interactions within and between them was illustrated. Chapter 6 will present the study's developed grounded theory in consideration of relevant literature and concepts discussed in this chapter.

6 The Grounded Theory

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the grounded theory for the current study. The final grounded theory was developed and is resultant from a complex process of data analysis and the drawing of links between outcomes of the data presented in Chapter 4 and the literature reviewed in Chapter 5. In the case of the present study, the developed grounded theory provides conceptual understanding as to the complex interactions and processes perceived as occurring between the six developed conceptual categories. Evolution of the presented grounded theory reflects categories and codes that were considered as key in understanding the social phenomenon under exploration. This includes from the focused code *'having an effective, inspiring and supportive leader'* and the categories '*investing in shared, all-encompassing ethos, culture and values'*, '*constructing knowledge and facilitating change through communication'*, *'striving to manage external challenge and identities as educators'* and *'seeking and engaging in personal and organisational growth'. 'Investing in shared, all-encompassing ethos, culture and values'* is identified as particularly significant; feeding into all other categories and integral to all actions and processes related to pupil SEMH. However, it is understood that processes within each category do not occur in isolation and that the overall functioning of the social phenomenon under exploration is only understood through the way all six categories interact with and complement each other.

A visual representation of the final grounded theory framework for understanding the way in which primary school staff perceive their own and the whole school-role in relation to all pupils SEMH is presented in Figure 6.1. This framework relates to the constructed theory of 'School ethos, culture and values: at the core of influencing processes and actions impacting upon pupil social, emotional and mental health'.

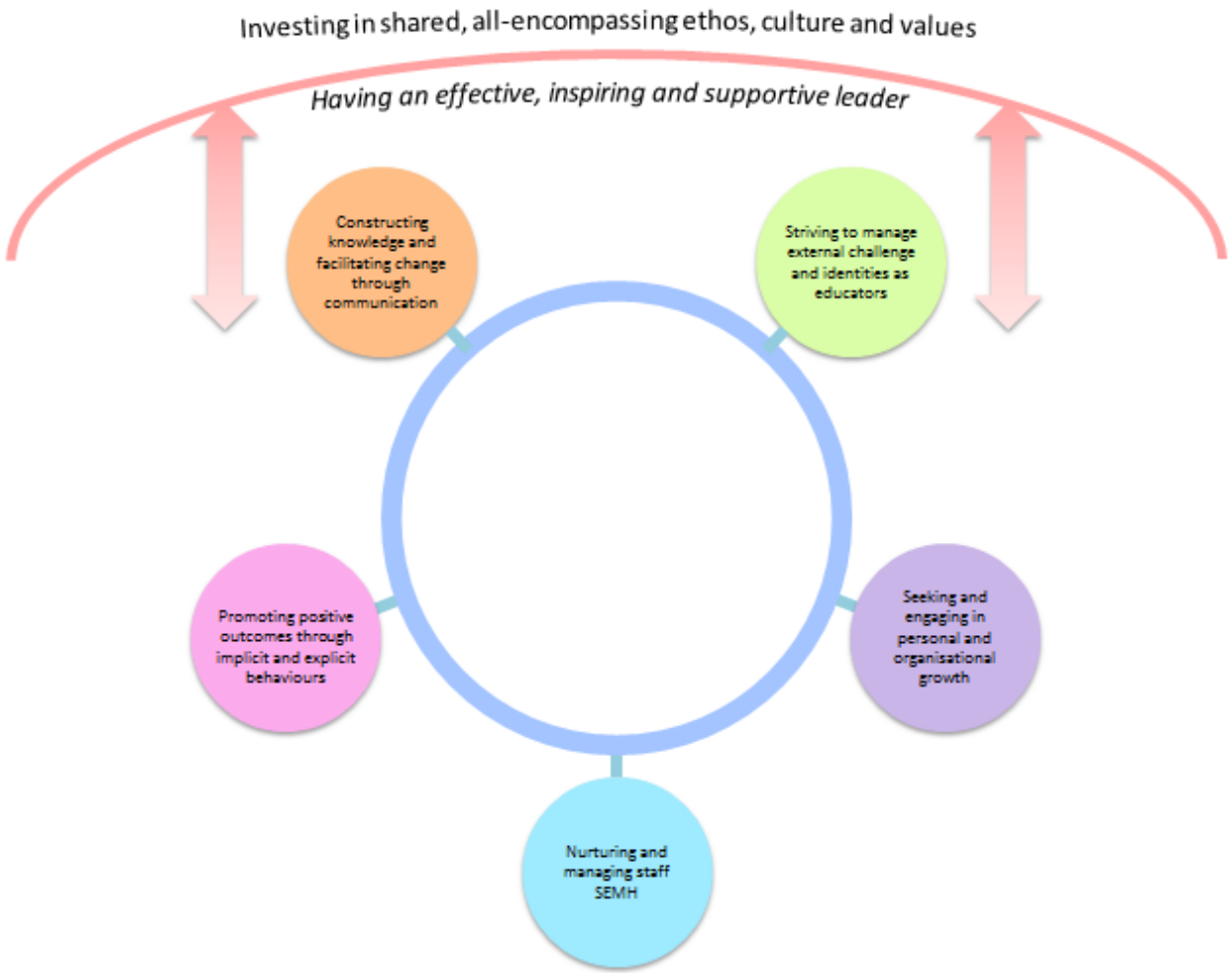


Figure 6.1 - A visual representation of the study's grounded theory: 'School ethos, culture and values: at the core of influencing processes and actions impacting upon pupil social, emotional and mental health'.

6.2 The grounded theory of the study

The presented grounded theory conceptualises that, in the context of mainstream primary schools, pupil SEMH is impacted upon and resultant from various internal actions and processes and external influences.

Within the presented grounded theory framework, school ethos, culture and values are conceptualised as being the core underpinning of pupil SEMH. Values, aims, and beliefs intrinsically run throughout ethos and culture; acting as implicit guidelines for all school staff which drive actions, behaviours and processes. Through the process of creating and communicating values, beliefs, aims and visions, leaders promote a sense of organisational belonging and identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). It is conceptualised that through verbal, written and symbolic means, such as displaying aims, greeting parents by first names and smiling at the children, a social identity is created at an organisational level and a collective sense of purpose, understanding, action and behaviour is mobilised between all school staff (Seyranian, 2014). However, value, aims, visions and beliefs aren't just 'there', they are kept active, referred to and reflected upon often to staff and pupils by the head teacher and continually invested in by all staff members. Through positive communication of guiding principles, a positive school culture is created that all school staff invest in. This leads to all members of staff implicitly and explicitly working in ways that reflect and embed shared values, beliefs, aims and vision that are conducive to positively supporting and improving pupil SEMH. It is conceptualised that all school staff are committed to the organisational identity of the school and, in this sense, the positive development and promotion of pupil SEMH is seen as being the responsibility of all members of staff. However, it is conceptualised that such guiding principles don't only drive the way in which staff work in relation to supporting pupil SEMH, but the values and beliefs residing within the overarching ethos and culture of the school also impact upon staff SEMH. Creation of a positive shared school ethos, culture and organisational identity also influences the actions and behaviours all staff members engage with to nurture and manage staff SEMH. In turn, these ultimately minimise the impact of this on pupils SEMH. As illuminated in Category 6, it is conceptualised that a positive culture that promotes collaboration leads to staff feeling empowered. In

turn, this impacts upon pupil SEMH (Carpenter, 2015; Waldron & McLeskey, 2010). For example, a school culture that promotes the process of having open and collaborative communication leads staff to feel supported and able to talk about concerns when they need to, which, in turn, enables them to feel they can effectively nurture and promote pupil SEMH.

Fluid, honest and open communication is conceptualised as an integral strategy in the effective promotion of pupil SEMH. It presents a critical and multifaceted tool within the school organisation that serves many purposes, including the sharing and promotion of values, beliefs, aims, vision and other characteristics that underpin ethos and culture. Through a culture where communication is open and school staff are accessible and available to talk and actively listen to pupils, child voice is empowered. Further highlighting the critical nature of ethos, culture and values, it is perceived that, through creation and embedding of a positive, open and honest communicative culture, pupils feel safe and enabled to share their thoughts and concerns. Viewed through a social constructionist framework is it considered that, through different means and structures and networks of communication between school staff and with parents, pupils and external agencies, knowledge of pupils is constructed (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013). It is perceived that such actions and processes enable school staff to develop and obtain a shared and holistic view of individual pupils. In turn, staff members are attuned to each pupil's needs and are enabled to make changes and adaptations, tailoring their approaches and behaviours in order to support the individual SEMH needs of pupils effectively. Communication between staff also serves as a tool that facilitates staff and organisational growth. As discussed in the social constructionist based literature, communication is perceived as playing a role in facilitating organisational learning and development (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013; Hosking & Bouwen, 2000; Louis, 2006). In the present study, it is thought that through staff identifying gaps in their knowledge and skills collaboratively, communication acts as a mechanism that drives staff to seek and engage with activities that facilitate organisational growth (Jordan, 2004; Senge, 2006).

In relation to organisational growth, schools are perceived as engaging in a range of activities to develop whole-staff knowledge and skills. This includes

developing skills in-house and also utilising external agencies. It is conceptualised that such seeking of organisational growth not only helps staff attune to and gain greater insight and understanding of pupils' SEMH needs, but also links to staff SEMH, whereby external agency support can help staff learn how to deal with their own emotions.

The grounded theory framework conceptualises that, for pupil SEMH to be promoted and supported effectively within schools, school staff must navigate multiple identities and the school as an organisation, and its members must adapt and grow in response to a range of external challenges, changes and demands. External challenge, change and demands place tension on roles, responsibilities and identities. Whilst trying to meet curriculum and societal demands and ensure legal duty is fulfilled, school staff also bring with them personal values, beliefs, morals and experiences (Jones & McEwen, 2000), shaping their understanding and engagement with pupils' SEMH. In trying to meet both curriculum demands and SEMH needs, school staff are faced with trying to manage their organisational, role, professional, and personal identities. Tension exists between wanting to put emotional needs first and ensure SEMH needs are met but also needing to minimise disruption to learning. For some roles, there is a perceived need to conform to role norms (Stets & Serpe, 2013), which can lead to dissonance between role expectation and role reality. Such tensions can lead to school staff experiencing emotional turmoil, torn between their personal sense of self in putting pupils' emotional needs first and ensuring they are fulfilling role expectations related to curriculum demands (Pillen et al., 2013; Troman, 2008). It is conceptualised that school staff strive to find a balance, seeking ways to effectively manage pupil SEMH and external challenge and demands. Schools and school staff are perceived as constantly trying to adapt to external larger external forces, such as societal change and government policy, which places pressure upon time and capacity (Buchanan, 2015). Reflecting literature regarding organisational learning (Senge, 2006), schools as organisations can be viewed as continually adapting to environmental challenge in order to reach shared goals. In order to work in line with organisational values and beliefs in ensuring pupil SEMH is nurtured and supported, both explicit and more implicit adaptations are seemingly made. This

includes the creation of bespoke and distinctive roles, embedding SEMH creatively throughout the curriculum and staff having different role responsibilities. Support staff seem to have a particularly distinguished role, with their role and responsibilities in relation to pupil SEMH being shaped indirectly by the time and capacity pressures faced by teachers.

6.3 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the final grounded theory framework constructed from the present research. This theory seeks to explain primary school staffs' understanding and perceptions of their own and the whole school role in relation to all pupils SEMH. The theory proposes that school ethos, culture and values are core to effective SEMH development of pupils and that they underpin and influence all actions, behaviours and processes within the school as an organisation. The critical role of the Head Teacher in relation to promoting positive ethos, culture and values is emphasised. Communication is conceptualised as an important construction tool, serving a range of functions. Amid ongoing external challenge and change, school staff strive to manage multiple identities, and adaptations to practice and organisational growth are mobilised in order to ensure both the learning and SEMH needs of all pupils are met. The discussion for the present study is presented in the following chapter. The grounded theory is considered in relation to literature reviewed in Chapter 2, and the study's distinct contribution, implications and quality are discussed. Finally, strengths, limitations and areas for future research are considered.

7 Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the grounded theory for this study in relation to the literature reviews in Chapter 2 and presents implications for policy and practice and the distinctive contribution of the present study. A final evaluation of the study's quality is presented, and limitations are discussed. Finally, implications for future research are considered and the researcher provides personal reflections on their professional journey and revisits their reflexivity within the study.

7.2 Connections of the grounded theory with the literature review

Connections can be drawn between the constructed grounded theory framework and literature presented in Chapter 2. The conceptual framework offered by the study's grounded theory provides inductive, real world evidence that appears to support assertion within the literature of a whole-school approach to dealing with pupil SEMH (DoH & DfE, 2017; House of Commons, 2017; Public Health England, 2015). Notably, findings from the present study provide evidence of the critical role of school culture, ethos and values in promoting positive outcomes for pupil SEMH, thus empirically supporting previous commentator emphasis on the importance of supporting pupil SEMH through development of positive organisational environment and the critical nature of school culture and ethos in relation to this (Banerjee et al., 2014; Greenberg et al., 2001; Public Health England, 2014; Weare & Nind, 2011; World Health Organisation, 2003). The presented grounded theory framework conceptualises the critical nature of culture, ethos and values in relation to pupil SEMH and thus provides evidence in support of government policy that advocates a need for schools to support pupil SEMH through the development of effective structures and cultures (DfE, 2016). The conceptual category *'nurturing and managing staff SEMH'* constructed with the presented study also draws links to the literature presented within Chapter 2. The relationship between school ethos, culture and values, staff SEMH and pupil SEMH is conceptualised in the offered framework. Such a finding provides evidence of Weare's (2015) assertion of the importance of staff SEMH and the creation of a

school ethos and environment that enables staff to feel able to promote pupil SEMH. The present study therefore provides valuable research findings that offer inductive insight and understanding of the importance of promoting positive pupil SEMH through the establishment of organisational ethos, culture and values that ensure staff SEMH is nurtured.

7.3 Implications of the present study

7.3.1 Distinctive contribution

The present study extends understanding of the way primary school staff perceive their role and the role of the whole school in relation to pupil SEMH. Extending previous research findings as discussed in Chapter 2, the grounded theory from this study provides inductive, rather than deductive, insight into the various thoughts, actions and social processes engaged with by staff in relation to pupil SEMH. Reflecting the current political and societal focus on ensuring educational settings support pupil SEMH, the researcher considers the study makes an original contribution by inductively highlighting the critical nature of organisational-level factors in supporting and promoting positive SEMH outcomes for primary school-aged pupils, findings which provide evidence in support of national guidance (Public Health England, 2014) and policy (DfE, 2016) which stipulates the need for schools to promote the SEMH of CYP through organisational features, such as ethos and culture. The current study also adds weight to the importance of values and beliefs in relation to these, emphasising their integral nature through findings and meaning emergent from the data set. Such insight therefore provides further emphasis for policy development and the importance of targeting pupil SEMH at an organisational level. Findings obtained from the study also provide valuable implications at a LA level, offering a new meta-perspective of school processes that may contribute to the furthering of strategic policy development within the local context and also offer insight for the wider context.

The present study fulfils a gap in research identified by the researcher by providing findings via a more rigorous methodology. The grounded theory framework offered provides valuable insight into the interactional nature of school processes that contribute and impact upon pupil SEMH and the nature of

such interactions existing under an overarching catalyst of organisationally tied concepts, ethos, values and culture. In particular, insight is gained into how pupil SEMH is indirectly influenced by the way in which school staff make sense of multiple identities and manage and adapt to a range of external demands and changes.

To the researcher's knowledge, no other research has focused on developing understanding of the current topic through production of a theoretical model that is grounded in data. Furthermore, the present research offers a unique contribution by providing findings induced from a participant sample that was representative of a range of staff roles typically maintained within primary schools. As far as the researcher is aware, previous research has not sampled from a range of staff roles. Employment of constructivist grounded theory therefore brings an original contribution by providing a new approach to understanding the social processes engaged with in primary schools in relation to pupil SEMH. Reflecting upon introduction of the term 'social, emotional and mental health' (SEMH) in 2015 (DfE, 2015) and the various discourse used in relation to this, the current study also makes a unique contribution by providing findings that refer to this more recent term and how staff understand this new terminology with regard to their role and the school role in relation to pupil SEMH.

7.3.2 Implications for EP practice

The grounded theory framework offered by the present research offers a range of implications for the professional practice of EPs. Government publications and policy (DfE, 2015; DfE, 2016, DoH & DfE, 2017) drive the need for the SEMH of children and young people, including those with SEN, to be supported by educational providers. As discussed below, EPs are well positioned to bridge the gap between policy, legislation and school practice in a variety of ways.

Findings from the present study highlight implications with regard to the contribution EPs can make in relation to supporting schools at an organisational level. The emerging grounded theory model is reflective of national emphasis on the need for whole-school approaches to help improve pupils' SEMH (Public Health England, 2014) and the vital importance of development school policy

that is conducive to a school ethos and culture that promotes pupil SEMH. In consideration of Category 3 (section 4.4), findings suggest that one way in which schools seek ongoing organisational growth in the midst of external challenge and change is through seeking and engaging with external agencies.

Applying their psychological knowledge and skills within a systems approach, EPs are well placed to promote and facilitate organisational change, development and learning in schools. The study's grounded theory provides a model which emphasises the critical and integral nature that school ethos, values and culture play in influencing all actions and processes within the school environment that ultimately impact upon pupil SEMH. One way in which EPs could support schools in developing culture, ethos and values that induce positive outcomes for pupil SEMH is by providing school staff with supervision regarding strategic and organisational issues. Applying their psychological knowledge and process skills through supervision, there is a distinct role for EPs in supporting the professional learning and development of school staff and the planning and development of school policies and processes (Hawkins & Shohet, 1989). In the instance of policy development, EPs could offer individuals or groups of school staff supervision around school policies; supporting the development of policies that embed psychologically theorised characteristics of ethos and culture that are asserted as effective in promoting positive outcomes for the SEMH of pupils. In the context of school development and change that leads to the promotion of SEMH of pupils, staff and parents, EPs are also well positioned to apply their unique psychological skills and knowledge through whole-school action planning approaches, such as the Sandwell Well-being Charter Mark.

Where findings indicate that schools are continually striving to adapt to ongoing external change and challenge, it is proposed by the researcher that, through application of processes such as appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987), force field analysis (Lewin, 1951) and soft systems methodology (Checkland & Poulter, 2010), EPs can play a role in supporting organisational change within schools. Thus, this change can aid development of actions and social process within the school that are conducive to promoting pupil SEMH.

Findings indicated that school staff experience greater difficulty in supporting the SEMH needs of pupils with additional needs and in dealing with more recently occurring needs such as self-harm and suicide. Reflecting one of their core activities (Farrell et al., 2006), EPs are ideally placed to support whole-school growth, development and learning by providing training in key matters relating to pupil SEMH.

The critical role of school leadership in communicating, promoting and embedding an organisational ethos, culture, value and aims that are conducive to positive outcomes for pupil SEMH was also illuminated by the grounded theory. Leaders present a key and integral in the overall functioning of a school and, subsequently, the way in which pupil SEMH is engaged with. Within the current study, findings highlight the importance of having a leader who embeds a positive school ethos and culture for effective development of all pupils' SEMH. Given the emphasis placed upon the valuable role EPs can offer at a strategic level (Farrell et al., 2006), EPs could afford valuable insight and advice to boards during the recruitment of Head Teachers, and of school leaders who will create school cultures and ethos that promote positive SEMH outcomes for pupils and staff (DfE, 2017).

A final implication considered by the researcher relates to the role of EPs in delivery of SEMH-based interventions at a pupil level. Although literature in the first literature review shows that EPs are well placed to deliver therapeutic intervention at an individual pupil level (Atkinson et al., 2012; Farrell et al., 2006), the constructed grounded theory demonstrates the critical underpinning of school ethos, culture and values. The grounded theory framework conceptualised that, without those underpinning aspects positively promoting pupil SEMH, limits would be placed upon the success of intervention. As such, when providing recommendations to schools regarding provision to support a pupil's SEMH, findings indicate that EPs should consider what intervention might look like at an organisational level and whether a school's ethos, culture and values are conducive to effectively supporting pupil SEMH.

7.3.3 Dissemination of the research findings

As presented in section 3.3.1, the researcher committed to sharing broad findings with participating schools, the EPS and the head of the SEND department within the LA. During initial meetings with head teachers, the researcher proposed to feedback findings in a way that was deemed most convenient to the head teacher. The researcher proposed to the head teachers that this could include providing verbal feedback during a whole-staff meeting. Feedback to schools will provide broad, non-school- and non-participant-specific findings from the study and will include the sharing of practice implications as detailed in section 7.3.2. It was agreed that feedback to the EPS would be provided during a whole-team meeting. To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of participating schools and staff members, the EPS will be presented with main findings and implications for practice. The same principles for ensuring that the identity of participating schools and staff members is protected will apply when feeding back to the head of the SEND department within the LA in which the research was conducted. During a meeting with the head of the SEND department prior to commencing the research, it was proposed by the researcher that another meeting be held with them upon completion of the thesis to verbally present main themes and practice implications. Insight gained from the social phenomenon under question also offers implications for strategic development within the LA. Reflecting upon Bronfenbrenner's (1976) ecological systems theory, as discussed within the second literature review (section 5.2), the interconnected nature of different systems is advocated. From this stance, LA processes, actions, ideologies and policies can interact with and have an impact upon school culture. Consequently, the constructed grounded theory may aid the development of LA strategy that is conducive to promoting organisational culture within schools that promotes positive outcomes for pupil SEMH.

7.4 Considerations of research validity and quality – part 2

Following presentation of the steps taken to enhance the quality of the current research prior to commencing study and during the stages of data collection and analysis (section 3.5), an evaluation of the constructed conceptual categories and grounded theory is provided. As before, the evaluation in

Table 7.1 considers the quality of the study in relation to the criteria set out by Charmaz (2014) and should be looked at in conjunction with the measures taken as presented in

Table 3.3 in section 3.5.

Evaluation criteria	**Outcomes**
Credibility	The developed theory is grounded in data collection and analysed through various coding processes and analysis strategies employed by the researcher (Appendix 7; Appendix 8; Appendix 12; Appendix 13; Appendix 14). Examples of reflexive activities provide evidence of ongoing interaction the researcher engaged in with the data (Figure 3.2 in section 3.4.2.5; Appendix 9).
Originality	The distinct contribution of the current research is discussed in section 7.3.1. The research is unique or provides new insight and conceptual understanding into the research topic. Professional implications arising from the constructed grounded theory in relation to EP practice are discussed (section 7.3.2). Employment of constructivist grounded theory provided a more rigorous approach and findings in relation to the explored topic.

Resonance	The grounded theory conceptualises meaning regarding the social phenomenon of primary school staffs understanding and perceptions of their own role and of the whole school role in relation to the SEMH of all pupils. The constructed categories revealed taken-for-granted meanings for the experience of school staff in relation to the study's topic of focus. At the time of writing the thesis, the researcher had shared the constructed grounded theory with EP colleagues, university tutors and trainee EPs. They shared that findings make sense in relation to their personal experience of the explored topic.
Usefulness	Professional implications arising from the constructed grounded theory in relation to EP practice are discussed (section 7.3.2). The dissemination of research findings and implications to participating schools, participating staff members, the EPS and the head of the SEND department with the LA is also discussed (section 7.3.3). The distinct contribution of the current research is discussed in section 7.3.1. The research is unique or provides new insight and conceptual understanding into the research topic. The analysis offers an inductive conceptualisation and interpretation of primary school staffs understanding and perceptions of their own and the school's role in relation to all children and young people's SEMH. The current study provides research that reflects

	understanding and perceptions of the more recently introduced term, SEMH. Concurrently, it provides readers with more a conceptual model to consider that is based on current terminology.

Table 7.1 - Measures taken by the researcher to improve the quality of the current grounded theory study, based on evaluation criteria outlined by Charmaz's (2014).

7.5 Strengths, limitations and future research

The present study employed constructivist grounded theory methodology to explore the perceptions and understandings that primary school staff hold around their own and the school's role in relation to all pupils' SEMH. Such methodology has advantages in providing an understanding of social phenomena that is grounded in data, rather than being developed from pre-existing theories, frameworks and paradigms. Unlike other qualitative research methods, such as those discussed in section 3.2.1, constructivist grounded theory was advantageous in affording rich data into a topic area of high complexity; providing insight into the how's and why's of the social processes occurring in the sampled schools in relation to pupil SEMH. A strength of the present study lies in the presentation that development of the grounded theory was enabled through application and completion of strategies and processes that were congruent with the proposed constructivist grounded theory methodology. However, although the conducted grounded theory and conceptual categories emergent from this study provide valuable insight and a distinct contribution to the explored area of study, several limitations are identified.

One limitation of the present study may be the small sample size and the narrow range of settings the data was obtained from. Bound by time and capacity pressures of the doctoral thesis, the range of data obtained could pose a threat to the study's credibility (Charmaz, 2014). However, the constructivist approach employed with the current study meant that the researcher gave credibility to the strength of the conceptual categories and constructed grounded theory through engaging in a process of rigorous analysis, employing

strategies such as line-by-line and segment coding with gerunds, memoing, diagramming, clustering and the constant comparison method (Charmaz & Bryant, 2011). Furthermore, the researcher aimed to further enhance the credibility of the study by engaging in the theoretical sampling. Nevertheless, future research may benefit from incorporating a larger sample size obtained from a broader range of primary school settings.

Reflecting legislative changes and the statutory need for educational professionals and providers to support the learning and development of young people aged 16–25 with special educational needs and disabilities (DfE, 2015), future research may extend the current study to exploring the understanding and perception of staff working in post-16 educational settings. Such findings may not only contribute through offering practice implications for professionals working within these settings, but may also provide valuable insight into the potential role of EPs in the age range with regard to young people's SEMH. Indeed, such research could contribute to the recent assertion by Morris and Atkinson (2018) that further consideration needs to be given to how EPs will respond to the need to support the SEMH needs of 16–25-year olds. Additionally, as the present study focused on mainstream primary schools, future research could extend to exploring the studied topic in private and specialist settings. In light of government reforms (DfE, 2015), such research could further contribute insight into staff understanding and perceptions in line with the term SEMH.

Employment of constructivist grounded theory methodology provided valuable theoretical insight into the studied social phenomenon, within the local context. Reflecting principles of the selected methodology, the present study and constructed grounded theory was not concerned with generalisability of the findings. Rather, within the local context, findings aimed to inform EP practice and LA strategic development in relation to supporting and promoting pupil SEMH in primary schools. It may be beneficial to conduct a similar study within or across a range of LAs so that data is obtained that captures potential variations in the studied social phenomenon from different geographical locations.

Employment of only one method of data collection could also be thought of as a limitation of the present study. Interviewing has been criticised for lacking in accuracy due to the capturing of retrospective participant narratives and voices that are bound within specific research conditions (Miller & Glassner, 2011). However, the credibility of the present study is enhanced through employment of constructivist grounded theory, which emphasises the subjective nature of interviews and the co-construction of knowledge between interviewer and interviewee (Charmaz, 1996). In-depth, extensive interviews which were not restricted to specific questions and were flexible in nature, allowed the researcher to ask questions of interest in relation to emerging information and analytical concepts (Anderson, 2010). However, future research could further enrich data and add depth to analysis through incorporating other, ethnographic elements of data collection, such as collecting and analysing documentation and completing observations (Charmaz, 2014). Future research may also focus on applying the presented grounded theory model. Application of the model through deductive methodologies such as mixed methods approaches or quantitative research might help to test its validity within the applied world.

Whilst the researcher was a novice in grounded theory methodology, they improved research credibility through extensive reading around grounded theory prior to and throughout the research process and by paying close attention to methodological strategies, processes and obtained data (Charmaz, 1996). One limitation of the study may be the researcher's experience with grounded theory methodology and the constraints presented by the doctoral thesis in which purposefully sampled interviews were not coded iteratively and the extent to which theoretical sampling was completed. However, theoretical sensitisation was facilitated, and data sufficiency achieved through the flexible nature of interviews and the researcher asking analytically guided questions within interviews; exploring areas of theoretical interest. Analysis and saturation was also facilitated through the employment of the constant comparison method. The researcher also completed reflective memos soon after each interview which prompted the development of questions and areas to explore in following interviews (Appendix 9). Thus, despite potential limitations with the

coding process and theoretical sampling, theoretical saturation was achieved, and a grounded theory developed.

A final aspect considered in relation to strengths and limitations of the present study regards research rigor and potential bias. In the current study, strategies were employed by the researcher to enhance rigor and ensure analysis was protected against being influenced by their personal biases (Anderson, 2010). Implicit with the principles of the constructivist grounded theory methodology employed, the researcher was actively involved throughout all stages of data collection and analysis. Through semi-structured interviewing that was flexible in nature, the research was acknowledged as co-constructing knowledge with participants. Additionally, the employed methodology acknowledges the subjectivity of analysis, with researchers applying their own, individualist meaning to their data. To reduce potential bias, the researcher maintained a reflexive stance throughout the research process, ensuring they safeguarded against their personal preconceptions, existing knowledge, and positioning. The researcher employed several strategies to support their reflexivity, including use of a research diary, rigorous coding processes, ongoing memo-writing and the constant comparative method. Such strategies enabled the researcher to scrutinise the research experience and provide transparency through documenting their reflections, decisions and interpretations (Charmaz, 2014). The researcher also aimed to reduce their preconceptions by completion of a purposefully broad literature review prior to commencing the research study. Despite this, some potential threats to researcher reflexivity are identified. Firstly, having previously worked as a teacher within a primary school, the researcher may have unknowingly applied existing knowledge when interpreting the data. A further bias might be in view of participants' responses potentially being influenced by both the researcher context and their awareness of the researcher's role as a TEP. Nevertheless, the researcher aimed to counteract this by ensuring time was allocated at the start of meetings with the participants to develop rapport and to talk through ethical considerations, including assurance of confidentiality anonymity.

7.6 Researcher reflections

The researcher has engaged in personal reflection throughout the journey of the present research. From start to finish, through highs and lows, the experience has afforded the researcher rich and enlightened insight not only into the world of qualitative research, but also into their strengths in knowledge and skills as a scientific practitioner. Furthermore, the research process has facilitated the researcher's professional practice through experience of working with a range of school professionals within a research context and needing to navigate the complexities and challenges of research alongside their role as a TEP.

Several challenges were experienced throughout the research journey which, upon reflection, provided the researcher with invaluable personal learning and character building. One of the biggest challenges encountered relates to timeframes, with the timeline of the research not running in the way that timescales predicted. Not obtaining ethical approval until the researchers third year of training meant participant recruitment did not occur until this point. Participant sampling presented another challenge, with the researcher finding it harder than anticipated to gain access to potential participants. However, EPs within the EPS were extremely supportive in providing suggestions for potential schools and recruitment was successful. Although the researcher entered initial interviews with some feelings of nervousness and apprehension, she thoroughly enjoyed the interviewing process and relished the opportunity to engage with a range of participants.

The process of data analysis alongside data collection was complex and demanding, but one which the researcher was enthused and captivated by. The experience of grappling with data was counteracted by moments of sheer enlightenment and euphoria as pieces of the puzzle came together and the complex picture began to unfold. Engagement with the constructivist grounded theory methodology led the researcher to develop their thinking at a meta level, with their understanding of the social phenomenon becoming more conceptual, analytical and theoretical, something which felt new, exciting and intrinsically rewarding. The researcher became fully immersed in their data, which aided the development of the study's grounded theory. Completion of the study has

sparked an interest and desire in the researcher to engage in projects at a strategic, LA level in order to promote positive change for CYP.

7.7 Chapter summary

The present study aimed to explore the social phenomenon of primary school staffs' understanding and perceptions of their own and of the whole-school role in relation to all pupils' SEMH. Through employment of constructivist grounded theory methodology, a grounded theory framework was developed to provide conceptual understanding of the explored topic. The chapter discussed the findings of the present study in relation to literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Implications of the research were then presented, including the study's distinctive contribution and implications for the role of EPs. Consideration then turned to the validity and quality of the study, strengths of the research, limitations and areas for future research. Finally, the chapter concluded with the researcher's personal reflections of the research process.

8 Conclusion

Located within the current context of research, governmental policy, changing terminology, prevalence of SEMH difficulties in primary school-aged CYP and local LA development, this study aimed to provide an inductive and rigorous exploration of how primary school staff understand and perceive their own and the school's role in relation to all pupils' SEMH. Through employment of constructivist grounded theory methodology, the study's purpose was to extend understanding and provide a distinct contribution which would inform practice for schools, professional practice for EPs and strategic LA development. It is hoped that, in the context of an ever-evolving governmental and societal backdrop, the current research offers a positive contribution that facilitates and enables understanding and practice in relation to promoting positive outcomes for the SEMH of all pupils within primary school settings.

Through consideration of literature in organisational culture, theories of identity, social constructionism and organisational learning, construction of a theoretical framework from grounded findings is provided. The emergent theory of 'school ethos, culture and values: at the core of influencing processes and actions impacting upon pupil social, emotional and mental health' and developed conceptualised categories offer a framework that explains the actions, social processes and factors that are understood and perceived as occurring within and externally to primary schools that ultimately impact upon pupil SEMH. The grounded theory seeks to illuminate the social phenomenon of the focused topic through conceptualising school ethos, culture and values as critically underpinning and perpetuating all actions, processes and functioning within the school organisation that relate to how school staff engage with and effectively support and promote pupil SEMH. Within this, the critical role of the Head Teacher in creating and mobilising such elements within the school organisation and in promoting a sense of shared, organisational identity amongst all staff is highlighted. The constructed grounded theory integrates notions of identities as educators, organisational growth, and adaption to challenge, change and demands and also perceives communication as an integral, multi-functional tool that affects promotion of pupil SEMH.

Limitations of the evidence base are acknowledged, with recommendations for further research to address these being suggested. This includes incorporating a larger sample size from a broader range of school settings and enriching data further through incorporation of additional approaches to data collection, including integrating observational and ethnographic methodological elements. However, despite presented limitations, evaluation of the present grounded theory research through application of criteria outlined by Charmaz (2014) indicates that the study is of good validity and quality. Improvement of the study's credibility, resonance, usefulness and originality is demonstrated through the researcher's employment and application of a range of reflexive measures to enhance validity and quality.

Findings from the current study provide suggestions and implications for the professional practice of EPs and insight that may be considered valuable in relation to strategic LA plans and development within the local context. Within the context of EP practice, findings from the study highlight the valuable and distinct role that EPs can play in applying their psychological knowledge and skills to work with schools in various ways to help facilitate and inform organisational change, development, learning and policy development that is conducive to the development of school ethos, culture and values that promote positive outcomes for the SEMH of all pupils. Further implications for EP practice include the valuable role they could play at a strategic level by providing psychological insight and advice to boards during Head Teacher recruitment and the need to consider organisational-level provision when providing schools with recommendations regarding a pupil's SEMH. Implications are also suggested at a LA level, with the proposal that dissemination of research findings and the grounded theory framework to the EPS and the head of the SEND could help inform the development of processes and services at a wider level.

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Appendix 1. Email sent to EPs within the EPS at the stage of purposeful sampling

Hi All,

As part of my doctoral training with the University of Nottingham I am intending to carry out a piece of research exploring primary school staffs understanding and perceptions of their own and the schools role in meeting the social, emotional and mental health needs of all children. It is hoped that the findings of this research may be of use to the Local Authority and the Educational Psychology Service in developing guidance on best practice in this area.

I am emailing to enquire as to whether you could suggest to me primary schools within the Local Authority that you think would be interested in working with a Trainee Educational Psychologist in a research study that is focused on exploring staff perceptions of pupil social, emotional and mental health within their schools. My research is not concerned with whether a school is deemed as 'good' or 'poor' in relation to pupil social, emotional and mental health and so your suggestions do not need to be made on this basis.

I am hoping to recruit approximately 3 schools to take part in the research. In total, I'm looking to recruit approximately 6 participants within the overall study, which is to include a range of job roles. Therefore, the number of participants recruited from each school might vary. As guided by my methodology (grounded theory) the sample size may vary depending on the saturation of my data, therefore, it may be that fewer or more participants are required.

Following your suggestions, an email may or may not be sent to the Head Teacher of these schools to enquire as to whether they would be interested in taking part in my research. At this point, I am looking for suggestions only and therefore please ask that guarantees to take part in the research are not provided to schools.

If you can suggest schools that you think would be willing to become involved as part of this research I would be very grateful if you could contact me via this email address.

Additionally, please do get in touch if you have any other queries or questions around the research.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email and considering schools that you think would be willing to take part in my research. I would be greatly appreciative of any suggestions.

Kind regards,

Olivia Corradi

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 2. Email sent to head teachers of suggested schools during purposeful sampling

Dear Mrs/Mr XXX

I am currently a second year Trainee Educational Psychologist studying at the University of Nottingham and on placement at the Local Authority Educational Psychology Service. During my time at the Educational Psychology Service, as well as my role as a trainee, I will also be carrying out a piece of research within children's services. This is an invitation to take part in a research project that I shall be conducting during my time at the psychology service.

Research title:

Primary school staffs understanding of the school role in meeting the social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs of all children and young people: A grounded theory exploration.

I am interested in illuminating our understanding of primary school engagement with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) to inform and enhance how school professionals and educational psychologists can help support children who may be vulnerable. To do so, I would like to conduct interviews with individual members of staff who have educational responsibilities.

If you choose to consent to your school taking to part, you will be asked to suggest a senior leadership team/teacher/special educational needs coordinator/teaching assistant to be invited to take part in an individual interview. You may be asked to nominate more than one member of staff. All participation is voluntary. Participants may also be asked to take part in a further individual interview.

As the primary researcher, I will carry out the interviews, analyse the data gathered and provide feedback to yourselves with regards to broad findings. These findings will not be participant or school-specific. Full ethical

considerations and details of the study will be shared with you before agreeing to engage with the project.

If this is a research study that you would be interested in engaging in, then please do contact me via this email address. Additionally, do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require any additional information.

I can be contacted via email at:
olivia.corradi@nottingham.ac.uk

Any enquiries for my university supervisor can be directed to@
Dr Sarah Atkinson
Email: lpasa3@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this email and considering taking part in my research. I would be greatly appreciative of your participation in the research and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Olivia Corradi
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 3. Invitation letter

School of Psychology

Invitation Letter

The University of Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Ethics Approval Number: S1084R

Researcher(s): Olivia Corradi (olivia.corradi@nottingham.ac.uk)

Supervisor(s): Dr Sarah Atkinson (lpasa3@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk)

Dear Sir/Madam

I am currently a third year Trainee Educational Psychologist studying at the University of Nottingham and on placement at the Local Authority Educational Psychology Service. During my time at the Educational Psychology Service, I will also be carrying out a piece of research within children's services. This is an invitation to take part in my research project.

Research title: ***Primary school staffs understanding of the school role in meeting the social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs of all children and young people: A grounded theory exploration.***

I am interested in deepening our understanding of primary school engagement with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) to inform and enhance how school professionals and educational psychologists can help support children, including those who may be vulnerable.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in an individual interview with myself. Interviews will take place in your school at a time convenient to you and last approximately one hour. You will be asked questions about your understanding, perceptions and views of the social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) of all pupils.

As the primary researcher, I will carry out the interviews, analyse the data gathered and provide feedback to yourselves with regards to broad findings. These findings will not be participant or school-specific. Full ethical considerations and details of the study will be shared with you before deciding if you would like to take part in the research. Participation is totally voluntary.

If this is a research study that you would be interested in taking part in, then please do contact me via this email address. Additionally, do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require any additional information.

I can be contacted via email at:
olivia.corradi@nottingham.ac.uk

Any enquiries for my university supervisor can be directed to:
Dr Sarah Atkinson
Email: lpasa3@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I would be greatly appreciative of your participation in the research and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Olivia Corradi
Trainee Educational Psychologist

If you have any complaints about the study, please contact:
Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee)
stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 4. Participant information sheet

School of Psychology

Participant Information Sheet

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Ethics Approval Number: S1084R

Researcher(s): Olivia Corradi (olivia.corradi@nottingham.ac.uk)

Supervisor(s): Dr Sarah Atkinson (lpasa3@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk)

I am currently a third year Trainee Educational Psychologist studying at the University of Nottingham and on placement with the Local Authority the Educational Psychology Service. This is an invitation to take part in a research project I shall be conducting during my time at the psychology service. Your contribution to my research would be greatly appreciated.

Before you decide if you wish to take part, it is important you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information very carefully.

Research title: ***Primary school staffs understanding of the school role in meeting the social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs of all children and young people: A grounded theory exploration.***

I am interested in developing our understanding of primary school engagement with social, emotional and mental health to inform how school professionals and educational psychologists can support all children, including those who are vulnerable.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in an individual interview with myself. Interviews will take place in your school at a time convenient to you and last approximately one hour. Interviews will be audio recorded. You will be asked questions about your own and the whole school's role in relation to pupil social, emotional and mental health. You may also be

asked to take part in a further interview with myself at a later stage. Once I have analysed the data, broad, non-staff or school specific findings from the study will be fed back to you.

Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are not obliged to take part. You are free to withdraw from the study prior to or during the interview. You have the right to ask for all, or specific bits of your data, to be withdrawn and destroyed up until your data have been processed. You have the right to decline to respond to any questions asked during the interview.

All data collected will be kept confidential, used by myself for research purposes only and stored in compliance with the Data Protection Act (1998). The Head teacher will also know you are taking part. In the instance of any safeguarding concerns being raised, either in relation to yourself or another person, your right to confidentiality will be overridden and school and local authority safeguarding protocols adhered to.

You will be debriefed at the end of the interview and provided opportunity to raise any concerns and ask questions you may have. To further ensure your well-being, I will provide you with my contact details for any questions or support. Should you wish to seek confidential and anonymous support outside of the research, contact details for the Samaritans will also be provided.

Full ethical considerations and details of the study will be shared with you before consenting to take part.

If you would be interested in taking part, then please do contact me via this email address. Additionally, do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require any additional information.

I can be contacted via email at:
olivia.corradi@nottingham.ac.uk

Any enquiries for my university supervisor can be directed to:

Dr Sarah Atkinson

Email: lpasa3@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

Olivia Corradi, Trainee Educational Psychologist
University of Nottingham

If you have any complaints about the study, please contact:
Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee)
stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 5. Semi-structured interview schedule

Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Introductions

Refer to script for the start of the interview.

Understanding of the term Social, Emotional and Mental Health

1. What does the term social, emotional and mental health' mean to you?
    - *How do you understand these terms? How would you define them?*
    - *Can you give an example?*

Understanding and perceptions of their own role in relation to pupil SEMH

2. How has your role contributed to your understanding of SEMH?
    - *What experiences have contributed to your understanding?*
    - *Examples?*

3. Tell me about your own role in relation to pupil SEMH
    - *What do you feel your role is?*
    - *What do you feel your responsibilities are?*
    - *What impacts upon your role in relation to pupil SEMH? (supported/hindered)*

4. How able to do you feel to talk about SEMH within your role?
    - *When do you talk about pupil SEMH?*
    - *What impacts or influences your ability to talk about pupil SEMH?*

Understanding and perceptions of the whole school role in relation to pupil SEMH

5. In your view, how does the wider staff group understand SEMH?
    - *How would SEMH be defined? Why?*
    - *What experiences have contributed to your view on this?*
    - *Why do you think the wider school staff understand SEMH in this way? How would you explain differences in understanding?*
    - *Thoughts/feelings about this?*

6. How do school staff talk about pupil SEMH?

- *How do they talk about their own role and the roles of others in relation to pupil SEMH? Do you people in different roles talk about pupil SEMH differently? (Prompt to not use the names of staff to protect identity).*
- *What do you think is the perceived role of the whole school in relation to pupil SEMH?*
- *How might pupil SEMH be talked about by staff across different situations?*
- *Examples?*
- *Thoughts/feelings?*

7. How confident do you consider school staff feel in supporting pupil SEMH?
    - *What do you think influences and impacts upon staff confidence?*
    - *Internal/external factors?*
    - *How might confidence differ across different situations?*
    - *How would you explain different confident levels? Example?*

8. What factors impact upon whole-school engagement with pupil SEMH?
    - *What factors facilitate or hinder engagement, if anything?*
    - *External/internal factors?*
    - *Examples?*

9. What needs to happen next for the school to develop its engagement with pupil SEMH?
    - *What changes need to occur, if any? Why? How?*
    - *Why do you the impact of these changes would be? Why?*

Closing statements

- Any further comments/thoughts you would like to add? Have we missed anything?
- Is there anything you would like to clarify?
- Do you have any questions?
- Thank the participant for taking part and reiterate ethical matters relating to confidentiality, data storage and right to withdraw.
- Explain next steps of the research.

Note: Questions written in italics are prompts.

Appendix 6. Researcher script for the start of interviews

Script for Participant Interviews

1. **Introduction:** Introduce myself as a Trainee Educational Psychologist; explain my dual role as a trainee practitioner and a researcher. Explain I am working in a researcher capacity during this interview.

2. **Aims and rationale of research:**

    - Mention the study is exploring primary school staff's understanding and perceptions of their own and their whole school school's role in relation to all pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH).
    - Given growing national and local focus on pupil SEMH, the proposed research aims to make a distinct contribution by exploring primary school staff's understanding and perceptions of their and their school's role in relation to all pupils SEMH. In turn, aiming to inform the practice of school professionals and EPs.

3. **Data collection:**

    - Data will be collected via semi-structured interviews that will be audio recorded and last up to one hour. You will be asked some specific questions about your own and the whole school's role in relation to pupil social, emotional and mental health but the direction the interview takes will be guided by the discussion. You may also be asked to take part in a further interview with myself at a later stage. You have the right to not answer specific questions without needing to justify why.

4. **Ethical considerations:**

    - Data will be stored securely, and full transcripts will not be included in the thesis.
    - Anonymity will be ensured, including using pseudonym names within the thesis and the anonymised storage of audio-recording, transcripts, observation notes and any personal thoughts or feelings shared during the interview.
    - In the instance of safeguarding concerns arising, regarding the participants or others, participant's rights to confidentiality will be overridden by the professional duty to protect and safeguard children, young people, professionals and other adults from harm. Such information will be shared with the schools safeguarding lead and reported and recorded following the EPS's safeguarding procedures.

- You have the right to withdraw from the research up until the point the researcher has begun to process your data, which will be _____. You will not be expected to justify or explain your decision, your data will be destroyed, with no negative consequence occurring as a result of their withdrawal.
- Mention that, at the end of the interview, they will be debriefed and provided opportunity for reflection and to ask any questions. I will provide my contact details and _____ within the school is also a point of contact should you have further queries or questions. I will also provide details of the Samaritans in the unlikely events that you wish to seek independent, anonymous support outside of the research.
- Interviews will be terminated if it is felt you may be feeling anxious, distressed or stressed. You can also terminate the interview in the unlikely event of this happening.

5. **Do you have any questions?**

6. **Go through consent form and if the participant is happy to volunteer to take part, receive their written informed consent.**

7. **Ask the participant to state their role and years of experience once the recording starts. Remind them to not to mention their name, the names of colleagues or the name of the school.**

Appendix 7. Example of initial coding conducted by the researcher

. Understanding SEMH as underpinning all else . Dealing with SEMH first . 'getting it right' . Everything following SEMH; giving clarity to impact of SEMH . Support future outcomes . Dealing on different levels . Being preventative . Relating to all ch. . Reaching out to all ch . Becoming the curriculum * . Becoming part of self . Giving additional support where needed. . Adapting approach to need. * . Embedding a quality first teaching; catering for all . Having a hidden curriculum; having a positive, nurturing atmosphere; actions as common place; looking out for each other; having aims . Catering for all; tailoring provision to need; recognising ind needs; giving extra where needed; graduating response . Supporting at different levels . Testing what works; support for staff; graduating response . Supporting staff SEMH; . Managing staff SEMH . Meeting SEMH needs of staff	in school who's diabetic and we meet the needs of that... We can... Because we meet the needs there everything else can happen so if you could meet the needs in terms of social emotional mental health then everything else will happen exactly the same as well and we're very much trying to give it the same clarity that if you get it right then actually you can still live your life well. And it's dealing with it on lots of different levels so dealing with it, dealing with social emotional mental health in terms of preventative, just normal life, so how we talk about things like an assembly and self-esteem and confidence and relationships with everybody else... With yourself, you know how you deal with things... For all children and you know again, like you would have PE lesson, you work those muscles for all children so you talk about that with all children and it becomes part of the curriculum but then also you, where those children do struggle, you put the support in there as well. **So it sounds like there are different approaches** Yes, depending on the need. So you're trying to come in at it in terms of quality first teaching and they used to refer to things like being the hidden curriculum so it is the positive atmosphere, the nurturing atmosphere, that's just what we do in this school we look out for each other, it's reflected in our school aims. So you meet all of that need but then it's an understanding that for some people, even if all of that is correct, there might be some needs that they need to be met elsewhere with an additional work so it's all of that kind of thing. **So it sounds like there's a difference between everyone and then specific individuals?** Yes very much so and using that and taking that into, you know that level, and finding out what then works best for those children and staff. We support a lot of staff, I mean I've got one member of staff but we've had other members of staff who have been signed off on mental health. **Really.** Yeah so it's, it's meeting their needs as well because, you know without

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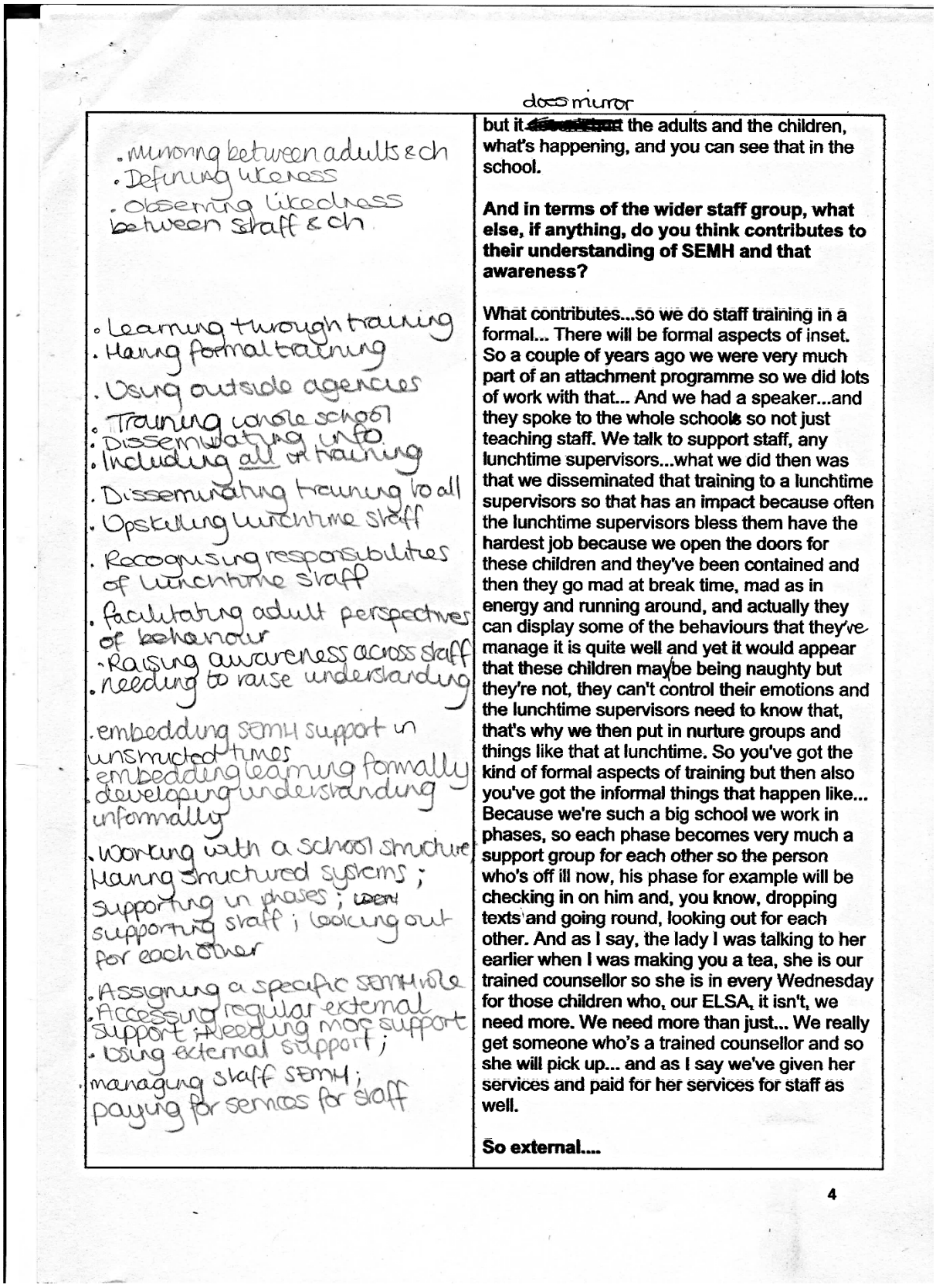
• Dealing with staff SEMH • Nurturing/manging staff SEMH • Understanding impact of staff SEMH • Being alert to staff needs • Helping staff; Managing staff SEMH	sounding all grand, contribution to society is really helpful for you with mental health. You don't want to become too insular because that's when you become on a downward spiral but we understands that you've got a, a tipping point and we need to help staff there so we've paid for counselling for staff and things like that so we try to help them. So yeah it is... **And what impact do you feel staff social emotional and mental health has in relation to pupil social emotional mental health?**
• Gaining awareness through own SEMH • Being self-aware • Understanding impact of SEMH • Being able to empathise; Seeing others needs • unpicking roots of SEMH needs • 'getting it right for ch'; being preventative • Building foundations (rec important Laying foundations of) • supporting staff SEMH • Seeing SEMH from 2 sides - increasing sensitivity to staff SEMH • Being more attuned to pupil SEMH	I actually think it's make the staff very aware, self-aware, because the staff who so for example don't necessarily themselves have any heightened needs, so they so you know they're quite happily...plodding along isn't the best word necessarily...but they understand, they recognised but it doesn't impact on them but they can see that somebody else has been struggling or is struggling in a day-to-day life and they see that in an adult and actually when you start and unpicking it a lot of it does go back over years and things maybe not have been addressed so that it makes you very aware of 'well we've got to get it right for the children' in the school' so that you'll building foundations and again that muscle base so that they've got a good foundation going forward to help them. So I think in working with colleagues who struggle with mental health it certainly makes it better to the children because we can see it in both areas. **So do you think that impacts on their roles and responsibilities?**
• Being attuned/aware • Being alert; sensitising to whats concerning • Acting upon concerns; taking action; listening to ch; giving time • Hypothesising underpinnings • Differentiating time	Yes very much so and just a heightened awareness and just you know it's almost like [redacted] your ears have pricked up it's like 'hang on a minute' that's not, that's not, they said something that worries me or 'ooo that's a new thing I just need to follow that through' or could be something so simple as just spending a bit more time with that child and listening and having a chat with them and giving them that time because maybe something is going on at home and it could be a short time [redacted], a very short term thing, or it can be a long-term thing



. mirroring between adults & ch . Defining likeness . Observing likedness between staff & ch . Learning through training . Having formal training . Using outside agencies . Training whole school . Disseminating info . Including all in training . Disseminating training to all . Upskilling lunchtime staff . Recognising responsibilities of lunchtime staff . facilitating adult perspectives of behaviour . Raising awareness across staff . needing to raise understanding . embedding SEMH support in unstructed times . embedding learning formally . developing understanding informally . Working with a school structure; Having structured systems; supporting in phases; supporting staff; looking out for each other . Assigning a specific SEMH role . Accessing regular external support; Needing more support . Using external support; . managing staff SEMH; paying for services for staff	does mirror but it [redacted] the adults and the children, what's happening, and you can see that in the school. **And in terms of the wider staff group, what else, if anything, do you think contributes to their understanding of SEMH and that awareness?** What contributes...so we do staff training in a formal... There will be formal aspects of inset. So a couple of years ago we were very much part of an attachment programme so we did lots of work with that... And we had a speaker...and they spoke to the whole schools so not just teaching staff. We talk to support staff, any lunchtime supervisors...what we did then was that we disseminated that training to a lunchtime supervisors so that has an impact because often the lunchtime supervisors bless them have the hardest job because we open the doors for these children and they've been contained and then they go mad at break time, mad as in energy and running around, and actually they can display some of the behaviours that they've manage it is quite well and yet it would appear that these children may be being naughty but they're not, they can't control their emotions and the lunchtime supervisors need to know that, that's why we then put in nurture groups and things like that at lunchtime. So you've got the kind of formal aspects of training but then also you've got the informal things that happen like... Because we're such a big school we work in phases, so each phase becomes very much a support group for each other so the person who's off ill now, his phase for example will be checking in on him and, you know, dropping texts and going round, looking out for each other. And as I say, the lady I was talking to her earlier when I was making you a tea, she is our trained counsellor so she is in every Wednesday for those children who, our ELSA, it isn't, we need more. We need more than just... We really get someone who's a trained counsellor and so she will pick up... and as I say we've given her services and paid for her services for staff as well. **So external....**

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Example of initial coding completed by the researcher

Appendix 8. Example of focused coding carried out by the researcher

Putting SEMH first ~~Identifying SEMH as all-~~ ~~Dealing with SEMH first~~ en	in school who's diabetic and we meet the needs of that... We can... Because we meet the needs there everything else can happen so if you could meet the needs in terms of social emotional mental health then everything else will happen exactly the same as well and we're very much trying to give it the same clarity that if you get it right then actually you can still live your life well. And it's dealing with it on lots of different levels so dealing with it, dealing with social emotional mental health in terms of preventative, just normal life, so how we talk about things like an assembly and self-esteem and confidence and relationships with everybody else... With yourself, you know how you deal with things... For all children and you know again, like you would have PE lesson, you work those muscles for all children so you talk about that with all children and it becomes part of the curriculum but then also you, where those children do struggle, you put the support in there as well.
. Being preventative . Promoting postive outcomes	
Embedding SEMH holistically	
Tailoring ~~approach~~ provision to need	**So it sounds like there are different approaches**
Tailoring provision ~~approach~~ to need . Graduating approach	Yes, depending on the need. So you're trying to come in at it in terms of quality first teaching and they used to refer to things like being the hidden curriculum so it is the positive atmosphere, the nurturing atmosphere, that's just what we do in this school we look out for each other, it's reflected in our school aims. So you meet all of that need but then it's an understanding that for some people, even if all of that is correct, there might be some needs that they need to be met elsewhere with an additional work so it's all of that kind of thing.
Creating a positive environment Looking out for each other Embedding ~~a hidden curriculum~~ SEMH holistically	
Catering for all through adapted approaches	**So it sounds like there's a difference between everyone and then specific individuals?**
Graduating response ; tailoring approach to need	Yes very much so and using that and taking that into, you know that level, and finding out what then works best for those children and staff. We support a lot of staff, I mean I've got one member of staff but we've had other members of staff who have been signed off on mental health. **Really.** Yeah so it's, it's meeting their needs as well because, you know without
Managing staff SEMH	

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. Nurturing staff SEMH ; Having support processes for staff . Being self-aware of own SEMH staff . Increasing awareness of ch SEMH through own experience / seeing SEMH from both sides . Laying the foundations Being highly alert and attuned . Responding to concerns proactively . Tailoring approach to need	sounding all grand, contribution to society is really helpful for you with mental health. You don't want to become too insular because that's when you become on a downward spiral but we understands that you've got a, a tipping point and we need to help staff there so we've paid for counselling for staff and things like that so we try to help them. So yeah it is... **And what impact do you feel staff social emotional and mental health has in relation to pupil social emotional mental health?** I actually think it's make the staff very aware, self-aware, because the staff who so for example don't necessarily themselves have any heightened needs, so they so you know they're quite happily...plodding along isn't the best word necessarily...but they understand, they recognised but it doesn't impact on them but they can see that somebody else has been struggling or is struggling in a day-to-day life and they see that in an adult and actually when you start and unpicking it a lot of it does go back over years and things maybe not have been addressed so that it makes you very aware of 'well we've got to get it right for the children' in the school' so that you'll building foundations and again that muscle base so that they've got a good foundation going forward to help them. So I think in working with colleagues who struggle with mental health it certainly makes it better to the children because we can see it in both areas. **So do you think that impacts on their roles and responsibilities?** Yes very much so and just a heightened awareness and just you know it's almost like ~~even though~~ your ears have pricked up it's like 'hang on a minute' that's not, that's not, they said something that worries me or 'ooo that's a new thing I just need to follow that through' or could be something so simple as just spending a bit more time with that child and listening and having a chat with them and giving them that time because maybe something is going on at home and it could be a short ~~time saying~~, a very short term thing, or it can be a long-term thing

* · mirroring between adults and children's SEMH · Promoting organisational understanding through training · Disseminating training to all · Facilitating adult perspectives of behaviour. · Upskilling all internal staff / Attributing responsibility to all · Embedding provision throughout Developing formally & informally · Looking out for each other · Utilising external support managing staff SEMH	does mirror but it ~~doesn't hurt~~ the adults and the children, what's happening, and you can see that in the school. **And in terms of the wider staff group, what else, if anything, do you think contributes to their understanding of SEMH and that awareness?** What contributes...so we do staff training in a formal... There will be formal aspects of inset. So a couple of years ago we were very much part of an attachment programme so we did lots of work with that... And we had a speaker...and they spoke to the whole school so not just teaching staff. We talk to support staff, any lunchtime supervisors...what we did then was that we disseminated that training to a lunchtime supervisors so that has an impact because often the lunchtime supervisors bless them have the hardest job because we open the doors for these children and they've been contained and then they go mad at break time, mad as in energy and running around, and actually they can display some of the behaviours that they manage it is quite well and yet it would appear that these children maybe being naughty but they're not, they can't control their emotions and the lunchtime supervisors need to know that, that's why we then put in nurture groups and things like that at lunchtime. So you've got the kind of formal aspects of training but then also you've got the informal things that happen like... Because we're such a big school we work in phases, so each phase becomes very much a support group for each other so the person who's off ill now, his phase for example will be checking in on him and, you know, dropping texts and going round, looking out for each other. And as I say, the lady I was talking to her earlier when I was making you a tea, she is our trained counsellor so she is in every Wednesday for those children who, our ELSA, it isn't, we need more. We need more than just... We really get someone who's a trained counsellor and so she will pick up... and as I say we've given her services and paid for her services for staff as well. **So external....**

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Example of focused coding completed by the researcher

Appendix 9. Memos written by the researcher prior to and following theoretical sampling

Meeting curriculum demands **4.1.19**

P3, Page 13

I think all comments on this page are interesting. They talk about being driven by the curriculum. Insights indicate that whilst they recognise and believe that SEMH lays the foundations and that children can't learn unless this is managed, teachers are conflicted. They are conflicted by their duty and the pressure to teach the curriculum and to keep children on academic track. Their comments almost imply that teachers are a slave to the curriculum.

The pressure experienced by teachers then 'rubs off' of on and is sensed by children who, in turn, feel stressed. Pressure, P3 indicates, is related to time and grades. P1 and P2 also mention time and curriculum pressures. I need to check over this. But, in this sense, codes indicate that whilst it's acknowledged and understood that SEMH is the 'foundation of everything', the curriculum greatly underpins engagement with pupil SEMH and actions and decisions that staff make. Particularly with teachers there is huge pressure to deliver statutory subjects. SEMH or SEMH needs are therefore often picked up on by TA's. Is this because they have more time? More space? P3 mentions this. P4 does too. P2 mentions the ELSA and children often opening up to TA's. P3 says she over rid curriculum pressures as a TA. She went off-piste; she went with supporting the SEMH need. Is this because they felt less pressure? Was the onus off them in terms of grades and targets etc? I'm missing the TA voice – how do they perceive pressures? Are these perceived hindrances? Do they recognise these pressures on other staff? Would talking to a TA give new or different insight? Do TA's perceive different constraints? This feels like it needs padding out. TA's have been mentioned several times with their role standing out as different; having more time and space. Would talking to a TA give more data? Their role seems distinguished but is this clearly communicated to them? How do they perceive their position within the culture and how do they perceive their role in relation to SEMH? **Why** is it attributed? **How** do they attribute their role? There seems to be insight missing into their role norm.

Transcribing participant 6 **21.02.19**

Transcribing this interview and then listening through it for a second time provided insight that I was considering when striving for theoretical sampling. My initial focused codes and tentative categories led me to the concept of TA's being a key role in relation to pupil SEMH. Not just a key role, a key figure within schools already sampled. A key figure because they are able to provide what other roles within the school can't; time. They can offer time because they don't experience the constraints in terms of national curriculum targets and dealing with 29 other children. This is something illuminated through most interviews – time and capacity demands are experienced by teachers. Therefore, making them less available to pupils. Not because they don't necessarily wasn't to be, but because they have more demands upon their role. TA's and LSA's provide that time; something further illuminated by P6.

Page 4: *(…) but they [teachers] have targets and things that need to be met. I don't have those in the same way as a teacher would. And I don't have to ensure targets are met in the same way a teacher does. So I have more time to listen and possibly do things in a different way.*

Yes, I think I have [got more time] (…) I mean don't get me wrong, you don't feel sometimes that there are enough our in the day but none-the-less, I have more time than a teacher would, definitely.

Time - it all seems to boil down the time. Time is a giver for support staff – it enabled them to talk to children. However, whilst time is still hindrance for support staff, it doesn't have the same impact as it does on other staff roles. For support staff, time provides more time to listen and talk to pupils. It gives you time to be patient, to give children the time they need; not to be rushed. Whilst having time as a TA/LSA is inadvertently provided by not having the same external pressure, it is also perceived by P6 has being their role. Making time is a key role of all support staff. Such insight support and contributes to my existing theoretical concepts – TA's/LSA's inadvertently being a key role in promoting and supporting pupil SEMH.

From this sampling, it has been highlighted that the TA/LSA role is more than just through default, it's how they perceive their role – this **is** their function. Their primary role is to be there and listen. That have to make time – they don't just fall into it – they are aware of it.

Page 6 - *And I, to be honest, I think that's my role. I think I have to make that time.*

Appendix 10. Email sent to EPs within the EPS during theoretical sampling

Hi All,

I'm currently seeking voluntary participation in my research from a Teaching Assistant/Learning Support Assistant, as my data analysis thus far is indicating that this is a valuable voice to capture. I wanted to reach out to ask whether anyone could recommend a primary school where they feel a teaching assistant or learning support assistant would be likely to volunteer to take part in the study. In line with my ethics, I would need to liaise with the head teacher of any suggested schools and gain their consent for the school to take part before disseminating invitations letters to teaching assistants and/or learning support assistants.

I very much appreciate you taking the time to read this and would be sincerely grateful for any suggestions of schools.

Best wishes,
Olivia Corradi
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 11. Email sent to head teachers for recruitment of a member of support staff during theoretical sampling

Dear Mrs/Mr XXX,

I am currently a third year Trainee Educational Psychologist studying at the University of Nottingham and on placement at the Local Authority Educational Psychology Service. During my time at the Educational Psychology Service I am carrying out a piece of research. This is an invitation to take part in my research project.

Research title:
Primary school staffs understanding of the school role in meeting the social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs of all children and young people: A grounded theory exploration.

I am interested in deepening our understanding of primary school engagement with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) to inform and enhance how school professionals and educational psychologists can support all children, including those who are vulnerable.

If you choose to consent to your school taking part, I will then distribute research invitation letters to staff roles I wish to seek participation from. I am currently seeking participation from Teaching Assistants/Learning Support Assistants, with my data analysis thus far indicating this is a valuable voice to capture. Staff who express an interest in taking part in the study may not necessarily be selected. All participation is voluntary. Participants may also be asked to take part in a further individual interview at a later stage.

As the primary researcher, I will carry out the interviews, analyse the data gathered and provide feedback to yourselves with regards to broad findings. These findings will not be participant or school-specific. Full ethical considerations and details of the study will be shared with you before agreeing to engage with the project.

If this is a research study that you would be interested in engaging in, then please do contact me via this email address. Additionally, do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require any additional information.

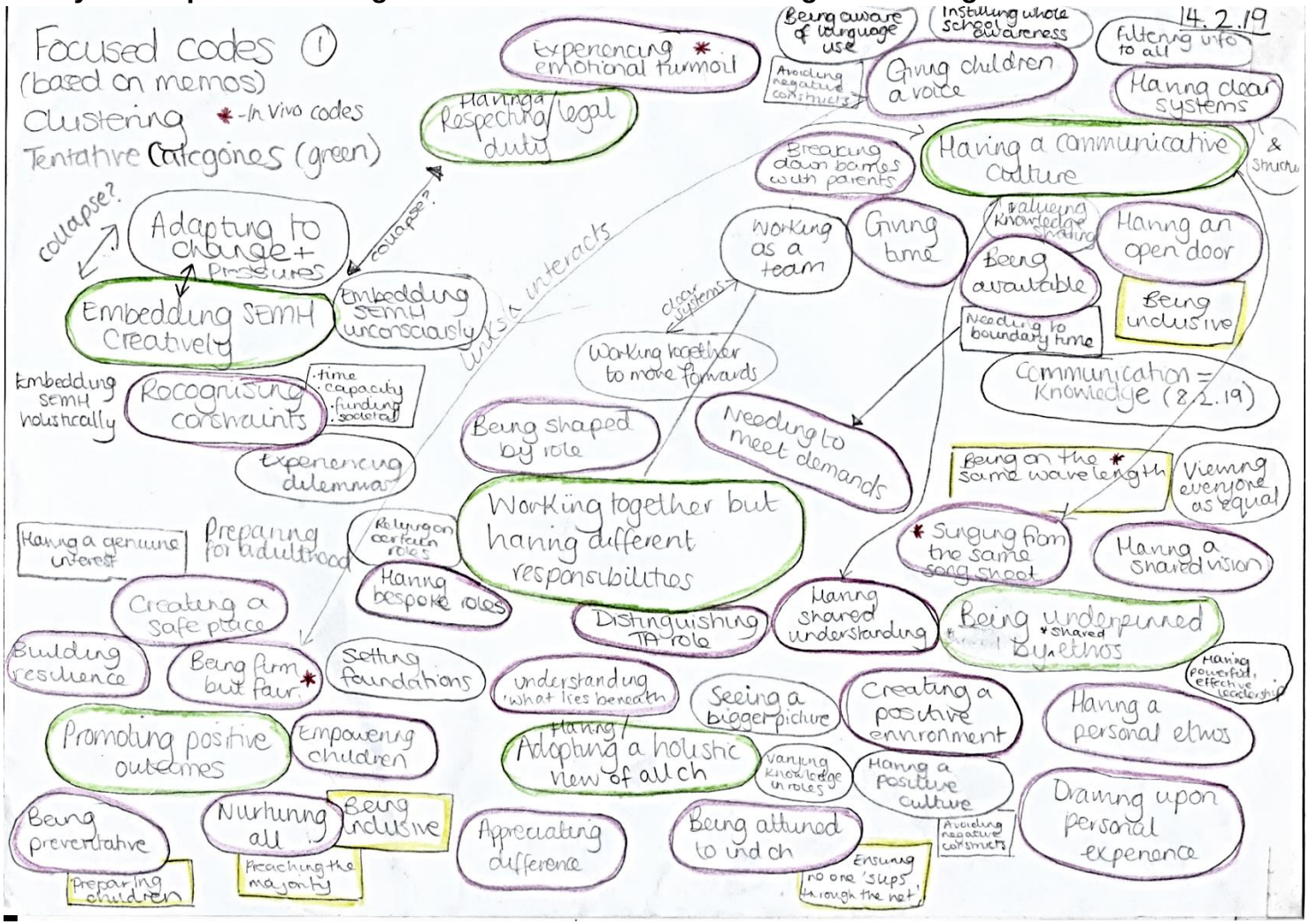
I can be contacted via email at:
olivia.corradi@nottingham.ac.uk

Any enquiries for my university supervisor can be directed to:
Dr Sarah Atkinson
Email: lpasa3@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this email and to consider taking part in my research. I would be greatly appreciative of your participation in the research and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Olivia Corradi
Trainee Educational Psychologist

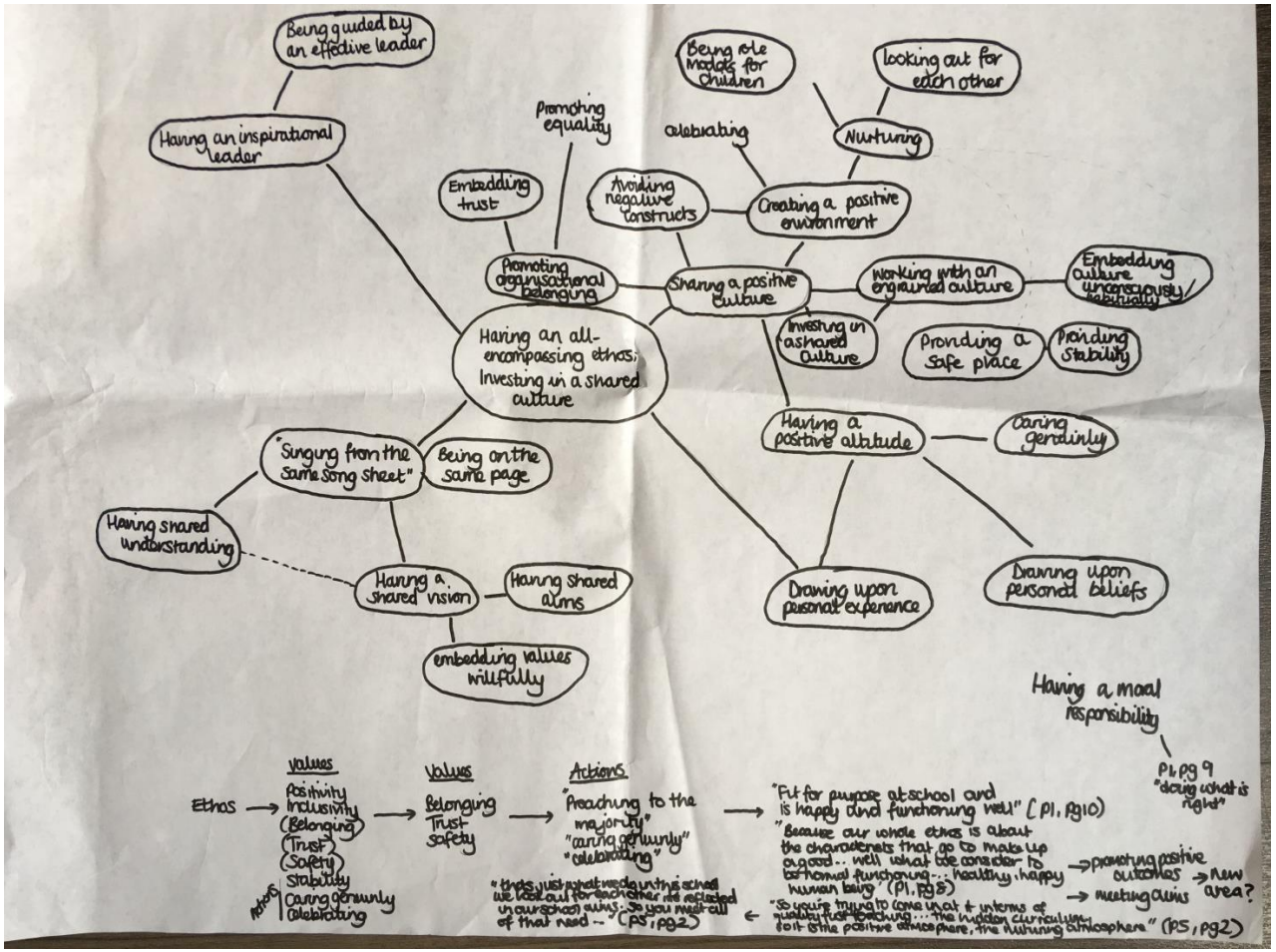
Appendix 12. Early development of categories and focused codes through clustering





An example of early clustering of focused codes around tentative conceptual categories

Appendix 13. An example of a mind map created by the researcher during analysis



Appendix 14. Tabularising of focused codes, final focused codes and conceptual categories

Focused codes before analysis	Focused codes after analysis	Conceptual category
Seeking understanding through external agencies **Accessing external support for greater insight into need** **Using external support** **Enabling provision through external support** **Receiving training** **Accessing training** **Keeping staff knowledge up to date** **Communicating with external agencies to develop knowledge** **Attuning to needs through training** **Promoting organisational understanding through training** **Disseminating training to all** **Cascading training to all; Ensuring staff-wide sharing** **Developing confidence through training** **Training formally and informally** **Communicating externally to keep abreast** **Seeking personal growth** **Growing as professionals** **Seeking and enabling staff growth** **Seeking ongoing organisational growth** **Remaining open to learning and change**	Responding to needs Utilising external agencies Seeking ongoing growth Facilitating staff understanding of behaviour Learning over time; learning from role models; sharing experience and knowledge Identifying gaps; Feeling stuck with additional needs	Seeking and engaging in personal and organisational growth

Upskilling all internal staff **Keeping up to date** **Being open to growth** **Responding to needs** **Tailoring provision to meet needs** **Tailoring training to needs** **Proactively ensuring provision to meet needs** **Growing to support all** **Learning over time** **Learning from roles models** **Upskilling all internal staff** **Facilitating staffs perspectives of behaviour** **Changing understanding of SEN** **Changing staff perception of children** **Breaking traditional practice** **Changing staff approaches and understanding** **Evaluating practice** **Valuing knowledge sharing between staff** **Sharing experience** **Changing staff attitude** **Re-educating staff** **Promoting staff growth through multiple avenues** **Identifying gaps** **Identifying gaps collaboratively** **Feeling ill-equipped** **Feeling stuck with additional needs** **Experiencing discomfort over the known** **Having clear advice pathways for staff**		

Experiencing conflict between self-perceived and actual capacity to deal with certain situations **Differing staff confidence in dealing with SEMH** **Experiencing difficulties meeting higher needs** **Finding it hard to relate to certain needs** **Being driven my personal attitude** **Drawing upon personal experience**		
Meeting curriculum demands **Meeting societal demands** **Recognising societal influence** **Being hindered by curriculum demands** **Recognising constraints** **Being hindered by funding** **Increasing available time through funding** **Being hindered by time** **Having a moral duty to meet statutory expectations** **Having a legal duty** **Respecting legal duty** **Increasing need to address SEMH** **Feeling pressured by time** **Talking a key LSA role/benefit** **Being enabled as a TA through fewer demands and pressures** **Enabling pupil talk through time as a TA/LSA** **Having more responsibilities as a teacher** **Failing to have capacity/time as a TA/LSA** **Being better equipped as a TA/LSA to give time** **Being limited by demands (as a teacher)** **Assigning support staff in a considered way**	Facing external challenge; being hindered by time; respecting legal duty; picking up the pieces; respecting legal duty; meeting curriculum demands; adapting to societal change Experiencing emotional turmoil; experiencing challenge between expectation and reality; conforming to role norms; attributing responsibility to all Striving to find a balance Adapting to change and challenge (having designated SEMH roles; embedding SEMH creatively; working as a team) Distinguishing the role of support staff	Striving to manage external challenge and identities as educators

Being restricted by demands as a teacher **Acknowledging difference in staff roles** **Attributing staff differences to academic demands Losing touch with children and parents** **Identifying societal shifts in understanding of SEMH** **Managing societal pressures** **Facing new challenges** **Recognising greater exposure of SEMH on children** **Recognising increasing awareness in children** **Needing to meet demands and prove self** **'Picking up the pieces' – compensating for external agency limitations** **Having increasing responsibility** **Being hindered by personal attitude** **Hindering talk through a negative attitude** **Filtering own attitude to children** **Balancing learning and SEMH** **Needing a balanced focus on SEMH to promote positive outcomes** **Finding balance between SEMH and curriculum demands** **Striving to marry SEMH and curriculum demands** **Needing to minimise disruption to learning** **Boundarying time to talk** **Wanting to develop the whole child**		

Putting SEMH first **Experiencing emotional turmoil** **Being ultimately driven my moral duty** **Prioritising emotional needs** **Needing to meet SEMH first** **Having a moral duty/responsibility** **Wanting to develop the whole child** **Shifting academic focus** **Managing hindrances to prioritise SEMH** **Prioritising emotional needs** **Striving to marry to two** **Managing competing demands through structures** **Missing preventative opportunities through increased demand** **Changing role expectations** **Evolving role to changing times** **Adapting creatively in the face of demands** **Adapting practice to ongoing change** **Adapting planning and strategy to meet demands** **Adapting to prioritise SEMH** **Managing competing demands** **Meeting curriculum expectations through deliberate teaching** **Responding to increasing social pressures** **Adapting to societal change** **Experiencing role changes over time** **Changing role/role expectations** **Changing/evolving role of LSA**		

Adapting roles to societal change **Teaching SEMH creatively** **Embedding SEMH creatively** **Embedding SEMH holistically** **Embedding SEMH unconsciously** **Embedding learning creatively** **Adapting creatively in the face of demands** **Embedding and teaching SEMH discretely** **Managing pressures through planning** **Managing time through planning** **Increasing staffing** **Having/creating bespoke roles** **Improving provision through bespoke roles** **Needing designated roles to enable talk** **Having designated SEMH teams/support** **Relying on bespoke roles for emotional support** **Needing designated roles to reduce teacher demand** **Managing time through different roles** **Having differing staff roles** **Having differing staff responsibilities** **Distinguishing roles differences** **Identifying variations in staff roles** **Roles influenced by demands** **Distinguishing TA/LSA role** **Being enabled by time as a TA/LSA** **Enabling pupil talk through designated roles**		

Having a duty to make time **Conforming to role norms** **Experiencing difference between role expectation and reality** **Working beyond role expectations as a teacher** **Sharing responsibility** **Managing situations together** **Working as a team** **Attributing all staff as having a role** **Attributing whole-staff responsibility** **Having equal SEMH roles between staff** **Relying on team working** **SEMH as everyone's role** **Planning collaboratively** **Managing time collaboratively** **Managing time collaboratively** **Working together to move forward** **Working collaboratively and collectively**		
Disseminating information between staff **Facilitating awareness through collaborative communication** **Promoting collectiveness through dialogue** **Generating and conveying a communicative culture** **Promoting staff value through cyclical communication** **Managing staff SEMH through communication** **Valuing knowledge sharing by all**	Instilling shared understanding through open communication; talking openly Being attuned to individual children; Having a holistic view of children; Facilitating change through communication Breaking down barriers with parents	Constructing knowledge and facilitating change through open communication.

Creating a communicative culture **Valuing support staff as experts** **Using longstanding knowledge** **Sharing ideas/experience to develop provision** **Talking openly about SEMH** **Communicating openly between staff** **Facilitating change through talk** **Judging effectiveness of communication through change** **Supporting through communication networks** **Having clear communication systems between staff** **Enabling organisational efficiency through clear structures** **Passing on information between staff** **Ensuring sharing of information to staff** **Ensuring all staff are informed** **Communicating through clear structures and systems** **Having an open door** **Being available** **Instilling shared understanding and awareness through communication** **Raising staff awareness of needs through dissemination of information** **Placing importance on communication and systems** **Facilitating staff awareness through written communication**	Empowering child voice Utilising shared language Promoting communication through organisational structures and systems	

Ensuring needs are met through clear structures and systems of communication **Managing SEMH through clear communication systems** **Communicating with external agencies and colleagues to develop knowledge of children** **Working with external professionals to gain a holistic view** **Building a big picture through fluid communication** **Knowing children's back stories** **Acknowledging parental influence** **Recognise influence of home and upbringing** **Knowing what lies beneath** **Needing time to know children** **Using longstanding knowledge** **Being attuned to individual children** **Having a holistic view** **Knowing backgrounds** **Using knowledge to inform practice** **Adapting practice** **Acting on children's views to meet needs** **Tailoring teaching to meet needs** **Responding to concerns in a graduated way** **Promoting growth through talk; promoting peer support** **Being aware of language use**		

Utilising shared language **Avoiding negative constructs** **Using language carefully** **Tailoring communication to different people** **Creating links with parents** **Liaising with parents** **Breaking down barriers with parents** **Listening to parents** **Empowering parents through sharing practice** **Collaborating with parents** **Giving time to talk and listen (to pupils)** **Creating a safe environment to talk** **Empowering child voice** **Listening actively to children** **Providing safety through listening and talking** **Enabling talk through time – as a TA** **Enabling pupil communication** **Enabling children to express themselves** **Talking as key in supporting** **Supporting SEMH through talk** **Being sought by children to talk** **Providing enough time** **Offering children advice** **Talking as preventative** **Establishing staff availability and approachability**		

Having an all-encompassing ethos **Instilling whole-school ethos** **Having a shared, organisational ethos** **Making values explicit** **Being on the same page** **'Singing from the same song sheet'** **Creating and embedding a positive environment** **Avoiding negative constructs** **Having a shared agenda** **Promoting/having shared understanding** **Embedding values wilfully** **Sharing an organisational ethos** **Having a shared vision** **Instilling a shared ethos** **Making values explicit** **Having an shared culture** **Having an engrained culture** **Investing in a shared culture** **Creating a positive culture** **Having an effective leader** **Facilitating from the top** **Having an inspiring leader** **Having a supportive leader** **Having a personal ethos** **Drawing upon personal experience** **Being underpinned by personal experience** **Drawing upon personal beliefs** **Having a positive attitude**	Sharing an all-encompassing ethos; 'Singing from the same song sheet' Investing in a shared culture **Sharing guiding values, beliefs and aims -** Laying the foundations; Working preventatively; Preparing children for the future; Being inclusive; Promoting resilience; Empowering children; changing children's mind-set; providing safety; providing stability Drawing upon personal experience, values and beliefs Having an effective, inspiring and supportive leader	Investing in shared, all-encompassing ethos, culture and values

Relating personally to SEMH **Facilitating talk through positive attitude** **Promoting self-esteem** **Working preventively** **Being preventative rather than diagnostic** **Trying alternatives** **Equipping children with strategies** **Equipping children with self-help skills** **Helping children to help themselves** **Changing children's mind-sets** **Empowering children** **Enabling children to express themselves** **Promoting positive outcomes** **Laying the foundations** **Laying foundations through resilience** **Promoting resilience** **Going on a journey with children** **Equipping children with strategies** **Preparing children for the future** **Changing children's perceptions of feeling creatively** **Preparing for adulthood** **Preparing mentally healthy adults** **Developing emotional independence** **Providing a nurturing environment** **Providing a safe place** **Providing stability** **Providing a supportive climate** **Having whole-school belonging** **Embedding trust**		

Promoting equality **Promoting belonging** **Fostering belonging** **Nurturing the whole child** **Putting SEMH first** **Identifying SEMH as all encompassing** **Perceiving all areas as interconnected** **Treating pupils are your own** **Having an acute understanding of SEMH has a reason**		
Caring genuinely **Providing a genuinely caring environment** **Celebrating children** **Treating children as individuals** **Recognising and accepting children as individuals** **Being first but fair** **Being dependable** **Promoting inclusion through tailoring resources** **Preaching to the majority** **Proactively ensuring provision to meet needs** **Tailoring provision to promote inclusion** **Tailoring teaching to all children's needs** **Tailoring provision to need** **Graduating approach** **Catering to all through adapted approaches**	Being firm but fair; preaching to the majority; caring genuinely; celebrating pupils; being dependable; graduating response; treating children as individuals Doing things as second nature	Promoting positive outcomes through implicit and explicit behaviours

Addressing SEMH through various strategies **Doing things as second nature** **Unconsciously embedding SEMH**		
Recognising and managing staff SEMH **Minimising impact of staff SEMH on pupils** **Being hindered by own SEMH** **Looking out for each other** **Nurturing own SEMH through feeling supported** **Promoting children's SEMH through own SEMH** **Projecting own feeling/attitude onto pupils** **Managing staff SEMH** **Empowering staff through collaborative and considered planning** **Feeling empowered by SLT** **Having a supportive leader** **Facilitating staff morale through empowerment** **Managing pressures through planning** **Managing impact of teacher pressure on children** **Managing pressures through planning** **Having support processes for staff** **Being self-aware of own SEMH** **Putting on a brave face** **Needing to keep it together** **Acknowledging and managing staff pressures** **Managing staff SEMH through communication** **Providing a supportive climate** **Remaining aware of staff pressures**	Feeling empowered by senior leadership Being aware of self and others Minimising impact on pupils Looking out for each other	Nurturing and managing staff SEMH

Appendix 15. Ethics committee acceptance letter

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

School of Psychology
The University of Nottingham
University Park
Nottingham
NG7 2RD

T: +44 (0)115 8467403 or (0)115 9514344

Ref: S1084R

Friday 14th September 2018

Dear Oliva and Sarah,

Ethics Committee Review

Thank you for submitting an account of your proposed research **'Primary school staff's understanding of the school role in meeting the social emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs of all children and young people: A grounded theory exploration'.**

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

Appendix 16. Consent form

School of Psychology

Consent Form



Title of Project:

Primary school staffs understanding of the school role in meeting the social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs of all children and young people: A grounded theory exploration.

Ethics Approval Number: S1084R

Researcher(s): Olivia Corradi (olivia.corradi@nottingham.ac.uk)

Supervisor(s): Dr Sarah Atkinson (lpasa3@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk)

The participant should answer these questions independently:

- Have you read and understood the Information Sheet? YES/NO
- Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about the study? YES/NO
- Have all your questions been answered satisfactorily? YES/NO
- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study? (at any time and without giving a reason) YES/NO
- I give permission for my data from this study to be shared with other researchers provided that my anonymity is completely protected. YES/NO
- I give permission for audio recording to be used during interviews and for these to be used within the study. YES/NO
- Do you agree to take part in the study? YES/NO

[*For online studies:*

By clicking the button above, I indicate that the 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.]

"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:

If you have any complaints about the study, please contact:
Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee)
stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 17. Debrief form

School of Psychology

Debrief Form

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Ethics Approval Number: S1084R

Researcher(s): Olivia Corradi (olivia.corradi@nottingham.ac.uk)

Supervisor(s): Dr Sarah Atkinson (lpasa3@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk)

Study Title: ***Primary school staffs understanding of the school role in meeting the social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs of all children and young people: A grounded theory exploration.***

The study you have just taken part in is concerned with exploring how staff within primary school organisations understand and perceive pupil social, emotional and mental health; in relation to both their own role and the role of the whole-school organisation. The rationale for completing this study is as follows:

There is growing awareness about the importance of children and young people's social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) (Webster, 2017). Statistics indicate 10% of children aged between 5-15 years have significant mental health issues (Public Health England, 2016). There is now focus on SEMH within the UK government (DfE, 2015).

Documentation (Children and Families Act, 2014; DfE; 2015) emphasises that all educational contexts have a responsibility to support children and young people's SEMH.

Some research studies have already explored school staff's perceptions, understanding and attitudes of pupil SEMH. However, given the growing national and local focus on pupil SEMH, this study aims to add to current literature. It is hoped findings from this study will help inform the practice of school professionals, EPs and the Local Authority.

The data collected from the interviews will be analysed by myself. Once the research has been completed, you will be invited to attend a meeting at your school where I will provide overall, non-staff or school specific findings from the study. Findings from the study will also be shared with the Educational Psychology Service to help inform the work of EPs.

You are reminded that you have the right to withdraw your participation and data from the study up until the time it has been processed by myself, the researcher. If you would like to do this, then please contact me on or before

(estimated date of data being processed). If you do not contact me, then it will be assumed that you are happy for your data to be used in the study.

I will provide my contact details for any questions or further support. The (Head teacher/alternative member of staff deemed appropriate by the Head Teacher) within your school can also be contacted for support. Should you wish to seek further anonymous and confidential support outside of the research and the school then you can contact the Samaritans on 116 123.

Please feel free to contact the researcher if you have any questions you may have following the study on:
olivia.corradi@nottingham.ac.uk

Any enquiries for my university supervisor can be directed to:
Dr Sarah Atkinson
Email: lpasa3@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

Thank you for your participation in the research. It is greatly appreciated.

References

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Public Health England. (2016). The mental health of children and young people in England. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575632/Mental_health_of_children_in_England.pdf

Webster, C. (2017, December 1). A focus on children's emotional wellbeing for a positive future legacy. Huffington Post. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/children-mental-health_uk_5a1d4a2fe4b07bcab2c699dc

If you have any complaints about the study, please contact:
Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee)
stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk