

***Exploring the Process of  
Change: Developing the Use of  
Nurturing Approaches in a  
Secondary School for Young  
People with Social, Emotional  
and Mental Health Needs.***

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*For Nan x*

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# ***Abstract***

Nurture Groups (NGs), an intervention designed for use with primary aged children with 'Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties' (SEMHD), has been adapted for use in secondary schools and schools for children with special educational needs. Existing research suggests that the NG approach can be an effective intervention with secondary aged pupils however very little research has studied the use of the approach in specialist settings.

This research explored the use of nurturing approaches and the establishment of a nurture unit in a specialist secondary school for young people with SEMHD. The explorative study used a grounded theory approach to data collection and analysis, aiming to explore the process of change which was occurring within the school and the impact of this change on the young people, staff group and the wider school context.

Findings suggest that the establishment of a year seven Nurture Group alongside whole school nurturing approaches was having a positive impact. It seemed that the young people within the group were building trusting relationships with their teachers and feeling safe within the smaller setting. The whole school was thought to have a calmer atmosphere, attributed largely to the use of "wondering aloud" interactional techniques. Nonetheless, the approach had not impacted all pupils equally, needing to be balanced with other approaches and adapted to meet individual needs as well as the adolescent population.

The implementation of the NG approaches was facilitated by a number of factors including a motivated management team, shared ownership of the project, availability of resources, support from outside professionals, whole school training and an on-going process of reflection and adaptation. Furthermore, there was a need for sufficient time for teachers to prepare, plan and reflect. Limitations to this study and implications for practice are discussed.

*N.B: In order to ensure anonymity of those involved in this study a pseudo name has been used when referring to the school in which the research took place (Woodlands Academy).*

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## **Acronyms**

The following acronyms are used within this thesis:

<b>Term</b>	<b>Acronym</b>
<b>Nurture Group</b>	NG
<b>Young Person</b>	YP
<b>Educational Psychologist</b>	EP
<b>Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulty</b>	SEMHD
<b>Boxall Profile</b>	BP
<b>Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire</b>	SDQ

# ***Chapter 1: Introduction***

## ***1.1 Overview of Chapter***

This chapter will provide a contextual and theoretical background to the research that has been undertaken. It will begin by introducing what is meant by 'Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties' (SEMHD) a concept central to and mentioned throughout this thesis. The social and political context relevant to the project will then be discussed, providing a rationale for this research. Subsequently, the Nurture Group (NG) approach (applied in the project explored in this research) will be outlined, along with the theoretical ideas linked to the approach.

## ***1.2 Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties***

### ***1.2.1 What are Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties?***

This thesis explores a project in a specialist academy which works with children whose statement of special educational needs or Education Health and Care Plan describes their primary need as being 'Social, Emotional and Mental Health'. Before describing the project it is important to examine what falls within the parameters of this construct and defines the group of children being researched.

It is evident from reviewing the literature that there does not appear to be a universally accepted and exhaustive definition as to what is included in this group of difficulties and young people's needs range in severity of difficulties including

challenging behaviour and severe mental illness (Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties Association (SEBDA) 2006; Visser, 2003, 2012). Furthermore, Visser (2012) writes of his, and his colleagues, struggle to define this category of need within the context of changing terminology and diagnostic criteria (see Appendix 1 for history of SEMHD).

Moreover, the threshold for what can be considered as SEMHD is perhaps relative to the person whom is experiencing them. As Visser (2003) highlights, what is felt to be tolerable, challenging behaviour to one person may be intolerable, disturbing behaviour to another- the latter being labelled as having SEMHD whilst the former is perhaps described as mischievous (Visser, 2003). Kauffman (2001) goes further, noting the socially and culturally determined nature of 'social, emotional and behavioural disorders'. By defining these difficulties as a deviation from the norm, he argues that the definition is intrinsically linked to what is believed to be normal. He wrote:

*"One reason it is so difficult to arrive at a reliable definition is that an emotional or behavioural disorder is not a thing that exists outside a social context but a label assigned according to cultural rules...A science of behaviour exists, but the objective methods of natural science may play a secondary role in designating someone as deviant. An emotional or behavioural disorder is whatever a culture's chosen authority figures designate as intolerable. Typically, it is that which is perceived to threaten the stability, security, or values of that society. Defining an emotional or behavioural disorder is unavoidably subjective, at least in part."* (Kauffman, 2001, p22-23)

In the recently published Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (Department for Education (DfE), 2014), the pre-existing category 'Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties' was relabelled as 'Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties' (SEMHD). The addition of the term 'mental health', and the omission of the term 'behavioural difficulty', perhaps reflects a growing recognition that for many children their challenging behaviour is symptomatic of an underlying emotional or mental health difficulty and it is this that needs addressing. The current Special Educational Need Code of Practice defines Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties as:

*“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, 2014, p98)*

This definition reflects the magnitude of difficulties that are encompassed under the term SEMHD, ranging from internalising/withdrawn presentations to externalising/aggressive behaviour. A publication by SEBDA (2006) further notes that difficulties may manifest on four levels: the personal level (low self-esteem or anxiety) the verbal level (verbal aggression or mutism); the non-verbal



level (defiance or avoidance); or at the work skills level (difficulty concentrating or staying on task).

This paper adopts the definition from the latest SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 2014) as this is currently being used in the UK Education system and therefore the school being researched. However, the researcher is aware that this definition is bound by current social, political and cultural beliefs.

### ***1.2.2 The Current Social and Political Context***

The management of and support offered to children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties continues to be a significant difficulty faced by many schools. In an international review of interventions aimed at supporting social and emotional development, Cooper and Jacobs (2011) comment that:

*“No other educational problem is associated with such frustration, fear, anger, guilt and blame.” (p32)*

In 2001, it was estimated that in England and Wales up to 20% of school aged children were experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties which significantly impaired their social and educational development (Cooper, 2001) and in 2004, ten percent of five to 16 year olds had received a diagnosis of psychological disorder (Green, McGinnity, Meltzer, Ford and Goodman, 2005). There is growing evidence which links social and emotional difficulties in childhood to anti-social behaviour and mental health problems in adulthood (Seth-Smith, Levi, Pratt, Fonagy and Jaffey, 2010) with 50% of adults who are diagnosed as having mental health difficulties having experienced emotional difficulties as a child (Kim-Cohen, Caspi and Moffitt, 2003). Research also shows

that children with emotional difficulties are more likely than peers to have academic difficulties and be less engaged throughout their schooling (DfE, 2012)

Economic studies, looking at the financial implications of failing to support this group of young people, suggests that the cost of public services used by individuals whom experienced ‘troubled behaviour’ as children was ten times that of those who did not experience such difficulties (Cheney, Schlösser, Nash and Glover, 2014). This highlights the need to invest in early intervention to support these children and prevent future mental health difficulties.

Government legislation has emphasised the role of schools in promoting children’s emotional wellbeing and mental health, and the need to support children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (now called SEMHD) in order to prevent the negative prognosis outlined above (The Children’s Act, DfES, 2004; Every Child Matters, DfES, 2003).

As Gardner and Thomas (2011) noted, SEMHD is most common in adolescence, perhaps due to the particular challenges faced during this developmental stage. According to government statistics (Department for Education, 2013) ‘Behaviour, Emotional & Social Difficulties’ was the third most prevalent primary need amongst children on the SEN register in state funded primary schools but the *most frequent* primary need amongst this population in state funded secondary schools (27.7% of children on the SEN register). Local authority data shows that this pattern exists in the authority in which the research is being conducted (data published in online statistics). Therefore, supporting adolescents with social and emotional development is both a national and local priority.

### ***1.2.3 Interventions used to support children and young people with SEMHD***

In an international review of interventions for social, emotional and behavioural development, Cooper and Jacobs (2011) discussed the evidence for a range of different approaches to supporting children with SEMHD needs. This review included interventions targeted at a number of levels, including whole school approaches, teacher training, small scale provisions, parental support and multi-agency working. The authors classified the interventions discussed into three categories: those which have high empirical support; those which have moderate empirical support; and those which have low empirical support. The results from this study are represented in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1: Hierarchy of Interventions Reviewed by Cooper and Jacobs (2011).

	Teachers' Qualities and Skills	Whole-School approaches	Small Scale provision	Parental Support	Multi-agency working.
<b>High Empirical Support</b>	The Good Behaviour Game	FRIENDS	Career academies		
<b>Moderate Empirical Support</b>	Kemels Student peer support Cognitive behavioural approaches	Success for all School wide positive behavioural support Coping Power	Nurture Groups	Parent management training	Fast Track
<b>Low Empirical Support</b>	Personal Warmth In-Service Training on SEBD Management of the classroom's physical environment Functional Behavioural Analysis Instructional Strategies	Circle Time SEAL Second Step Restorative Practices	Outreach Schools Residential Provision	Incredible years Triple P	Gatehouse

Cooper and Jacobs concluded that interventions using behavioural and cognitive behavioural techniques (FRIENDS, The Good Behaviour Game, Kernels, and Cognitive Behavioural Approaches) were found to have the strongest empirical evidence. However, the authors note that the power of empirical support given to these interventions was influenced predominantly by the generalisability of the findings and remark that readers should be cautious in their interpretation of these results as those interventions classified as having low empirical support are often classified as such due to lack of rigorous research and thus should not necessarily be deemed ineffective. Cooper and Jacobs therefore urged researchers to complete further evaluations of lesser researched but widely used interventions.

A more recent systematic literature review by Cheney, Schlösser, Nash and Glover (2014), focussed on group interventions used within the UK education system. This group of interventions was selected for review as the authors argued that previous international reviews often looked at research completed predominantly in schools operating outside of the UK education system, limiting their applicability within UK schools. The review focused on group interventions as previous research has found group interventions to be an effective use of limited resources and an effective model for use with children as they are responsive to socialisation and benefit from peer-led learning. Furthermore, group interventions are often conducted in a familiar and less threatening context than individual therapy.

Cheney et al's (2014) review identified that the following group interventions were being used within UK schools: Nurture Groups (NGs) (a full or part time

group ran in a mainstream school as an alternative to attending the child's mainstream class); Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) small group work; social skills groups; the FRIENDS cognitive behavioural group; and The Pyramid Club intervention (an after school club aimed at building self-esteem and social skills).

The review found the largest body of literature to be research evaluating the effectiveness of NGs; this literature suggested that significant gains in social and emotional functioning were found after children attended the group, however no conclusive evidence for the long term outcomes of the group existed (research into NGs is discussed more fully in chapter 3).

The authors claim that a "modest" effect was found in research looking at SEAL small groups as although participants' self-report outcome measures showed benefits of attending the groups, these were not always recognised by teachers and parents.

Only one study was found for each of the other interventions looked at: social skills groups, FRIENDS and The Pyramid Club.

A paper researching the FRIENDS group found significant improvements on measures of self-esteem, anxiety, depression and social skills when compared to a control group. Improvements in social skills were however not maintained at a four month follow up.

Although a study into social skills groups found significant improvements on measures of anxiety and anger management, no significant improvement was

found on measures of social competence or self-esteem, the areas targeted by the group.

Finally, an evaluative study of The Pyramid Club after school intervention found significant improvement on overall social and emotional functioning, however only one measure was used and the control group was not matched according to need. It was noted, however, that a benefit of The Pyramid Club and NG interventions is that they do not need to be run by outside professionals and are thus easier for schools to implement than the FRIENDS group and social skills group.

Cheney et al. (2014), again highlighted the need for further research into the use of these interventions to ensure that schools are able to make choices about the interventions which they implement based upon a robust evidence base.

### ***1.3 Nurture Groups***

As mentioned above, one well researched and widely used intervention targeting social and emotional development is the Nurture Group intervention (NG). The effectiveness of this intervention when adapted for use in a specialist secondary school is the focus of the research documented in this thesis (see chapter 2 for details of the project). The origins of this approach, its theoretical underpinnings and research into its effectiveness will therefore be the focus of the final part of this introduction and the literature review in chapter three.

#### ***1.3.1 Brief History and Outline of Nurture Groups***

Boxall and Lucas (2012) describe NGs as:

*“an inclusive, educational, in-school resource...for children whose emotional, social and cognitive learning needs cannot be met in the mainstream classroom.”*

(Boxall and Lucas, 2012, p2)

NGs were developed in inner London in the 1970s by Educational Psychologist (EP) Marjorie Boxall as a response to the overwhelming numbers of children being referred due to social and emotional difficulties affecting their ability to engage in learning. Boxall proposed that these difficulties could be understood as the result of impoverished early nurturing leading to children not being developmentally ready to meet the demands of formal education (Boxall, 2002 in Binnie and Allen, 2008). Boxall and Lucas (2012) state that the aim of a NG is therefore to:

*“create the world of earliest childhood in school, and through this build in the basic and essential learning experiences normally gained in the first three years of life, thus enabling the children to participate fully in the mainstream class”*

(Boxall and Lucas, 2012, p4)

The small class intervention is designed to provide children with nurturing experiences and a trusting attuned relationship with an adult which is thought to be a precursor for early learning (Boxall and Lucas, 2012). The recognition of the importance of early nurture on development was not a new idea; in 1955, when discussing the development of primary aged children The Underwood Report (Underwood, 1955) stated:

*“Whether a child is happy and stable in this period, or unhappy and out of step with society or with his lessons, largely depends on one thing - the adequacy of his early nurture.” (Underwood, 1955, p72)*

A NG classically consists of approximately ten children and is led by a teacher and teaching assistant. The groups are aimed at children whose emotional functioning is at least two or three years below their chronological age. The Boxall Profile questionnaire, (Bennathan, Boxall and Colley, 1998) is used to assess which children will benefit from the group and review their progress once in the group. The NG is usually held in a room within the mainstream school which has been furnished to provide a welcoming and homely environment alongside space for learning. Practice in the NG is underpinned by the six principles of nurture, as shown below in Figure 1.

- ✓ Learning is understood developmentally
- ✓ The classroom offers a safe base
- ✓ The importance of nurture for the development of self esteem
- ✓ Language as a vital means of communication
- ✓ All behaviour is a communication
- ✓ The importance of transitions in the lives of children and young people

Figure 1: NG Principles (Lucas in Boxall and Lucas, 2010)

Children undertake learning tasks differentiated for their developmental level at a slower pace than that of a mainstream classroom and within consistent daily structures (as described in detail by Boxall and Lucas, 2010). The group partakes in reflective carpet sessions, whole group breakfasts, child directed play and adult directed curriculum tasks. Children remain part of their mainstream class, which they attend for one or more sessions a week. Their class teacher



retains responsibility for their progress and the child attends their mainstream class for key parts of the school day, such as registration, assembly and lunchtime. Children usually attend the NG for three or four terms before being fully integrated back into their mainstream class.

The model described above is often referred to as the 'classic' NG model (Hughes and Schlösser, 2014); however there is evidence of groups which deviate from the model being included under the umbrella term of 'Nurture Groups'. Some settings have chosen to run part time groups (e.g. Scott and Lee, 2009, Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes, 2008) and others have adapted the group for use in secondary schools (e.g. Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes, 2008). Boxall and Lucas (2010, p180) endorse the following structures as 'authentic Nurture Groups':

- *A classic NG running for nine sessions a week, allowing one session (half a school day) for liaison, CPD, meeting parents etc.*
- *A part time group run in the mornings with support to the children in the afternoons in their mainstream class*
- *Two half-time groups at different levels (e.g. Key Stage 1 and 2)*
- *Fulltime (0.9) with varying numbers of children attending part time.*

There is also anecdotal evidence that NG's are now used in specialist provisions (as described in this paper) and pupil referral units as well as in mainstream settings (Nurture Group Network, Personal Communication). Despite their growth, very little has been written about the use of NGs in specialist provisions

and, there is currently no guidance as to how the model is transferable to a specialist school setting (see literature review for further detail).

### ***1.3.2 Theoretical Frameworks Underpinning Nurture Groups***

#### ***Attachment Theory***

The school of psychology most widely cited in connection with NGs is psychoanalytic theory, in particular Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969). Bowlby proposed that children's sense of self and emotional and intellectual development is affected by the care given to them in their early relationships with their primary caregivers (Geddes, 2006). He proposed that children benefit from an adult who acts as a 'secure base' to which they can consistently return to for comfort and safety when feeling anxious. Bowlby believed that children's experiences of this relationship are internalised into an 'internal working model', a representation of how others view them. This internal working model is used as a template to predict how others will relate to them and influences how they respond to others. Bowlby believed that an experience of a predictable, available and responsive primary caregiver in the very early stages of infancy was the basis for positive emotional well-being in later childhood and adult life (Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes, 2008). This theory mirrors Boxall's assertion that impoverished early nurturing effects children's social and emotional functioning in school.

As noted by Music (2011) a child's internal working model is not thought to be static but "*can be challenged by new kinds of experiences*" (Music, 2011 p235).

This is reflected in the emphasis in NGs of providing a restorative experience of an attachment relationship through consistency and attunement.

Recent advances in neuroscience support the notion that an infant's relationship with his/her primary caregiver has a significant effect upon emotional development (Gerhardt, 2004). Research has shown that as a child develops, the size and structure of the child's brain, their stress response, and their ability to add meaning to emotional experiences are shaped by the experiences the child has with his/her carers (Gerhardt, 2004; Music 2011). Nonetheless, it appears that the effects of early deprivation on the brain can be recoverable if the child is placed in the right environment (Boxall and Lucas, 2010), supporting the potential benefits of the restorative function of NGs.

### ***Further Psychoanalytic Theories***

Bailey (2000) additionally cites the theories of 'containment' (Bion, 1962) and 'the internal word' (Klein, 1959) as being relevant to the functioning of a NG as well as the importance the psychoanalytic perspective places upon play.

Psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion claimed that the capacity and motivation for learning is developed through early experiences of a 'containing' mother (Bion, 1962). Bion described how a baby conveys their early anxieties and distress to their mother, often through crying. A 'containing' mother is able to receive these communications, think about their meaning, bear the anxiety attached to them, and respond in a way that shows her understanding. The baby then receives back his anxieties in a processed, less distressing form and his or her anxiety is decreased by the feeling of their fears being transformed into "*thinkable thoughts*" (Geddes, 2008, p39). If the infant consistently experiences a 'thinking

mother' he will later be able to draw upon these memories and use thought to overcome anxieties for himself (Youlle, 2006). Therefore, when a child faces the anxiety of 'not-knowing' associated with learning, or the frustration linked to getting things wrong, he is able to bear this, think about it, and persist in the learning task. This concept is perhaps reflected in the first of the Nurture Principles 'learning is understood developmentally' as it is believed that a certain level of emotional development is required prior to a child being ready for classroom learning.

The concept of the internal world, as described by Klein (1959), highlights the importance of relationships and past experience in emotional development and postulates that difficulties arise if there is a disturbance in these relationships. Past relationships are thought to be internalised and developed into a psychic template (known as the internal world) from which we interpret present social situations, thus effecting our emotions and behaviour (a process known as transference) (Klein, 1959). The understanding that we communicate our internal worlds unconsciously through our present behaviour can be seen as underpinning the fifth nurture principle 'all behaviour is communication' (Bailey, 2010).

### ***Social Learning Theory***

Social learning theory, introduced by Vygotsky (1978), also supports the model of learning through relationships used within NGs. Vygotsky identified the importance of the social context in which learning occurs and the importance of these social interactions within the learning environment. He highlighted that

social and cognitive needs develop together, mirroring the emphasis given to social development and the teacher-pupil relationship in the NG model.

Bruner (1987), cited in Cooper and Whitebread's (2007) research into NGs, proposed that children are able to reach their potential when learning is optimised by mediation from an expert peer. The use of modelling of appropriate behaviours and interaction by adults in the NG could thus be seen as scaffolding their learning about pro-social behaviour.

### ***Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs***

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1954) has also been linked to NG practice (Gardner and Thomas, 2011; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007). Maslow proposed that children's self-esteem and higher order functions (such as problem solving skills and creativity both needed to succeed in formal education) can only be developed and applied once their basic physiological, safety and belonging needs have been met and esteem is built (see Figure 2). NGs aim to provide an environment where a child's physiological and safety needs are met thus enabling them to develop a sense of belonging and self-esteem and eventually higher order learning skills. This theory is thus reflected in the third of the Nurture Principles "The importance of nurture for the development of self-esteem".

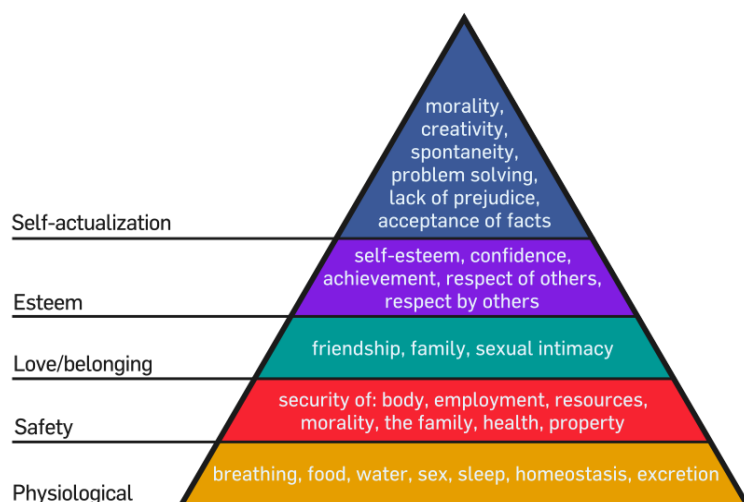


Figure 2: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1954)

It therefore seems that the NG Principles are congruent with a number of psychological theories.

## 1.4 Chapter Summary

The project being researched in this paper is located within a specialist provision for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties (SEMHD). There does not appear to be a definitive definition as to what is meant by the term SEMHD and needs range in severity, (e.g. from challenging behaviour to severe mental illness) and may present themselves in a variety of ways, including both externalising and internalising behaviours.

SEMHD is the most frequent primary need amongst children with special educational needs in state funded secondary schools and has been shown to be linked to mental health difficulties in adulthood. It is therefore argued that evidenced and effective interventions to support this group of young people are required.

One intervention that is currently being used to support children with SEMHD is the Nurture Group intervention. This school based intervention draws upon theories of developmental psychology, in particular attachment theory, and hopes to offer opportunities to develop positive relationships and skills to be able to manage the emotional demands of the classroom. Although originally designed for use in mainstream primary schools, this approach is now being adapted and used in secondary schools and specialist settings (as is the case in the project being researched in this paper).

# ***Chapter 2: The Project***

## ***2.1 Overview of Chapter***

This chapter describes the 'nurturing approaches' project which is explored through this research. It will provide an introduction to the specialist academy in which the project has been taking place, a history of the project and a description of the project as it existed when researched. Finally, details will be given of the training delivered by the Educational Psychology Service which supported the development of the nurturing approaches project.

## ***2.2 Introduction to Woodlands Academy***

Woodlands Academy is a secondary provision for 60 boys who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan which recognises that they have Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs requiring additional support. Places in the school are funded by the Local Education Authority and allocated through a specialist panel attended by a range of education and health professionals. As well as education placements, the school also has a residential provision which cares for a number of their pupils.

## ***2.3. Outline of the Nurture Project***

### ***2.3.1 History of the Project***

The nurture approaches project at Woodlands Academy began in the autumn term of 2013 (although preliminary discussions had occurred before this point).



A teacher was appointed to oversee the running of the project and a day per week of her time was designated to its development.

It was initially envisaged that the NG would cater for those pupils whom showed the highest level of need as assessed by the Boxall Profile. This was intended to be a part-time group attended by pupils from all school years. It was planned that the group would begin in February 2014 after two full days of training delivered by the area's specialist EPs in social and emotional wellbeing.

The first day's training was completed by all school staff in December 2013. Unfortunately, the second day had to be postponed until April 2014 delaying the start of the group. The project lead reported that this delay was primarily due to unforeseen staffing changes and resignations which caused stabilisation of staffing to become a priority for the school prior to beginning the project.

Towards the end of the spring term, the project lead held further planning meetings with the specialist EPs to design a further full days training for all staff. Although initially intended to be a training session for members of staff directly involved in the group, the school felt that it was important to continue to embed the principles at a whole school level prior to beginning the NG and therefore the whole school team were invited to the training.

During this period of planning, the project lead was consulted to by the school's link EP to support her to develop her plans and help shape the evolving project.

During the summer term of 2014, the school's senior management team decided that rather than a part-time NG which included children from all year groups it would be more beneficial to run a full-time NG for all year seven pupils in order to

support their transition into the school. This year seven NG would be complimented by a whole school nurturing approach.

In the latter part of the summer term, a pilot nurture provision was set up to cater for four year six pupils who had recently been referred to the school. A supervision space was created with the school's EP for those staff involved in the pilot nurture project.

During the summer break a purpose designed unit was built for the year seven NG. This unit has a separate entrance and contains three classrooms and an additional shared space for cooking, social activities and meal times. Three teachers and a teaching assistant were assigned to the project.

In September 2014 a third full days training was completed. This included an introduction to the approaches for new staff and a reflective space for those who had already attended the first two days training. In addition to this, there was a whole school session on the importance of language and the use of 'wondering aloud' techniques (Bomber, 2007) when communicating with young people.

The Nurture Unit began running when the children returned later that week (September 2014).

### ***2.3.2 The Current Project***

At the time the research was completed, there were seven boys, age 11-12, attending the Nurture Unit, supported by three teachers and a teaching assistant.

This year seven group was divided into two classes, each with their own classroom. The boys attended lessons in their classrooms using a topic based curriculum which was taught by one of the three members of staff in the unit. The

classrooms were designed to have a large communal table in the middle and individual tables around the edge of the room. Alcove spaces attached to each classroom provide the children with an opportunity to partake in lessons whilst physically separate from the rest of the group. In addition to curriculum work, the pupils had the opportunity to attend weekly trips out with the group.

The whole group ate lunch together with their teachers in the unit and had a separate break time from the rest of the school (although they were later given the option of joining the main school for breaks). The NG teachers were supported by two senior teachers who assisted them in difficult situations and helped them to reflect on their work in the unit. The nurture team also had a monthly supervision group with an EP.

Throughout the rest of the school, teachers were encouraged to use a 'nurturing approach' to their work, based upon the six nurture principles. In particular, they were encouraged to use the daily debrief sessions to consider the communications underlying pupil's behaviour and the possible causes for it. The staff were also encouraged to think about the language they use when speaking to the young people in order to help them to communicate their emotions with teachers and pupils.

The project lead had attended a further two day NG training with the Nurture Group Network which included a day on the use of the Boxall Profile. The school had begun to assess all children on the Boxall Profile and use this to highlight gaps in their emotional development in order to create individualised targets for pupils.

Furthermore, supervision groups for all staff members had recently begun with a CAMHS psychologist and an EP to provide additional reflective spaces.

### ***2.3.3 Outline of Whole School Training***

Three days of whole school training on NGs and Nurture Principles were provided by the Educational Psychology Service. This training was developed after discussions with the project lead designing a bespoke package of training. The trainings were delivered over a ten month period, with trainings in December 2013, April 2014 and September 2014.

The first of these trainings introduced the NG model, the nurture principles and the theory underlying these. The second day of training focused on the use of the Boxall Profile to assess children's emotional development and the application of the nurture principles within the school. The third day included both reflective spaces and further teaching sessions consolidating the nurture principles including a session about the use of wondering aloud strategies when communicating with children.

Due to a number of staff changes which occurred over the ten month training period, a further introductory session was developed and delivered to members of staff. This was taught in parallel to the reflective sessions on day three. This introductory session was co-facilitated by the project lead in order that she would be able to deliver the session to any subsequently employed teachers as part of their induction.

## ***2.5 Chapter Summary***

This chapter has described the nurture approaches project which is explored through this thesis. It has outlined how the project evolved from a part time group accessed by young people of different ages to a full time year seven NG complimented by whole school nurturing approaches. The involvement of the Educational Psychology Service has also been documented, highlighting the varying roles which were undertaken during the project including training, consultation, supervision and research.

# ***Chapter 3: Literature Review***

## ***3.1. Overview of Chapter***

Relevant literature exploring and evaluating the use of the Nurture Group model will be presented in this chapter providing the rationale for completing this research. An initial literature search was conducted prior to beginning the project in order to provide a rationale and gain ethical approval to complete the project. This search was completed again a year later in order to ensure that the most up to date research was reviewed. This literature review therefore includes papers which were read prior to and during data analysis.

The review begins by presenting research into the use of the NG intervention in primary schools as this is the largest body of literature and the initial target population of the intervention. Both early and more recent literature is reviewed, looking at the use of full and part time models. Subsequently, papers looking at the use of NGs in secondary schools will be explored and finally a paper describing the use of the approach in a specialist provision is presented. Each paper is discussed in regards to its contribution to the body of knowledge, its methodological strengths and weaknesses and implications for further research.

## ***3.2 Literature Search Strategy***

The literature search aimed to answer the following questions:

1. **Are Nurture Groups effective in improving social and emotional wellbeing?**
2. **How are Nurture Groups being used in different settings?**

Searches were conducted using the following electronic databases in October 2013 and December 2014: PsychInfo, PEPArchive, PsychARTICLES, MEDLINE, CINAHL, British Education Index.

The search term used in the database searches was Nurture Group\* (as used in Hughes and Schlosser's (2014) systematic review). This was the only search term chosen as the intervention being studied is only referred to by this name. Abstracts of all articles were read and decisions regarding which articles were included were made using the following inclusion criteria:

1. Research article referring to the impact of or implementation of a Nurture Group intervention
2. Young people attending the Nurture Group between the age of 4-18
3. Research conducted in the UK

An initial search found 58 articles. Six articles were excluded immediately by the search engine as they were "known duplicates". A further four articles were removed as duplicates and a further 27 were disregarded as they did not meet the inclusion criteria. 21 articles therefore remained. One further, unpublished, article was found through liaison with the Nurture Group network making the final number of articles discussed 22.

### ***3.3 The Effectiveness of Nurture Groups in Primary Schools***

Although NGs were first introduced in primary schools in the 1960's there has been a recent growth in interest into the effectiveness of the approach. As can be seen in the literature review summary table (Appendix 2), there is an increasing body of literature demonstrating the effectiveness of NGs as an intervention in primary schools (e.g. Binnie and Allen, 2008; Bishop and Swain, 2000; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; Sanders, 2007; Mackay, Reynolds and Kearney, 2010;

Doyle, 2003; Scott and Lee, 2009; Gerrard, 2006, Griffiths, Stenner and Hicks, 2014; O’Conner and Colwell, 2002; Seth-Smith, Levi, Pratt, Fonagy & Jaffey, 2010; Shaver and McClatchey, 2013). Its strong evidential base was recognised by The Department of Education (2012) who endorsed the use of the intervention in their Healthy Schools toolkit (Hughes and Schlösser, 2014).

### ***3.3.1 Early Studies***

In the earliest of these papers, Lyndon (1992) provided a descriptive account of a NG for seven boys in a mainstream primary school. The group ran for a term and a half, after which the children all returned to their mainstream classes and were described as behaving more appropriately and showing more willingness to learn. In a larger study of 308 pupils placed in NGs, Iszatt and Wasilewska (1997) found that 87% of NG children returned to their mainstream classroom within one year and furthermore 83% required no additional provision (these results were also published in an article by Bennathan, 1997). These early studies did not evaluate the significance of outcome data; however they gave an early indication that the approach was effective.

### ***3.3.2 Quantitative Evaluations: Measures***

More recently, researchers have used pre and post measures of social and emotional functioning, measured by Boxall Profile data (BP) and/or Strength and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs), to quantitatively analyse whether a significant improvement was produced by attendance at a NG (see Figure 3 for definition of measures).



### **The Boxall Profile (BP) (Bennathan, Boxall and Colley, 1998)**

The Boxall profile for young people is a monitoring and intervention tool designed for use with children in nurture groups. It is divided into two strands; developmental and diagnostic. The developmental strand looks at the development of characteristics needed to engage in learning such as ability to listen to adults, awareness of others needs and adaptable behaviour in a group. This strand is further divided into two subsections 'Organisation of Experience' and 'Internalisation of Controls'. A low score on these sections indicates difficulties in engagement with learning. The diagnostic strand of the BP assesses social and emotional functioning such as attachment behaviour and self-image. It is divided into three subsections: 'Self-limiting features', 'Undeveloped Behaviour' and 'Unsupported Development'. A high score on this strand indicates difficulties in social and emotional functioning.

### **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ): (Goodman, 1997)**

The SDQ for teachers (SDQ-t) and SDQ for parents (SDQ-p) are 25 item clinical questionnaires. They are used to elicit a score for emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity-inattention, peer problems, and pro-social behaviour.

Figure 3: Details of Boxall Profile and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

### ***3.3.3 Quantitative Evaluations of Full Time Nurture Groups***

Seth-Smith et al. (2010) used the BP and SDQ measures to compare improvement in social and emotional functioning of a sample of 41 children attending classic NGs and a control group who were managed with behavioural strategies within their mainstream class. The experimental and control groups were matched on gender and social and emotional functioning, whilst ethnicity, age and ability were controlled for during analysis. When compared to the control group, NG children made significantly greater improvement in social-emotional functioning after one and a half terms (average time in NG=23 weeks). Analysis showed that post-intervention there were significantly fewer children in the NG

whose difficulties were assessed as being clinically significant (SDQ data) than in the comparison group ( $p < .05$ ). Although both the experimental and control group improved significantly on the 'organisation of experience' and 'internalisation of control' strands of the Boxall Profile, there was a greater effect for the NG children. There was also a significant interaction effect for the 'unsupported development' sub-strand, showing that NG children made significantly greater improvement than controls. This pattern also occurred in the academic achievement variable (measured by teacher ratings). However, no significant improvement or group difference was found on the 'conduct difficulties' and 'emotional difficulties' scales in the SDQ or 'undeveloped behaviour scale' on the BP. The authors hypothesised that this latter finding may be due to the characteristics of the sample, as they had more social problems than conduct difficulties at pre-test and thus this was the primary focus of the group.

In 2003, Gerrard completed a pilot study of NGs in Glasgow (Gerrard, 2006). This looked at SDQ and BP scores from a sample of 17 schools. They found that of the 108 children tested on the Boxall Profile only eight showed no significant improvement and 110 out of 133 children improved their overall SDQ score whilst attending the group. This was compared to no significant changes in 11 pupils in control schools. Although the use of a control group is a strength of this study, a relatively small number of children were included in this group affecting the power of the statistical analysis performed on their results. A further criticism of this study is that the time between the pre and post testing varied from three to 20 months and it is unclear how this affected the results. Furthermore, it may have been beneficial to look at the sub-strands within the outcome measures in addition to the overall scores to further analyse which aspects of social and

emotional development the children the NG was impacting upon. Nonetheless, these studies appear to provide further evidence of the effectiveness of NGs for primary aged children, at least from a teacher's perspective.

Significant improvements in SDQ and BP scores were also found in a large national research study completed by Cooper and Whitebread (2007). This evaluated the progress of 359 students attending 34 NGs. This study used pre and post intervention measures to compare NG children's progress to that of four different control groups (1. Children with SEBD in school with NG but in mainstream classes (n=64), 2. Children without SEBD in school with NG (n=62), 3. Children with SEBD in school with no NG,(n=31) 4. Children without SEBD in a school with no NG (n=27)).

Significant improvements were found in NG children's social and emotional functioning as measured by the SDQ-t total difficulties score ( $p=0.000^{**}$ ) compared to no significant difference for children in the same school classified as having 'no SEBD'. Significant improvement was also found for NG children on all strands of the BP ( $p=0.000^{**}$ ), however this improvement was found to be most significant in the first two terms of attendance, with the exception of the 'organising experiences' strand. The authors hypothesised that this indicates that social and emotional functioning shows greatest improvement in the first two terms, whilst behaviour associated with engagement in learning continues to improve significantly across all four terms. Significant improvement, as measured by the SDQ-t, was also found for children with SEBD who attended schools which had NGs running but did not attend the group itself ( $p=0.001$ ). This change was less than that found for children attending the group, however the between

groups difference was only marginally significant. The study also found that pupils in established NGs showed a significantly greater rate of improvement than those in newly established NGs (running for less than 2 years). Furthermore, those pupils not in the NG made significantly more improvement in a school with established NGs when compared to those in non-NG schools ( $p=0.007^{**}$ ). This indicates that the inclusion of a NG in a school benefits the whole school's ability to support children with SEBD by creating a nurturing environment. The large sample size used in this study is a strength of its design as well as the use of four different control groups allowing for multiple comparisons to be made. However, one limitation of the study is that only a third of the NG pupils whose data was collected at time one and two were available for data collection after four terms in the group.

Furthermore, in each of the above studies (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; Seth-Smith et al. 2010 and Gerrard, 2006) all data collected was from teacher reports and it may be that the teachers are biased to report an improvement in the group they are a part of. The data could therefore have been improved by triangulation of evidence from parents and young people.

It is also worth noting that three of the 34 NG evaluated in Cooper and Whitebread's sample were in secondary schools, however it is not clear whether this had any effect on the results. Research which has looked directly at the use of NGs in secondary provision is discussed further in section 3.4.

Although Seth-Smith et al. (2010), Gerrard (2006) and Cooper and Whitebread (2007)'s research shows that significant improvements in social and emotional functioning is found immediately after attending a NG, they do not provide data

as to the long term effects of the group. One study which did provide follow up data was conducted by O'Connor and Colwell (2002). This study looked at BP data for 68 primary aged children (mean age 5.25 years) attending NGs in six infant or primary schools in a north London borough. After an average attendance of three terms, children showed a significant improvement ( $p < 0.001$ ) on all sub-strands of the BP. Two years after leaving the group, BP data was gathered for 12 of the 68 participants. No significant difference in results from time 2 (end of intervention) and time 3 (follow up) was found on 16 of the 20 sub-strands of the BP, suggesting no relapse had occurred. However, there was deterioration on four sub-strands suggesting the young people were less able to connect up experience; had more of an undeveloped/ insecure sense of self; were more negative towards others; and wanted, grabbed and disregard others more. The authors called this a 'relapse in maladaptive behaviour', however concluded that NG attendance had had an overall positive long-term effect.

### ***3.3.4 Qualitative Studies Exploring Full Time Nurture Groups***

As well as quantitative data being gathered to research the effectiveness of NGs, complimentary qualitative research has also been completed which explores the experiences of those involved in the groups, and parents' and teachers' perceptions about what it is that has or has not been effective (Doyle, 2003; Bishop and Swain, 2000; Griffiths, Stenner and Hicks, 2014).

Doyle (2003) used a case study design and described how the setting up of a NG after a school was placed in special measures by an OFSTED inspection led to the school taking on a nurturing school ethos. This was achieved by making changes to the curriculum, changing the physical classroom environment and

adapting the behaviour management policy as well as whole school routines such as lunchtime and assemblies. The author described the school as becoming “*calm, pleasant and busy*” (Doyle, 2003, p264). Although providing rich detail about the project, this case study is descriptive in nature and is based upon the author’s experiences alone, raising questions about the impact of the changes and the validity of the reports.

Bishop and Swain (2000) conducted semi-structured interviews as part of their qualitative study. They interviewed the head teacher; deputy head teacher; two ex-NG staff; two teachers of other classes; two ex-NG pupils; two parents of pupils who attended the group; and two governors in a school in which a NG had recently been closed due to funding difficulties. The authors found that the staff members and parents interviewed regretted the closure of the group and they described the benefits for the children in the group, the NG teacher and the whole school as it provided respite for pupils. It seems that the group, although promoting the social and emotional wellbeing of its pupils, had a primary function of moving challenging children out of their mainstream class to reduce disruption. The authors questioned whether this approach is exclusion within a mainstream school rather than true inclusion. This provides an interesting perspective upon the group, however, although extracts from interviews are provided to corroborate the authors claims it is not clear whether the interviews were formally analysed.

Griffiths, Stenner and Hicks (2014) used a focus group design and thematic analysis to analyse semi-structured interviews with children who attended a NG. This research used an established data analysis method and also provided the

child's views, which were not reported in the above studies. The researchers found that the children were positive about their experiences in the group. Analysis found that one of the key themes that emerged was the positive relationships in the group, indicating that children valued the relationships they built in the NG, feeling they belonged to a family. Children also spoke about the strategies they had developed for managing their behaviour and the beneficial learning strategies and mediation used in the NG.

As single case studies these studies have limitations in terms of replicability and generalisation.

### ***3.3.5 Part-Time Nurture Groups***

It is important to note that some of the NG students in Cooper and Whitebread (2007), Bishop and Swain (2000) and Griffith, Stenner and Hicks's (2014) studies attended on a part time rather than full time basis. Further research has looked at the effectiveness of part-time groups themselves in order to ascertain whether this model is effective.

Quantitative research has found that the use of NGs as a part time intervention can be effective in improving children's social and emotional functioning and improving the school's ethos (Sanders, 2007; Binnie and Allen, 2008; Scott and Lee, 2009, Shaver and McClatchey, 2013).

Sanders (2007) evaluated a pilot project of three part-time NGs. BP data from one of the groups (n=17) was compared to that of a control group from a comparison school with no NG matched for having similar difficulties (n=9). It was found that NG children made significant gains in both sub-strands of the BP, although more progress was made in the developmental strand ( $p=0.01$ ). When

compared to controls, NG children were found to make significantly greater gains than those in the control group ( $p=0.05$ ). Class teachers from each of the three schools were also given questionnaires about academic progress after two terms of intervention. Teachers reported increased motivation and ability to take risks in learning. There were also less exclusions and improved attendance for those involved in the group, although no data is provided to support this claim. The authors also observed the children in the group and noted an improvement in engagement in learning and more relaxed and balanced interactions within the group. They found that children were better able to follow adult instructions and express themselves in a rational and calm way. A strength of this study was that in addition to teacher's views, pupil's views were also gathered. These children indicated that they liked school more, had better friendships and had a more positive concept of themselves as a learner. However, these interviews were summarised by the author and it is unclear what method, if any, was used to analyse the content of the interviews. Parent interviews indicated improved home-school communication, attributed to the positive rather than negative feedback they received about their children. They also suggested that children were better behaved at home and enjoyed school more. As in Doyle's (2003) and Cooper and Whitebread's (2007) studies of full time NGs, Sanders (2007) found that part time NGs benefited the whole school as well as those in the group, as head-teachers and teachers reported better behaviour management and staff morale.

This pilot study used a small sample size and the questionnaires used were designed specifically for the study and thus are limited in their generalisability. Furthermore, the EP conducting the research was directly involved in the setting



up of the NG and therefore may have been biased in her interpretation. Nonetheless, this research suggests that NGs are able to be effective when attended on a part time as well as full time basis.

Support for the use of part-time NGs was also found by Binnie and Allen (2008). Binnie and Allen, used a within group, repeated measures design to evaluate the impact of six part-time NGs each in a different school (n=36). This provided a larger sample than that used in Sanders' study. The researchers measured the difference between pre and post scores on the BP, SDQ-t, SDQ-p and the Behavioural Indicator of Self-Esteem Scale (BIOS). They found that in all schools there was a significant increase on the developmental strand of the BP and a decrease on the diagnostic strand ( $p=0.001$ ) showing an improvement in social and emotional functioning. This effect was found for all subscales of the BP. All six schools also demonstrated a positive improvement in self-esteem, as measured by the BIOS ( $p=0.0001$ ). Furthermore, a significant improvement in overall SDQ-t score was found ( $p=0.001$ ) for all six schools as well as an improvement in SDQ-p score in five out of the six schools ( $p=0.003$ ). In addition to this, 97% of parents reported that the NG had had a positive impact on their child and 100% reported that it had been effective overall (although it is unclear what the difference is between these two measures). Teachers were also positive about the impact of the group and 94% reported that the NG had had a positive impact on children attending the group and 63% reported a positive impact on whole school ethos. Four out of five head teachers also noted a positive impact upon staff and other children in the school. This further supports the assertion that part-time NGs can be effective at improving self-esteem and

social and emotional functioning affecting both those in the NG and those within the main school.

This study triangulates evidence by providing data from multiple perspectives and using a number of outcome measures. However it too has limitations as no control sample is used, and differences between sub-strands of the outcome measures are not discussed. It is also unclear whether self-esteem mediated the effectiveness of the NG, something which would have been interesting to analyse in order to gain further understanding of the mechanisms underlying the success of the NG approach.

Scott and Lee (2009) also looked at the effectiveness of part time NGs. Unlike Binnie and Allen's (2008) study, Scott and Lee compared NG participants (n=25) to a control group matched for age, gender and behavioural and learning concerns. Pre, mid (4 months) and post (7 months) intervention scores were compared using the BP, as well as measures of literacy, numeracy and motor skills. Consistent with the findings of Sanders' (2007) and Binnie and Allen's (2008) studies, a significant improvement was found on both strands of the BP when compared to controls ( $p=0.012$ ,  $p=0.007$ ). However, although NG children made more academic gains than controls, this difference was not found to be significant. Descriptive statistics show that the greatest gains were made for NG children in the first four months for both social and emotional functioning and academic achievement. Furthermore, in regards to academic achievement the NG children appear to have made more progress than controls in the first four months of the group, followed by the reverse pattern in the subsequent three

months. However, no statistical analysis was performed to analyse this pattern of data, nor were hypotheses presented regarding why this may have occurred.

A further finding of Scott and Lee's (2009) study was that those NG children in years one to three made significant gains in social and emotional functioning but those in years four to seven did not. This indicated that the intervention was only effective for Key Stage 1 children. However, there were only 10 children in the Key Stage 2 group compared to 40 in the Key Stage 1 group. Furthermore, the researchers anecdotally discuss that the older children did make gains but this took a longer time period for them to be observed. This assertion requires further research.

More recently, Shaver and McClatchey (2013) used a mixed method design to assess the effectiveness of NGs in northern Scotland. This research provided further evidence supporting the use of part-time groups. Like Sanders's (2007) study, children's views were gathered as well as teachers' views and pre and post BP data. Significant gains ( $p > 0.05$ ) were found on 15 out of the 20 items tested on the pre and post BP. Staff reported that children had more confidence, were better able to build attachments, responded to adults more positively and were making academic progress. They reported that the culture of the school was also changing, supporting the findings of Sanders (2007) and Binnie and Allen (2008). Children's questionnaire data revealed that the majority of children enjoyed going to the group, felt happy there and had friends there. These findings support those found by Sanders (2007). However, it was noted that in the staff interviews there was also some discussion about the challenges faced in setting up and running the group. These included finding staff willing to be part

of group, getting the whole school on board with the work of the group and logistical arrangements such as space and resources. This exploration of difficulties as well as strengths of the group, alongside the emphasis on the children's views, is a strength of the study. However, it is a small scale study and it is again unclear how the interviews were analysed. Nonetheless, it provides further support to previous studies suggesting that the NG model is effective when adapted for part-time use.

No studies were found which directly compared full and part time groups within mainstream primary schools in order to ascertain which of these models is the most effective and thus the most efficient use of resources. However, a literature review by Cheney, Schlösser, Nash and Glover (2013) analysing all the quantitative research on NGs concluded that the part time NGs were just as effective as full time groups.

### ***3.3.6 Nurture Groups and Academic Achievement***

In full time NGs, academic as well as social functioning has been found to significantly improve after a NG intervention (Mackay, Reynolds and Kearney 2010; Seth-Smith et al. 2010). Mackay, Reynolds and Kearney (2010) discuss the results of a large scale controlled study of NGs in Glasgow published by the same authors in 2009. This research looked at 53 NGs and compared their literacy skills to 32 control primary schools. The research used a well validated literacy assessment and independent assessors to improve validity. They found that pupils in the NGs showed significantly more improvement on literacy tests than those in the control group. Furthermore, the authors claimed that a multiple regression found attachment behaviour to be the main mediating factor in

producing this effect. As was noted above, however, a significant effect on academic achievement was not found in Scott and Lee's (2009) study of a part-time NG, suggesting that full time support may be required for academic as well as social and emotional gains to be made. This requires further research.

### **3.3.7 Systematic Reviews**

Two systematic literature reviews have been completed recently looking at the quantitative research into NGs (Hughes and Schlosser, 2014; Cheney, Schlösser, Nash and Glover, 2013). These both concluded that current research indicates that NGs are an effective intervention. Cheney et al. (2013) concluded that NGs were effective when used both as a full and part-time intervention, stating that:

*“Participants made significant gains on all sub-strands of the Boxall Profile immediately after the intervention, across a number of NG variants. Where scores did not reach significance, a trend toward improvement was noted. Two papers also reported significant enhancement of self-esteem”* (Cheney et al. 2013, p431)

The authors also highlighted that some papers had found that the whole school benefited from a NG being established, however they comment that the direction of this causation is not yet established as it may be that the establishment of the group is fostered by a pre-existing nurturing school ethos. More research into the processes underlying this is suggested.

Furthermore, Hughes and Schlosser (2014) found that all studies that conducted statistical analysis found significant improvements on at least some strands of the BP and thus they concluded that NGs are an effective intervention for

improving emotional wellbeing for children with SEMHD (at least in short term as not many long term studies have been completed). As is discussed above, qualitative research has further supported this claim and indicates that NGs are valued by the teachers, parents and children involved in them.

### ***3.4 The Use of Nurture Groups in Secondary Schools***

The reported success of NGs in primary schools has led secondary schools to begin to use the NG model in their settings. Although less research has been completed in this area, there is a small, yet growing body of literature which suggests that it is an effective intervention in secondary as well as primary schools (Colley, 2009; Garner and Thomas, 2011; Kourmoulaki, 2013; Cooke, Yeoman and Parkes, 2008; Gates, 2010)

As Colley (2009) notes, the majority of early evidence of success of secondary NGs came from OFSTED reports and professional testimonies. Colley reviewed this preliminary evidence and highlighted that secondary NG's range from temporary provisions for children experiencing crisis to structured NGs which children attend for two or more afternoons a week. He provided anecdotal evidence of the success of these provisions, however this report was tentative in nature and Colley suggested that further exploration was needed.

Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes (2008) outlined the use of a part-time NG with year seven pupils in a mainstream secondary school. Children were selected after consultation with their primary school and attended the provision every afternoon. The paper described how whole school training about the nurture principles improved the whole school ethos; however this assertion is based

upon anecdotal evidence. Analysis of Boxall Profile data showed an improvement in social and emotional functioning of the NG participants however no statistical analysis was performed.

More recently three pieces of qualitative research, both using thematic analysis, have explored the use of NGs in secondary provisions (Gardner and Thomas 2011; Kourmoulaki 2012; Gates 2010).

Gardner and Thomas (2011) conducted focus groups with teachers and parents and individual interviews with students to explore perceptions about the impact of three secondary school NGs. The authors concluded that secondary NGs were considered a valuable resource which benefited the students whom attended them. This paper highlighted the differences between secondary and primary NGs as Gardner and Thomas comment that secondary NG teacher-pupil relationships are based upon respect and equality rather than teachers treating children as much younger toddlers, (which they believed occurs in primary NGs). They also highlighted that there seemed to be more emphasis on explicit teaching of social and emotional skills in the secondary group. The authors argue that the success of the NG was due to the provision of developmentally appropriate attachment figures and a secure base for the young people to return to to calm down.

Kourmoulaki (2012) interviewed parents, teachers and pupils to explore the use of a NG in a Scottish secondary school. This research highlighted how the NG prepared students for learning by meeting their basic needs, consistent with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The NG had a clear routine which, like the NG researched by Gardner and Thomas, had an emphasis on social skills activities.

The young people in Kourmoulaki's study expressed how they valued the safety, belonging and calmness of the NG. The study concluded that the NG was an effective intervention which had boosted children's confidence in social situations, their ability to express and regulate emotions as well as their peer relationships.

In a similar study, Gates (2010) sought pupils' views about a NG running for year seven and eight pupils through semi-structured focus groups and questionnaires. Views were gained from pupils currently attending the NG, those that had reintegrated into mainstream and those who had never attended the group. Reintegration Readiness Scores (RRS) were also analysed. The author found that young people's RRS score increased from an average of 45% at intake to an average of 82% when leaving the group, with time spent in the group ranging from eight months to two years. They found that overall, the young people were positive about the NG, particularly enjoying the breakfast, social games and work games. They were also positive about the relaxed conversations and support in making friends and space to talk about their problems. They also reported appreciating the family atmosphere and relaxed teaching style. Furthermore, the researcher noted that one of the prominent themes in the young people's interviews was how much they liked the NG teacher and the strong relationships they had built with her. However, they also highlighted the difficulty of friends leaving the group and the negative perceptions of the group held by teachers and pupils outside of the group. The use of multiple sources of information is a strength of this study, however the author does caution that the results may not be generalisable due to the small sample size and notes that the young people's



point of view may be biased as they appeared to want to show loyalty to the NG teacher.

Although this research indicates the benefits of NGs in secondary schools, further research is needed to justify the growing use of the intervention with this population.

### ***3.5 The Use of Nurture Groups in Specialist Settings***

Only one unpublished study could be found which evaluated a NG in a specialist setting, exploring its use in a non-maintained residential provision for looked after children (Bailey, 2010). The NG participants in the sample were 12 boys of which three were in Key Stage two, eight were in Key Stage three and one was in Key Stage four. Bailey used a mixed methods design using descriptive statistics based on change in BP score and thematic analysis of a number of different qualitative sources (e.g. meetings, documents and transcripts). This first phase of analysis identified four mechanisms triggered by participation in the NG: improved emotional state; improved interpersonal relationships; better internal regulation of behaviour; and a match between curriculum and individual needs. In the second phase of the study Bailey analysed 12 case studies of children attending the group to explore whether these four mechanisms could explain the changes found in the individual cases. He found that these mechanisms were triggered for each of the individuals in the group, although less so for those who attended part time and in a way which was unique to that child.

Taking a psychoanalytic perspective, Bailey claimed that the mechanism 'improving emotional state' was driven by the unconscious processes in the

internal world and an increased sense of trust and security. The 'improved interpersonal relationships' mechanism was seen to have been driven by the modelling of social interactions by teachers within a safe environment; linking psychoanalytic and social learning theory. Social learning theory was also seen as integral to the 'better internal regulation' mechanism as adults mediated the child's ability to reflect and focus on solutions. The 'better match between curriculum and individual need' which was thought to have been driven by targeting work at emotional and cognitive developmentally appropriate levels is thought to have triggered a sense of competency and success.

This research indicates that the NG intervention can be successfully transferred to a specialist provision for Looked After Children. It also provides practitioners with an explanation of the underlying processes which may support the positive impact of the group. Furthermore, as improvements were most significant for those who attended the provision full time rather than part time, the research indicates that for this population of children a full time group is most beneficial.

The generalisability of this study is limited as it researches a group of children with very specific needs. Nonetheless, the authors argue that this extreme situation enables the underlying mechanisms to be illuminated which can then be applied to other less extreme situations. However, a further criticism of the study is that most of the data was provided by one of the nurture teachers and thus only represents one person's views. It would be helpful for further research to explore other perspectives on the group. Finally, the researcher himself identifies at the beginning of the paper that the school are partaking in the

research, in part to provide evidence to promote their provision and thus may be biased in their reporting of the data.

### ***3.6 Summary of Literature Review Findings***

Research evaluating the effectiveness of Nurture Groups has consistently found positive results. Eight studies were found which concluded that significant improvements of social and emotional functioning (as measured by the BP and/or SDQ) were found for children who were part of a NG intervention within their primary school. These significant improvements were found both within-subject (comparing scores pre and post intervention) and between subjects (comparing against control groups). NGs running on both a full time and part time basis were evaluated and both were found to be effective models. No research was found directly comparing the effectiveness of these models within primary schools.

In addition, five of these studies provided additional qualitative feedback and a further four studies were found which evaluated the use of a NG using a purely qualitative design. These studies concluded that the NG were not only seen as being effective in supporting children's social and emotional development but were also valued by school staff, parents and the NG pupils. Furthermore, a number of studies found that having a NG in the school positively affected the whole school ethos.

Four pieces of research were found which had evaluated the effectiveness of NGs in secondary schools. Three of these studies used qualitative or mixed methods designs and reported that being in a NG had boosted student's confidence to manage social situations and was valued by the young people in

the group. One quantitative study also reported improvements in areas of social and emotional functioning (measured by BP) however no statistical analysis was performed.

One piece of research was found which explored the use of a NG in a specialist provision. This found that the NG improved the participating student's emotional state and interpersonal relationships, contributed to better internal regulation of behaviour and provided a better match between individual needs and the curriculum.

### ***3.7 The Dynamic Maturation Model and the use of NG's in secondary provisions***

The above literature search has reported that NGs are now being effectively used in secondary as well as primary schools, seeming to be a beneficial intervention for adolescents as well as younger children.

The Dynamic Maturation Model (DMM) (Crittenden, 2002, 2005, 2006) may provide an explanation as to why an attachment based intervention continues to be effective during adolescence and the necessity for such interventions to be adapted to the developmental needs of this age-group.

The Dynamic Maturation Model builds upon the work of early attachment theorists such as John Bowlby (see section 1.3.2). It provides a model of attachment which goes beyond interpersonal relationships in early infancy and considers how these adapt and change throughout the life span, taking in to account the influence of maturational processes, genetic inheritance and individual experiences (Crittenden, 2006). Crittenden (2002) explains that as we mature and acquire new experiences, our attachment behaviours are likely to

change. She proposes that as our developmental demands and preoccupations change as well as the recipients of attachment relationships (first parent, then friend and later spouse), our relationships and the self-protective strategies which we use within these become increasingly complex. This may go some way as to explaining Scott and Lee's (2009) anecdotal suggestion that KS2 pupils required longer time within the NG than KS1 pupils before social and emotional gains were found, as the DMM would suggest that this was due to the older children's self-protective strategies and relationships being more complex.

It follows therefore that an attachment based intervention needs to be adapted to meet the developmental needs of the targeted group. This is perhaps reflected in the emphasis on social skills reportedly present in the secondary NGs researched above. The benefit of explicit teaching of social problem-solving may be explained by the assertion within the DMM that during adolescence young people need to be able to de-centre (take in information about others without being overly influenced by referencing themselves) and "*differentiate superficial appearances from the usually more complex reality*" (Crittenden, 2002, p37). If the ability to develop these skills is interrupted or not fully developed then the child will require assistance.

Within the DMM, adolescence is viewed as a period of both risk and opportunity. On the one hand, the contextual change from a familial environment to life outside the family may cause challenges for children who have learned "*skewed interpersonal strategies*" (Crittenden, 2002, p33). However, at the same time neurological maturation and contextual changes during adolescence may provide an opportunity to "*consider and change, independently from their parents, the*

*heritage they take from their childhood families”* (Crittenden, 2002, p33).

Therefore it perhaps follows that the use of interventions such as NGs during adolescence both helps young people to adapt to the changing context and developmental demands and takes advantage of a period in which positive change is possible.

### ***3.8 Chapter Summary***

This chapter has reviewed a number of research studies which have provided support for the use of NG interventions in primary schools, when used as a both a full time and part time intervention. Quantitative studies have shown that attending a NG provision improves social and emotional functioning as well as some evidence suggesting that it improves academic attainment. Qualitative research has provided further evidence of the efficacy of NGs as teacher, parents and pupils report positive feedback about the group.

This chapter also reviewed research into the use of NGs in secondary schools, indicating that the intervention is able to be adapted for use in this setting and can be an effective intervention which is valued by the young people who attend it. Only one study could be found researching the use of NGs in a specialist provision. This study found that attendance in the NG improved the young people’s emotional state, interpersonal relationships and internal regulation, improvements which were most significant for those who attended the provision full time rather than part time.

# ***Chapter 4: Methodology***

## ***4.1 Overview of Chapter***

This chapter will describe the methods used to collect and analyse data and the rationale for adopting these methods. The research questions will be presented, followed by a discussion of the researcher's worldview which informed these questions and the subsequent methodology. This will be followed by a description of the research procedure, including a detailed account of the data collection and analysis process. Finally, considerations taken to ensure the research is valid and ethical will be outlined.

## ***4.2 Rationale for the Research***

As described in the introductory chapter, there is a need to find effective interventions to support children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. One intervention which has been found to be effective in mainstream primary and secondary schools is the NG model. There is a substantial amount of literature supporting its efficacy in mainstream settings however there is limited literature researching its applicability to a specialist school population. The first aim of this piece of research was therefore to further explore the use of the model in a specialist provision for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties in order to discover whether the intervention was transferable to this population and whether it showed the same benefits as have been consistently found in mainstream schools.

Research has claimed that approximately 70% of organisational change projects (such as that occurring at Woodlands Academy) do not achieve their intended outcomes (Todnem, 2005). This resistance to change is found to apply to school organisations (Lick, 2000) and researchers have highlighted the importance of further research into the implementation as well as outcome of interventions in schools (Freeman, Wertheim and Trinder, 2014). As described in chapter 2, due to a delay in the start of the project at Woodlands Academy, the NG was still in its early infancy when researched. The timing of the data collection, during the initial stages of whole school change, therefore allowed facilitating and hindering factors to be captured during the change process. The secondary aim of the project was therefore to explore what supported or hindered the process of change and the implementation of the NG approaches.

### ***4.3 Research Questions***

#### ***4.3.1 Overarching Question***

What supports and what hinders the implementation of nurture-based approaches in a school for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties and what impact do these approaches have?

#### ***4.3.2 Further Questions***

1. What are school staff members' perceptions of the impact of the nurture approaches on the children with whom they work?
2. What are school staff members' perceptions of the impact of nurture approaches on the school organisation?



3. What are school staff members' perceptions of the impact of training about nurture approaches on their practice?
4. What do school staff members' believe has supported their implementation of the nurture approaches?
5. What do school staff members' believe has hindered them from implementing the nurture approaches?

#### ***4.4 Purpose of Research***

The purpose of this research is predominantly exploratory because it seeks to find out about the nurture project occurring within a specialist provision and discover the factors which have helped or hindered the process of change and the implementation of a nurturing approach. However, it is hoped that through the process of interviewing a range of staff members in the setting future directions of the project will be influenced by their experiences, thus there is a subordinate emancipatory purpose to the project. Furthermore, through beginning to explore the impact of the nurture approaches project upon the school and the young people within the school there is a further evaluative aspect to the research and findings will be able to contribute to any later evaluations undertaken by the school.

#### ***4.5 Researcher Worldview***

Creswell (2009) describes a researcher's worldview as the:

*“general orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher holds” (Creswell, 2009, p6).*

This worldview includes the researcher's epistemological and ontological stances which guide the methodological approaches which they chose to employ. It is therefore important that researchers consider their view on the nature of reality (ontology) and how valid knowledge is able to be acquired (epistemology) in order that the research methods chosen are congruent with this view.

#### ***4.5.1 Traditional Dualisms***

There has been much debate in social research literature as to whether an objective reality exists which can be directly observed and measured or whether there are multiple subjective realities and no one true observable truth (Willig, 2001).

The first of these arguments, that there is an objective observable reality which is external to and independent of an individual, is argued by those researchers whose worldview is known as positivism or empiricism (Willig, 2001). Researchers taking this worldview typically use quantitative methodologies which aim to test hypotheses and produce generalizable theory (Creswell, 2009).

The second of these arguments is held by researchers who believe in relativism or interpretivism, including social constructionism, hermeneutics and phenomenology. Interpretivism is based on the belief that individuals may hold different subjective versions of reality, and that this reality does not exist independently of the participant or researcher but that they both influences the results which are obtained (McEvoy and Richards, 2006). Researchers holding this worldview typically use qualitative methodology and small scale, intense studies to explore individuals' experiences and perceptions (McEvoy and Richards, 2006).

### **4.5.2 Critical Realism**

The current researcher considers their worldview to be critical realist. This post-positivist view point, derived from the work of Bhaskar (1986 in Robson, 2011) and more recently continued in the work of Pawson and Tilley (1997, 2004) and Scott (2007), is based in a realist ontology which challenges the existence of a clear split between positivism and relativism, arguing this is a false dualism (Fox, Martin and Green, 2007; Scott, 2007). As a critical realist researcher, this researcher believes that an objective external reality exists, however there are limitations as to how much we are able to ascertain this reality as although some aspects are observable and measurable others are not (Scott, 2007). These unobservable aspects of reality are the mechanisms and contexts which underlie the reality which we see.

Critical realists believe that there are three ontological domains: the empirical, the actual and the real (McEvoy and Richards, 2006). The empirical reality is that which can be experienced directly, the actual reality is that which occurs but may not necessarily be experienced, and the real reality is that which contains the underlying mechanisms and structures which generate the actual and empirical reality.

As McEvoy and Richards highlight:

*“For critical realists, the ultimate goal of research is not to identify generalisable laws (positivism) or to identify the lived experience or beliefs of social actors (interpretivism); it is to develop deeper levels of explanation and understanding.”*  
(McEvoy and Richards, 2006, p69)

Bhaskar (1998) argues that the open systems in the social world are much more complex than those in the natural world and thus it is less easy to ascertain causation within them (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson and Norrie, 1998). For this reason, research should focus on both the agents and the social structures, contexts and mechanism in which they exist, and the interaction between these, as focussing on either of these alone does not account for *“the totality of social experience”* (Scott, 2007, p10).

Furthermore, McEvoy and Richards (2006) note that for a critical realist there is acknowledgement that even at the empirical or actual level of reality objective reality can never be fully apprehended by the researcher or research participant as their perceptions are influenced by their theoretical knowledge, own motivations and interests and the social discourses they encounter. Therefore the reality which we ascertain in research is likely to be a fallible one.

#### ***4.5.3 Critical Realism and the Research Questions***

Recently the critical realist worldview has been discussed in terms of its applicability to researching organisations as well as exploring and evaluating interventions. Fox et al. (2007) discussed how the approach takes into consideration the complexities of the organisational system and the context in which it operates, rejecting a one-size-fits all approach. It is therefore considered applicable to the phenomena being studied.

As a critical realist, the researcher is not only interested in whether the use of nurture approaches has made a difference in the school, but also the conditions which have facilitated or hindered change from occurring and the underlying contexts and mechanisms contributing to this.

The research questions aim to answer what has worked and for whom (questions 1, 2, 3) and what the conditions and mechanisms are which have facilitated any change occurring (questions 4 and 5).

This is consistent with Pawson and Tilley's (2004) work on realist evaluation as they argue that a researcher should be looking at why an intervention has or hasn't impacted and the contexts and mechanisms which allowed or hindered this from happening. Research needs to answer "*What works, for whom, to what extent, in what respects, in what contexts, and how?*" (betterevaluations.org).

Pawson and Tilley write:

*"It is only by understanding and probing its apparatus of change that one can evaluate a programme"* (Pawson and Tilley, 2004, p3).

In line with McEvoy and Richards' (2006) arguments discussed above, the researcher acknowledges that different participants will bring with them different perspectives on reality due to their position within the system, their own motivations and their unique experiences. For this reason participants who hold a range of positions within the system were selected to obtain a variety of perspectives in order to allow the best chance of understanding the 'real' reality (as defined in 4.4.2).

## ***4.6 Research Design***

### ***4.6.1 Qualitative Methodology***

Qualitative research aims to gather opinions, experience and descriptive accounts of a phenomena rather than seeking to find ordinal values and patterns

in numerical data. It aims to investigate how or why something occurs, taking into consideration the complexities of human behaviour and social contexts. This is typically achieved through interviews, focus groups, descriptive observations and diaries.

As this piece of research is looking to explore the opinions of the teaching staff as well as their experiences of what has helped or hindered the process of change, a qualitative design is appropriate. The use of complimentary quantitative (numerical) data evaluating the impact of the NG was considered, however the delay to the start of the project meant that the school were still at an early stage in the process of change and therefore pre and post measures were not deemed appropriate. It was considered that qualitative exploration around the process of change and capturing initial perceptions on the use of the nurturing approach would be more appropriate at this stage of the project.

#### ***4.6.2 Grounded Theory***

Grounded Theory is a methodological approach which was first developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the 1960s as a means of conducting inductive rather than deductive scientific research. It is concerned with generating theories rather than testing pre-existing theories and challenges traditional deductive methods of research in which theorising occurs prior to empirical work. It is appropriate for research which is exploratory and has an emphasis on discovery rather than the triangulation of knowledge (Denscombe, 2002). The aim of a piece of grounded theory based research is to create substantive theories (localised theory which is linked to the particular context being studied) which are able to integrate into a higher level or more

generalisable formal theory (Charmaz, 2006). This piece of research hopes to explore factors which support and hinder change in a particular school context, thus it fits well with the ideas upon which grounded theory is based.

The grounded theory method is described as:

*“a systematic, inductive, and comparative approach for conducting inquiry for the purpose of constructing theory”* (Bryant and Charmaz, 2013, p1).

It proposes a method in which data is collected within the context it occurs (rather than a laboratory setting) and it is recommended that the collection and analysis of this data happen simultaneously. This iterative process hopes to create data collection and data analysis which inform one another; allowing the themes emerging from the data to inform where the researcher should focus their next data collection in order to refine these themes.

As discussed above, grounded theory is an inductive method of research. According to Glaser it is imperative that theory ‘emerges’ from the data, rather than theory driving the data analysis. In “The Discovery of Grounded Theory” Glaser and Strauss (1967) ask researchers to:

*“..ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study, in order to assure that the emergence of categories will not be contaminated”.* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p37)

This notion of ‘emergence’ may represent the essence of grounded theory methodology but is also the subject of one of its most contentious debates. It is argued that analysing data without any preconceived ideas is an impossible task as our expectations and theoretical lenses tint that which we perceive (Kelle in

Bryant and Charmaz, 2013). Glaser and Straus did not revoke this argument but instead introduced the concept of 'theoretical sensitivity'. This postulates that a researcher's prior knowledge enables him to extract relevant data and categories from the data without this prior knowledge biasing the research. Reconciling the concepts of emergence (letting categories emerge without prior knowledge) and theoretical sensitivity (allowing theoretical knowledge to guide analysis) caused great difficulty for researchers. This led Glaser and Strauss to develop competing coding systems to help researchers balance the use of existing knowledge and induction. Strauss (1987) noted the crucial role played by experience, be it theoretical or personal, forms part of an abductive rather than solely inductive method of research. Abduction, written about by Charles Peirce, is the notion that conclusions about new rules emerge from data through an intellectual interpretation (Reichert, 2007). Strauss and Corbin argue that it is not only data analysis which may be guided by our pre-existing beliefs and knowledge but also the process of data gathering itself (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Therefore, in their analytical procedures (outlined in the procedure of this research) prior experience is used to explore possible meanings of the data and make inferences about this meaning; however they caution that this needs to be considered in the context of the rest of the interview and other possible interpretations.

#### ***4.6.3 Grounded Theory, Critical Realism and The Research***

##### ***Questions.***

Grounded Theory was chosen as a qualitative methodology as it is congruent the research questions aimed at *exploring* what supports and hinders a process from taking place. Grounded Theory methodology is also consistent with the critical



realist epistemology adopted by the researcher. Strauss and Corbin's later revision of the grounded theory approach (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) described a coding paradigm which explores the conditions, emotions and inter/actions occurring in order to theorise as to how these produce a consequence, this mirrors the contexts and mechanisms which a critical realist seeks to find.

The grounded theory approach fits with the research purpose, epistemological grounding and research questions outlined above. It also provides a clear process for analysing data and developing theory, which allows clarity and transparency of procedure for both the researcher and reader. Furthermore it has been successfully used in previous research theses (e.g. Long, 2010).

Although other qualitative methodologies were considered, it was believed that the rigor associated with grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) and the potential to generate a coherent theory about the underlying mechanisms operating within the organisation made it preferable to using thematic analysis as it provided a best fit to the research questions being asked. Furthermore, the critical realist stance taken by the researcher did not fit with hermeneutic methodologies such as interpretative phenomenological analysis.

## ***4.7 Participants***

### ***4.7.1 Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria***

The participants in this study were adults working within the school setting being studied. They were included in the study if they had been working at the school during the period of establishing the NG and the training intervention delivered by the Educational Psychology Service in order that they have experienced the

process of change, if any such change has occurred. Those who had joined the school since September 2014 were therefore excluded from the study.

#### ***4.7.2 Sampling and Recruitment***

In line with the grounded theory methodology being used, purposeful and theoretical sampling within this population were employed, in order that the theory being created was verified and refined.

Participants were recruited directly through the school. The researcher attended an in-service training at the school to explain the research, hand out information sheets (Appendix 3) and answer any questions which potential participants had. Twenty out of a possible twenty eight school staff members present at the in-service training consented to take part; these twenty potential participants formed the sample.

The consent form asked participants for their start date in the school and job role. The researcher was then able to use this information to purposefully select participants for the study. Initially, a purposeful sample of five participants was selected; this initial sample aimed to represent a range of views from different parts of the school system (senior management, teaching staff and support staff). Within this sample, three participants were having direct contact with the year seven nurture classes and two participants worked within the school without having direct contact with the NG.

After interviewing the initial sample, a further three participants were selected using theoretical sampling in order to refine the theory being developed.

### **4.7.3 Theoretical Sampling**

Theoretical sampling is a distinctive feature of grounded theory. In theoretical sampling the participants are deliberately selected by the researcher due to certain characteristics or experiences which they have had. This is part of the iterative process of grounded theory described above, as participants are chosen due to relevance to emerging categories and constructs in order for the researcher to further elaborate and/or verify these. Corbin and Strauss (2008) wrote:

*“with theoretical sampling, there is a flexibility to go where analysis indicates would be the most fruitful place to collect more data that will answer the questions that arise during analysis.” (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p144-145)*

## **4.8 Procedure**

### **4.8.1 Contracting and Re-Contracting the Research Design with the School**

Research into the nurture project was proposed by the EP linked to the school. This psychologist asked the school whether they were interested in becoming involved in the research. The school's project lead showed enthusiasm and invited the researcher to join a planning meeting with the link EP and the two specialist EPs involved in the project. As part of this consultation the purpose and nature of research was discussed. At this time it was agreed that the NG would be running during the spring and summer term of 2014, and thus it was discussed that the research would evaluate the impact of this group using a mixed methodological approach. The purpose of this research was both to

explore whether NG practices were effective in improving social and emotional functioning in a specialist settings and help the school determine whether to continue to use this model. As discussed in chapter 2, this timeframe could not be implemented and the project was adapted to meet the changing needs of the school. The researcher continued to liaise with the school and the EPs involved in the project and re-contracted the research to ensure it was both feasible and purposeful. Within these discussions the researcher was mindful, and explicit about, the primary concern of the project to be to meet the needs of the school, rather than be shaped around the needs and timeframes of the researcher.

Over the summer term of 2014, the researcher met with senior managers at the school as well as the EPs involved in the project and considered what the relevant research questions and methodology would be in the context of the evolving project. The school remained enthusiastic about the research throughout and were involved in co-constructing the research purpose and questions; this co-construction aimed to ensure that the research continued to be beneficial for the school as well as the body of psychological knowledge.

#### ***4.8.2 Semi-structured Interviews:***

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data, a method which is:

*“..the most widely used method of data collection in qualitative research in psychology” (Willig, 2001, p21).*

Robson (2011) cites King's (1994, p16-17) proposal that it is most appropriate to use interviews in the following circumstances:

1. *Where a study focuses on the meaning of a particular phenomenon to the participants*
2. *Where individuals perceptions of process within a social unit- such as a work group, department or whole organization- are to be studied prospectively using a series of interviews*
3. *Where individual historical accounts are required of how a particular phenomenon developed-for instance a new shift system*
4. *Where exploratory work is required before a quantitative study can be carried out.*
5. *Where a quantitative study has been carried out, and qualitative data are required to validate particular measures or to clarify and illustrate the meaning of findings.*

The research questions and purpose of the present study are consistent with the second of these criteria as it aims to explore individuals' perceptions of a process within an organisation, therefore the use of interviews as a method of data collection is congruent with the research questions, purpose and chosen methodology.

Semi-structured interviews differ from unstructured interviews as they have a set of predetermined questions which the researcher aims to ask and are unlike fully-structured interviews as there is flexibility to modify question wording and order as well as add or omit questions during the interview (Robson, 2011). A semi-structured interview can therefore be thought of as lying on a spectrum between fully structured and unstructured interviews.

Interviews were conducted within the setting (as is advised in grounded theory methodology). The interview schedule was devised in line with the grounded theory interview schedule proposed by Charmaz (2006). The initial set of questions produced were scrutinised during supervision and further refined through group supervision with colleagues who share the same epistemological stance and have experience of using the methodological approach. Adaptations were made in line with these suggestions (see Appendix 4).

The interview schedule was adapted throughout the research process in order that the questions became more focussed and allowed the research questions to be answered as fully as possible and emerging categories to be further explored and verified; this is in line with the iterative process of grounded theory described above.

No pilot interview was conducted. This was deemed unnecessary as the iterative process of a grounded theory approach assumes that the interview schedule will evolve throughout the research process as interview questions are adapted and changed in order to ensure that the research questions and evolving categories are fully explored.

### **4.8.3 Data Saturation**

Within the grounded theory framework it is proposed that the researcher continues to gather further data until 'data saturation' occurs. Strauss (1987) describes data saturation as arising:

*“when additional analysis no longer contributes to discovering anything new about a category”. (Strauss, 1987, p21)*

Due to time constraints it was not considered possible to aim for complete saturation of data (if this is indeed possible), however it was hoped that 'data sufficiency' would be attained. Dey (1999) suggests the concept of 'data sufficiency' rather than saturation as it is argued to be impossible to know when we have truly saturated the data. As the research was aimed to continue until data sufficiency was achieved, the sample size was not able to be determined prior to embarking on the research.

Data collection was ceased at the point at which the concepts emerging from the data were found in previous interviews and it was felt that there was sufficient data that the emerging concepts felt adequately evolved.

#### ***4.8.4 Transcription***

Due to time constraints, interviews were transcribed using an independent transcriber. The transcriber used true verbatim transcription which exactly reproduces the spoken data in written form, including pauses and speech dysfluencies (umms and ahhs). In discussion of the strengths and limitations of using this type of transcription Halcomb and Davidson (2005) note that the verbatim record allows the researcher to become closer to the data, which is essential in grounded theory analysis.

#### ***4.8.5 Analysis***

##### ***Coding Data***

Grounded Theory analysis procedures were followed to analyse the interview transcripts in order to transform the raw data into concepts and theory. This was completed through the process of coding, as described by Corbin and Strauss (2008). They argue that coding data consists of more than just paraphrasing the

content and suggest several analytical tools that a grounded theory analyst should use throughout the coding process:

1. **Asking Questions:** Questions regarding the content of the data are asked at all stages of analysis. These include sensitising questions (who, what, where, how?), theoretical questions (what are the connections and relationships between different codes and within codes?), practical questions (which concepts are fully developed/dense and which require further exploration?) and guiding questions (what are the questions which I am interested in answering now?).
2. **Making Comparisons:** Incidents in data are compared and grouped together, both between and within a code. This occurs at a theoretical level, analysing both the properties and dimensions of the data. At this level of analysis it is permissible to draw upon prior knowledge and experience to understand potential meaning of the data.
3. **Consider the varying meanings of a word or phrase:** Corbin and Strauss (2008) warn that researchers should not accept the meaning which they themselves ascribe to a given word but explore the multiple interpretations of that word. This is particularly important when considering significant phrases in the data. Researchers should use the contextual data in the rest of the text to determine most likely meaning.
4. **Use a flip/flop technique to consider further questions:** turning a concept 'inside out' or 'upside down' allows for a deeper analysis of that concept (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). For example, the use of the term "easy" can be turned inside out and the researcher should consider what would happen if the subject which was being discussed became difficult.



These thoughts can then guide the researcher to formulate further questions to further develop the concept.

5. **Draw upon personal experience:** As noted earlier, Corbin and Strauss (2008) argued that “*since it is impossible to completely void our mind of our...experience, why not put that knowledge to good use*”, (p79). They advise that a researcher does not impose experience upon the data but use it to support the finding of a number of possible interpretations/meanings.
6. **Waving the red flag:** Corbin and Strauss (2008) note that “*analysis, as well as research participants, bring to the investigation biases, beliefs and assumptions*”(p80) highlighting that the interpretations one makes may be influenced by gender, past experience, culture, time and training. They advise analysts to keep a distance so that they do not take on the participants’ beliefs and take precautions to recognise when their own beliefs are intruding in analysis. They suggested that absolutes, such as ‘always’ and ‘never’ should be seen as red flags and contradictory cases should be looked for.
7. **Consider the language used by participants:** It is noted that participants will often use conceptual language within the data and advised that these be used during coding. This type of code, which comes directly from the data, is called an ‘in-vivo code’. For example in the current study the axial code “definitely been worthwhile” was created as an in-vivo code.
8. **Look for the expression of language:** Emotions are seen as forming part of the contextual information as well as motivating action.

Researchers are encouraged not to overlook the emotions being expressed by the participant.

9. **Look for words which indicate time:** The analyst should be aware of words which indicate the passing of time (such as next, before, or after) as these often denote a shift in perspective.
10. **Look out for metaphor and simile:** It is advised that researchers look for metaphor and simile in the data as these provide vivid pictures and carry lots of meaning.
11. **Looking for the negative case:** Analysts should look for exceptions to the concepts being developed in order to deepen the analysis by looking at the contexts in which the process does not occur.

In addition to the above analytical tools, Corbin and Strauss (2008) outline how researchers should analyse their data for context and process as well as concepts. Context can be described as the conditions in which a situation arises and process as the on-going pattern of action/interaction and emotion in response to a situation. In order to consider contextual factors and process, Corbin and Strauss outline a coding paradigm (questions a researcher should consider in order to identify contextual factors and identify the relationship between this and processes), which postulates that in everyday experience there are conditions (why, what, how, where), interactions and emotions (response), and consequences (the outcome). They also outline a conditional matrix which encourages analysts to consider the complexity of context or process, keeping in mind the interaction between micro (the individual, micro organisations) and macro levels (international and national) contextual factors.

### ***Moving from Codes to Theory***

In order to develop codes the above analytical tools were used. To develop these codes into concepts and a substantive theory the following process was used (Figure 4). This is based upon that outlined by Robson (2011), Charmaz (2006) and Corbin and Straus (2008).

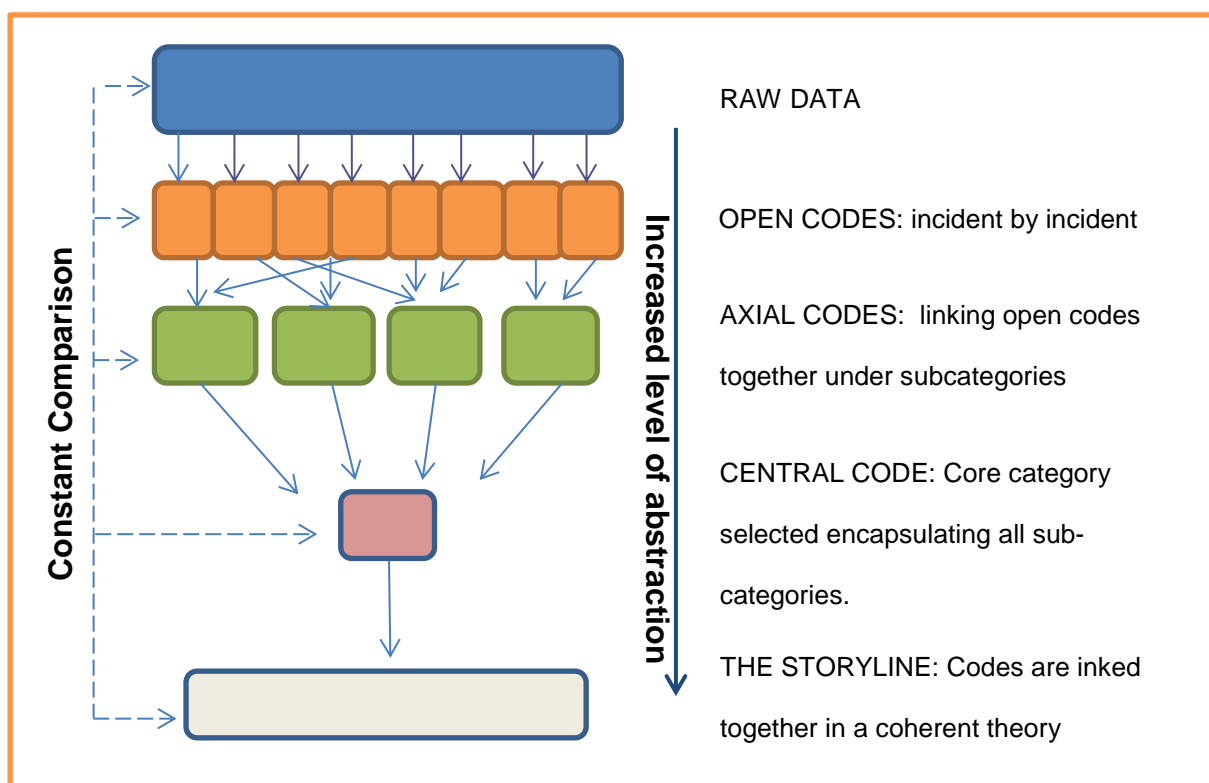


Figure 4: Levels of Coding

**Open codes:** The coding process began with open coding each transcript. These initial codes labelled the content of each line in the data or chunks of data (dependent upon what was deemed appropriate). Robson (2011) writes that the key question asked at this stage of the coding process is “*what is this piece of data an example of?*” (Robson, 2011, p489). As noted above, Corbin and

Strauss (2008) argue that coding data consists of more than just paraphrasing the content and thus these codes were interpretive in nature (Robson, 2011).

**Axial codes:** During this stage of the coding process, sometimes referred to as theoretical coding (Robson, 2011), the links and relationships between open codes were considered and codes were subsumed under broader headings.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) note that the process of open and axial coding is not necessarily a linear process, rather the researcher may develop axial codes alongside the process of open coding as constant comparisons are made between and within data. During data analysis the researcher moved between these two levels of coding, refining the coding hierarchy and ensuring axial codes continued to be grounded in the data.

**Central Codes:** Links between axial codes were hypothesised and those which were considered 'core' were focussed on. Once the relationships between codes had been explored, the researcher selected one concept to focus on, known as the 'core category'. Corbin and Strauss (2008, p104) identify the following criteria for a central/core category:

1. *"It must be abstract; that is, all other major categories can be related to it and be placed under it."*
2. *"It must appear frequently in the data. This means that within all, or almost all, cases there are indicators pointing to that concept."*
3. *"It must be logical and consistent with the data. There should be no forcing of data"*

4. *It should be sufficiently abstract so that it can be used to do research in other substantive areas, leading to the development of a more formal theory.”*
5. *“It should grow in depth and explanatory power as each of the categories is related through statements of relationships”*

### ***Creating a Storyline:***

A final memo was then written which integrated the concepts discovered. This explored how the concepts interact with one another and hypothesised about the processes and mechanisms which were occurring. This provided a storyline which outlines the theory which was discovered through the analysis

### ***The Use of MAXQDA Software***

MAXQDA II computer software was used to facilitate the coding of data. This program allows for data to be stored and coded, creating a hierarchical coding system. This was particularly helpful in creating the axial and selective codes from the initial codes. It also allowed text segments included under a code to be read together, to support the process of constant comparison. An example screen shot of this is given below, highlighting useful functions:

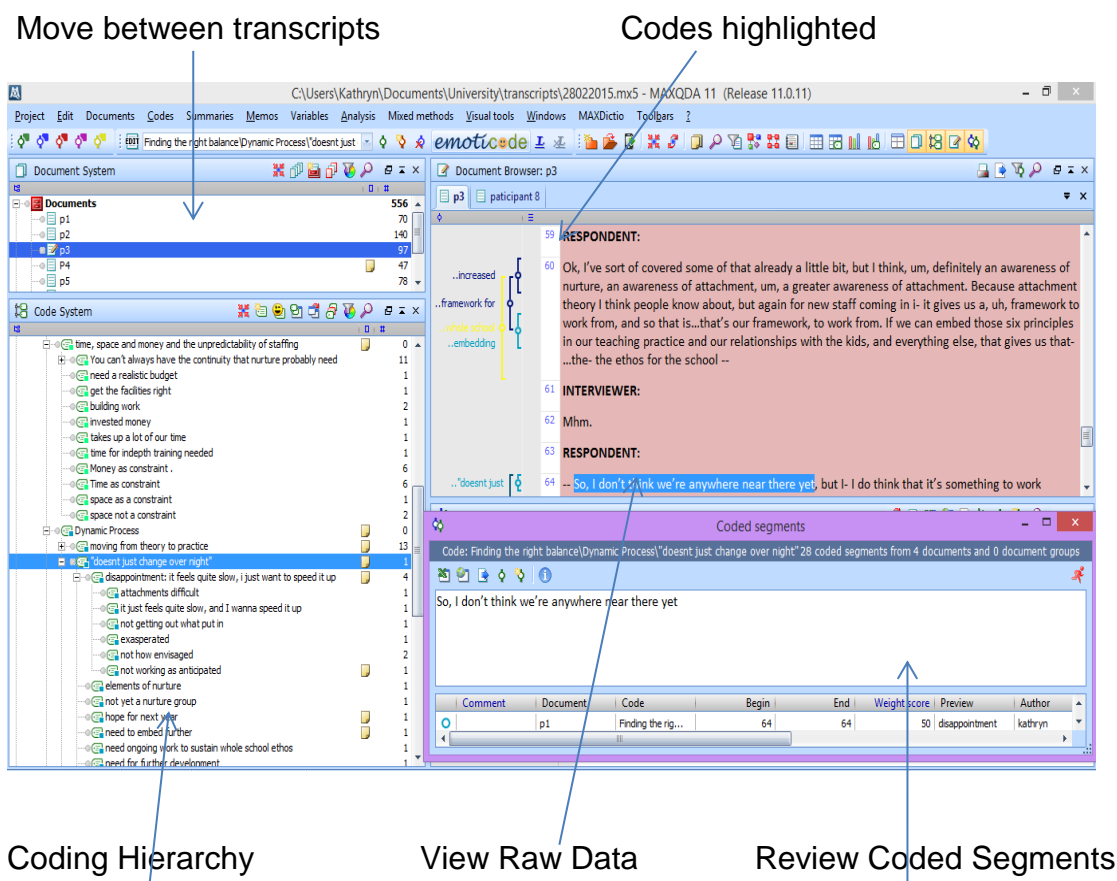


Figure 5: MAXQDA analysis

### ***The Use of Memos and Diagrams***

The use of memo writing is a fundamental part of grounded theory methodology (Lempert, 2007). Memo writing is the process by which the researcher notes down their reflections and thoughts during the coding process and begins to explore patterns within the data sets, transforming data into theory. Lempert (2007) describes how memos allow researchers to “*conceptualise the data in narrative form*” recording the analyst’s “*analytical conversations with him/herself*” (Lempert, 2007, p245).

Memos were used in analysis to consider the contexts and mechanisms which were underlying that being described in the data as well as connect different transcripts and concepts together. These memos gradually increased in length

and complexity as links were made and theoretical hypothesising introduced. Two examples of working memos are given below (Figure 6). The first of these was written during open coding and explores processes and consequences which may be occurring. The latter was written during axial code, aiming to create links between emerging concepts.

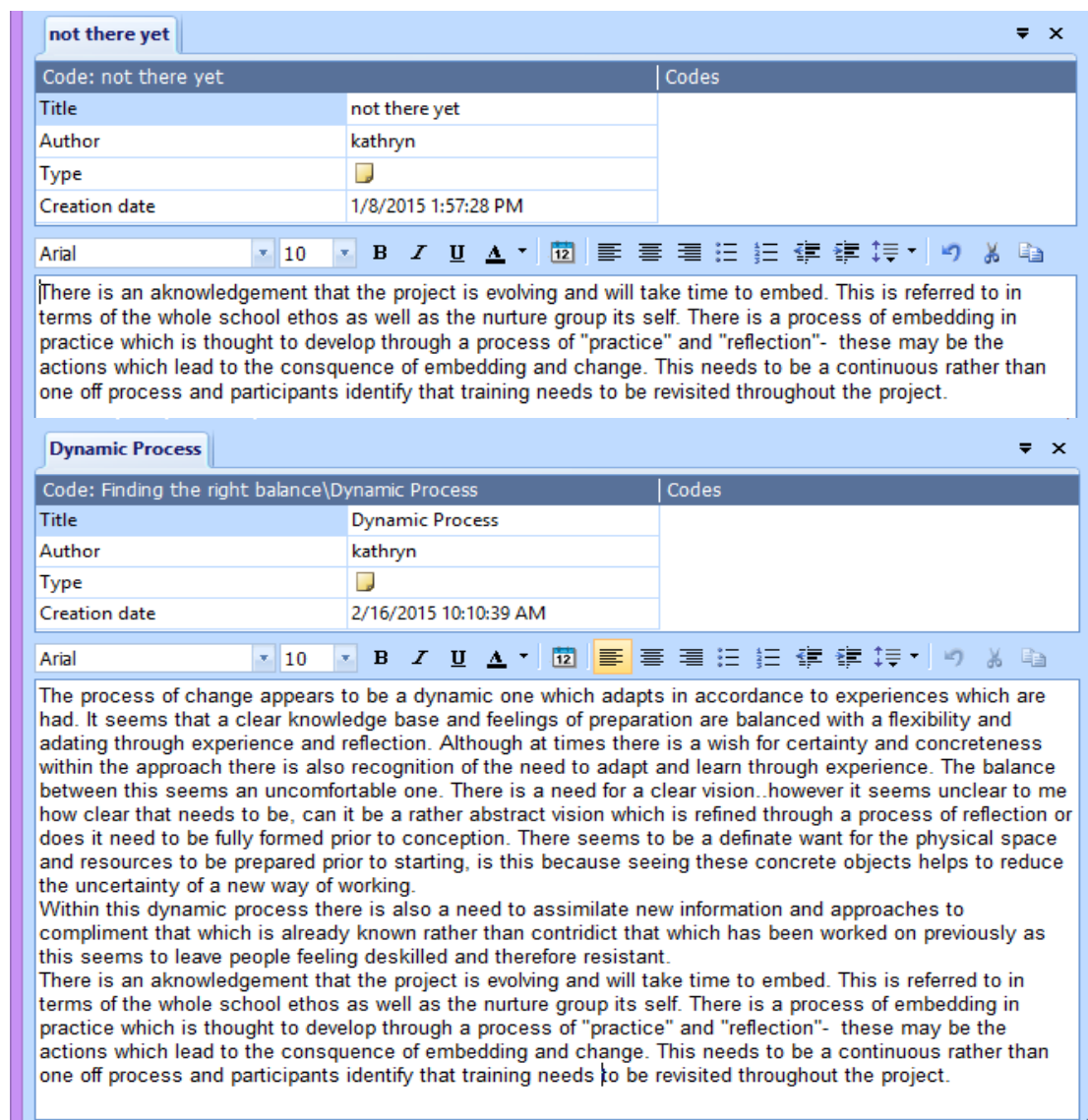


Figure 6: Examples of memos.

In addition to written memos, diagrams were used to consider how the emerging concepts linked together and to visually represent the processes occurring.

These diagrams were reworked several times as the theory developed (Appendix 5).

### ***Peer Coding***

Once the initial transcripts had been coded, the researcher asked a peer to code one of the transcripts to ensure that the coding decisions made were not being overly influenced by the researchers own views. The peer coder chosen was a clinical psychology trainee and former colleague of the researcher who had experience of coding within a grounded theory methodology. She selected a transcript to code and independently coded this transcript without having discussed it with the researcher or seen the researchers coding (see Appendix 6 for the peer coded transcript). Once she had completed coding the codes were discussed with the researcher and compared to the researcher's own codes.

## ***4.9 Additional Considerations***

### ***4.9.1 Trustworthiness:***

Qualitative researchers have highlighted the importance of addressing reliability and validity in their research (Shenton, 2004). Guba (1981) referred to this as the 'trustworthiness' of a piece of research and highlighted four aspects of qualitative trustworthiness that correspond to concepts used in positivist quantitative research. He suggested that in order to be trustworthy a piece of research should have: credibility; transferability; dependability; and confirmability.

### ***Credibility***



Credibility refers to the congruency between findings and reality. Shenton (2004, p64-69) suggests this is able to be achieved through:

- Using a well-established research method
- Becoming familiar with the culture of participating organisations early in the research process
- Using random sampling
- Triangulating data
- Encouraging honesty from participants
- Asking iterative questions
- Analysing negative cases
- Holding debriefing sessions after interviews
- Allowing peer scrutiny of the project
- Providing reflective commentary
- Being transparent about prior experience
- Completing member checking
- Providing a thick description of area under scrutiny
- Examining previous research

Grounded theory is considered a well-established research methodology (Bryant and Charmaz, 2013) and therefore meets the first of these criteria. In addition, the researcher made several visits to the school during the project and observed training sessions which were taking place in order to become familiar with the setting, as is suggested in the second criterion. Furthermore, participants were encouraged to be honest during a briefing before the interview and iterative questioning was used to ensure a fuller exploration. In addition to the peer

coding process described in 4.8.3, the researcher discussed interviews in supervision and shared extracts of transcripts and coding for scrutiny to support trustworthiness of coding decisions (Appendix 6). The concepts and theory inferred from the data were scrutinised by the researcher and supervising researcher to ensure it provided a logical theory and considered negative cases (as advised by Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Member checking occurred post analysis with a focus group of the participants who were interviewed (see Appendix 7 for notes taken during member checking).

Furthermore, the researcher kept a reflective diary and has provided a transparent account of their prior experiences and possible pre-conceptions (see below). The researcher conducted a literature search of previous research post analysis as well a clear description of the project prior to the analysis, as is suggested in the final two criteria. Therefore, the researcher has taken reasonable steps to ensure all of the above criteria are in place, with the exception of random sampling as this is not congruent with the sampling methods recommended in grounded theory research (described above) and triangulation of evidence, as this was not possible within the time frames.

### ***Transferability***

Transferability, which can be considered similar to external validity, is the ability to generalise findings to other situations (Shenton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that to ensure research findings are transferred to appropriate situations a full outline of the context is required, in order that claims of transferability are justified. This research looks at a particular setting and idiographic project thus limiting its transferability. A full description of the

contextual factors are therefore provided (chapter 2) so that readers are able to make a considered judgement as to whether the findings, or elements of the findings, are transferable to the context or setting in which they are working.

### ***Dependability***

Dependability aims to address the issue of reliability in qualitative research (are the results replicable). Some researchers have highlighted that the temporary nature of the situations studied means that when replicated studies may produce different outcomes, even when identical and credible procedures are used (Shenton, 2004). Others, however, have noted that it is important that the procedure followed is clear in order that repetition of research is achievable and methods are able to be scrutinised regardless of whether the results produced are replicable (Shenton, 2004). A detailed description of the procedure alongside examples of coding and MaxQDA analysis showing how data was analysed has therefore been included to support the dependability of this project (see Appendix 8 and 9).

### ***Confirmability***

Finally, confirmability refers to the precautions taken by the researcher to remain as objective as possible and ensure that findings emerge from the data rather than being influenced by prior knowledge (Shenton, 2004). Included under the concept of confirmability is the notion of reflexive validity. Reflexive validity is the degree to which the researcher is aware of their own biases and preconceived ideas and the precautions taken to ensure these are not forced upon the data.

The researcher completing this study has had previous experience working in a setting similar to that studied and therefore approached it with preconceived

ideas based upon both direct experience and theoretical knowledge. Furthermore, as aforementioned the researcher was part of consultative meetings shaping the project, thus developing ideas about the factors supporting and hindering the project prior to data analysis. Moreover, the researcher works in the same service as the psychologists whose work was being discussed and thus may have preconceived ideas about their work.

As noted by Corbin and Strauss (2008), it is not possible to completely suspend belief systems when approaching a research project, thus they may influence both data collection and analysis. Although, as mentioned above, the use of prior knowledge in exploring possible meaning is encouraged by Strauss and Corbin, it is important to be aware of when prior knowledge is influencing decisions and ensure that biases are not forced on the data. The researcher aimed to reduce the impact of their preconceived ideas on the data collection and analysis through the use of supervision (to reflect upon its influence), a reflective research diary and audit trail of transcripts and analysis (Figure 6 and Appendix 5, 6, 7, 8 9 and 10).

#### ***4.9.2 Ethical Considerations***

##### ***Ethical Approval***

This research design was deemed ethical by the Tavistock Research Ethics Committee. The project was also discussed with managers in the Local Education Authority and no objections or concerns were raised.

##### ***Supervision***

Research was supervised by a university tutor who is a qualified psychologist and has experience in conducting and supervising similar research projects. Ethical issues were discussed in supervision throughout the research process.

### ***Informed Consent***

The researcher met with senior members of school staff prior to the research taking place and discussed the implications and requirements of the project and the potential benefits for the school. Ethical considerations were also discussed such as confidentiality, anonymity, right to withdraw, data protection and dissemination of the knowledge acquired.

Participants were given an information sheet (Appendix 3) which outlined the purpose of the research, what would be involved in taking part in the research, the participants' right to withdraw from the project and how the information gathered would be stored and disseminated. It was highlighted that participation in the research would not have implications for future involvement from the Educational Psychology Service and that the information they shared would be anonymised prior to dissemination.

### ***Anonymity and Confidentiality***

The participant's names, school and local education authority are not named in this paper. A substantial amount of contextual information is described in chapter 2 and as the school and context are fairly unique (the school is the only specialist academy of its type in the local area), it may be that some readers who are aware of the researcher's work within the local authority may be able to deduce which school the research took place in. However, the researcher was mindful of this and tried to protect the schools identity as far as possible.

The school have requested permission to identify themselves as taking part in the research project in their own internal documents and have been allowed the freedom to do so, providing the names of participants remain anonymous.

Although names of participants were known by a senior member of staff in the school, as this was necessary in order to coordinate times and spaces to conduct interviews, their names were not used in the recordings, transcriptions or discussions of the research and thus particular findings cannot be linked to individuals.

### ***Transcription, Confidentiality and Data Protection***

Interview data was transcribed by an independent transcriber. The transcriber signed a confidentiality agreement prior to receiving the data (Appendix 11). The data was checked prior to transcription for whether it contained personal or sensitive data, as defined by the Data Protection Act (1998). Although some recordings contained names of staff members these were deemed unidentifiable as only first names were used. On a few occasions the full name of one of the EPs was used, followed by an opinion about the intervention he was running. This would be deemed to be 'personal data' under the Data Protection Act (1998). No sensitive personal data was included in the interview recordings or transcripts. In line with this legislation "Appropriate technical and organisational measures" were taken to ensure the data was protected by using a secure password protected online storage facility (Dropbox) to transfer files to the transcriber.

### ***Data Storage***

In line with the Data Protection Act (1998), all information gathered was kept securely in a locked cabinet at the local authority office and only the researcher was able to access this information. The Data Protection Act (1998) states that personal data should not be kept for longer than is necessary for its intended purpose, therefore any personal data, including that stored electronically, will be securely destroyed once no longer needed (with a limit of 6 years post data collection).

### ***Potential Risks***

Potential risks were identified prior to embarking on research so that precautions could be put in place. It was considered that teachers participating in the study may be at risk of a negative impact on their self-esteem/ feelings of competency as a professional if their reflections led them to feel the intervention/project which they were a part of running was unsuccessful.

### ***Researcher Competency in Managing Risk***

The researcher has previous experience of working in a similar setting. The researcher also has experience of conducting consultation interviews with staff about their role and would have been able draw upon these skills to support any member who of staff who had become upset or distressed had this occurred. There was time allocated to debrief with each participant following the interview, providing a space to discuss how their experience of the process and the opportunity to discuss anything which they felt they need further support with. If participants had shown signs of distress during debrief then a follow up phone call would have been made in order to offer further containment or sign posting to other services.

### ***4.10 Chapter Summary***

This research aims to explore the use of nurturing approaches in a specialist setting. In order to do this, a qualitative, grounded theory methodology is used. This is argued to be congruent with the critical realist epistemological stance taken by the researcher whilst providing a rigorous approach to analysis. Appropriate measures have been employed to ensure the research is transparent and trustworthy and care is taken to safeguard against harm being caused by the research.



# Chapter 5: Results

## 5.1 Overview of Chapter

This chapter begins with an overview of the findings from the grounded theory analysis conveying the overall storyline and linking the emerging concepts together. This is followed by an illustration of the coding hierarchy and subsequently a detailed description of the grounded theory. This description highlights the contexts and mechanisms underlying both the impact of the NG approaches and the factors facilitating or hindering their use. Finally, answers will be provided for each of the research questions asked in chapter four.

## 5.2 Grounded Theory Overview: *Finding a Balance (codes underlined)*

*“That balance, I don’t think, is clear for us yet, like where we draw the line from one and start the other”. (Participant 5)*

The accounts provided discuss both the impact of the group and the process of change which was occurring in the school. These narratives are summed up by the central code ‘**finding a balance**’.

During the initial stages of change, it seemed that the school system and individuals within it were attempting to find a balance, or a place of stability, between competing priorities and needs. Through a dynamic process, preparation and planning were balanced with reflection and evolution, and top down management moved towards shared ownership of the project. There was

also an attempt to juggle a whole school emphasis and a small group focus for the project. Providing whole school training enabled an understanding of the motivations underlying the project and a shared framework for practice, whilst refocusing resources on a small group allowed progress to become evident, increasing motivation for whole school changes and further embedding theory in practice.

The system also attempted to manage difference, both within the staff team and between the young people in the group. This included both pre-existing differences (perspectives, life experiences and personality traits) and those which emerged through the setting up of a group (differences in resources and structures).

When researched, the project was in its infancy and still evolving and as a result it was difficult to measure impact. Nonetheless, the project was seen as being valuable (definitely say it's worthwhile) and many positive changes were noted, both inside and outside of the NG. These were seen particularly in relation to the establishment of trusting relationships and meaningful communications between pupils and teachers and a more proactive, reflective and fluid teaching style. It was reported that there was a calmer atmosphere within the school and less physical interventions were needed.

However, these positive impacts were balanced against recognition that the nurture approach is not 'one size fits all' as it had not impacted all pupils equally needing to be adapted to meet individual needs as well as the adolescent population. Furthermore, the project required a substantial amount of resources (availability of resources), both human and physical, which needed to be

balanced with competing priorities (balancing priorities). The focusing of resources upon the year seven group caused envy amongst teachers in the main school and in turn teachers within the group felt isolated (splitting and isolation). The benefits of the NG were also offset by its potential cost, as the approach was seen as being intense for staff working within the group.

Finally, the school appeared to be endeavouring to reach a balance between the different aspects, or meanings, of nurture as it was constructed differently by different members of the system. Some school staff members talked about the approach being created through the physical environment and being defined by discrete nurturing tasks or games. Others spoke about nurture in more abstract terms referring to it as a therapeutic approach or ethos. It seemed that through practice and reflection the school were trying to understand the nature of nurture and its meaning within their project.

### 5.3 Coding Hierarchy

The table below shows the coding hierarchy developed through the grounded theory analysis.

Table 2: Coding Hierarchy

Central Code	Axial Code	Concepts
<b>Finding The Balance</b>	Definitely Say It's Worthwhile: Trusting relationships and meaningful communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Calmer atmosphere</li> <li>✚ safe and secure environment to learn</li> <li>✚ connecting with pupils: building trusting relationships</li> <li>✚ smoother transition</li> <li>✚ Phenomenal change: examples of individual progress</li> <li>✚ Change in attitude</li> <li>✚ meaningful communication with children</li> </ul>

Not One Size Fits All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sometimes nurture approach isn't enough</li> <li>+ • more entrenched = harder to nurture</li> <li>+ • difference in nurture approach for older children</li> <li>+ • differences within the group</li> </ul>
Proactive and Reflective Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more reflective</li> <li>• staff more empathic and thoughtful</li> <li>• more fluid</li> <li>• proactive</li> <li>+ • more reflective debrief</li> <li>+ • understanding behaviour as communication</li> <li>• increased awareness</li> </ul>
Shared Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ • sense of community</li> <li>+ • Shared framework: "we all talk the same language"</li> <li>• whole school training giving a whole school language</li> </ul>
Difficult to Measure Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• difficult to measure impact</li> </ul>
Splitting and Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ • pupils envious/curious</li> <li>• detached from project</li> <li>+ • staff outside of unit unaware of impact</li> <li>• bit out of everything</li> <li>+ • y7 pupils separate</li> <li>+ • need to reconnect with rest of school</li> <li>• isolation</li> <li>• I'm not part of that,</li> <li>• blame</li> <li>+ • jealousy</li> </ul>
Intense for Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emotional impact on teachers</li> <li>• horrendously hard work</li> <li>• quite full-on</li> <li>• health a constraint</li> </ul>
Balancing Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• other priorities</li> <li>+ • being with kids vs planning time</li> <li>• balance home and classroom</li> <li>• dedicated 'nurture' time</li> <li>+ • balance nurture and prep for y8</li> <li>• balance nurture and curriculum</li> <li>• concentrating on year 7 vs whole school</li> <li>+ • y7 curriculum vs primary focus?</li> </ul>
The Nature of Nurture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ • nurturing environments</li> <li>+ • Nurture as a way of being</li> <li>+ • Nurture as a defined activity</li> </ul>
Availability of Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• need a realistic budget</li> <li>• get the facilities right</li> <li>• building work</li> <li>• invested money</li> <li>• takes up a lot of our time</li> <li>• time for indepth training needed</li> <li>• Money as constraint .</li> <li>• Time as constraint</li> <li>• space as a constraint</li> <li>• space not a constraint</li> </ul>
Dynamic Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ • "doesn't just change over night"</li> <li>+ • balancing preparation and plans with reflection and evolution</li> </ul>

	Ownership of the Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ concentric circles of support</li> <li>put own twist on it</li> <li>pick and choose relevant parts</li> <li>+ top down initiated but held by the front line</li> </ul>
	Embedding Theory in Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ assimilation easier than accomodation</li> <li>+ the power of one sceptic and the urge to regress to certainty</li> <li>+ motivation to begin</li> <li>+ seeing is believing</li> <li>desire to see example group to make sense of direction</li> <li>- where to begin?: outside in vs inside out</li> <li>+ group beginning to impact the school</li> <li>+ gradual integration into whole school</li> <li>+ importance of whole school cultural change</li> <li>need unit before training</li> <li>+ moving from theory to practice</li> </ul>

### 5.4 The Complete Grounded Theory

The complete grounded theory analysis is described below. This begins by discussing the impact of the nurturing approaches (research questions 1, 2 and 3), followed by a description of the process of change and the factors facilitating and hindering the use of the approaches (research questions 4 and 5).

Throughout the narrative, axial codes are used as subheadings to guide the reader. Links are made between axial codes to create an overall picture showing the interplay between the nurture approach and the change process. The theory is illustrated with excerpts from transcripts with each participant being identified with a number at the end of each quote (e.g. p1= participant 1). Furthermore, the written description is complemented by tables highlighting the contexts, mechanisms and consequences which are thought to be occurring. These are based upon the concepts of Corbin and Strauss's (2008) coding paradigm (conditions, actions/interactions, emotions and consequences) discussed in chapter four. A diagram is also provided for each section in order to provide a visual depiction of the findings. Furthermore, more detailed diagrams depicting

the contexts/conditions, mechanisms and consequences are available in Appendix 5.

#### ***5.4.1 The Impact of the Nurturing Approaches***

Although the project was in its infancy and still developing, participants noted positive impacts that the nurturing approaches and the NG have had upon the young people in the group, the teachers working with them and the wider school environment. These positive developments were balanced with the recognition that the approach does not impact on all children equally and needs adapting for the adolescent population. It was also reported that the creation of a separate group has caused the staff team to become somewhat fractured as the team working in the unit became isolated and split off from the whole school. Nonetheless, focusing on a small group seemed to have led to further whole school changes as teachers were able to see the positive impacts it has had. This balance between the positive impacts and the difficulties which needed to be overcome are depicted in Figure 7 on page 101.

#### ***Difficult to measure impact***

As the project was still evolving the impact of the project upon the pupils, staff and whole school ethos described below was believed to be a preliminary one and is likely to change as the project itself changes. One participant described how their opinion on the project was a temporary one and was likely to change once the project was more established:

*"I think probably if you ask me that question in four or five months' time I'll be able to give you more positive answers, but at the moment I think it- it's too early to say, really."*(p1)

Nonetheless, the NG and nurturing approaches appeared to be having some promising impacts within the school.

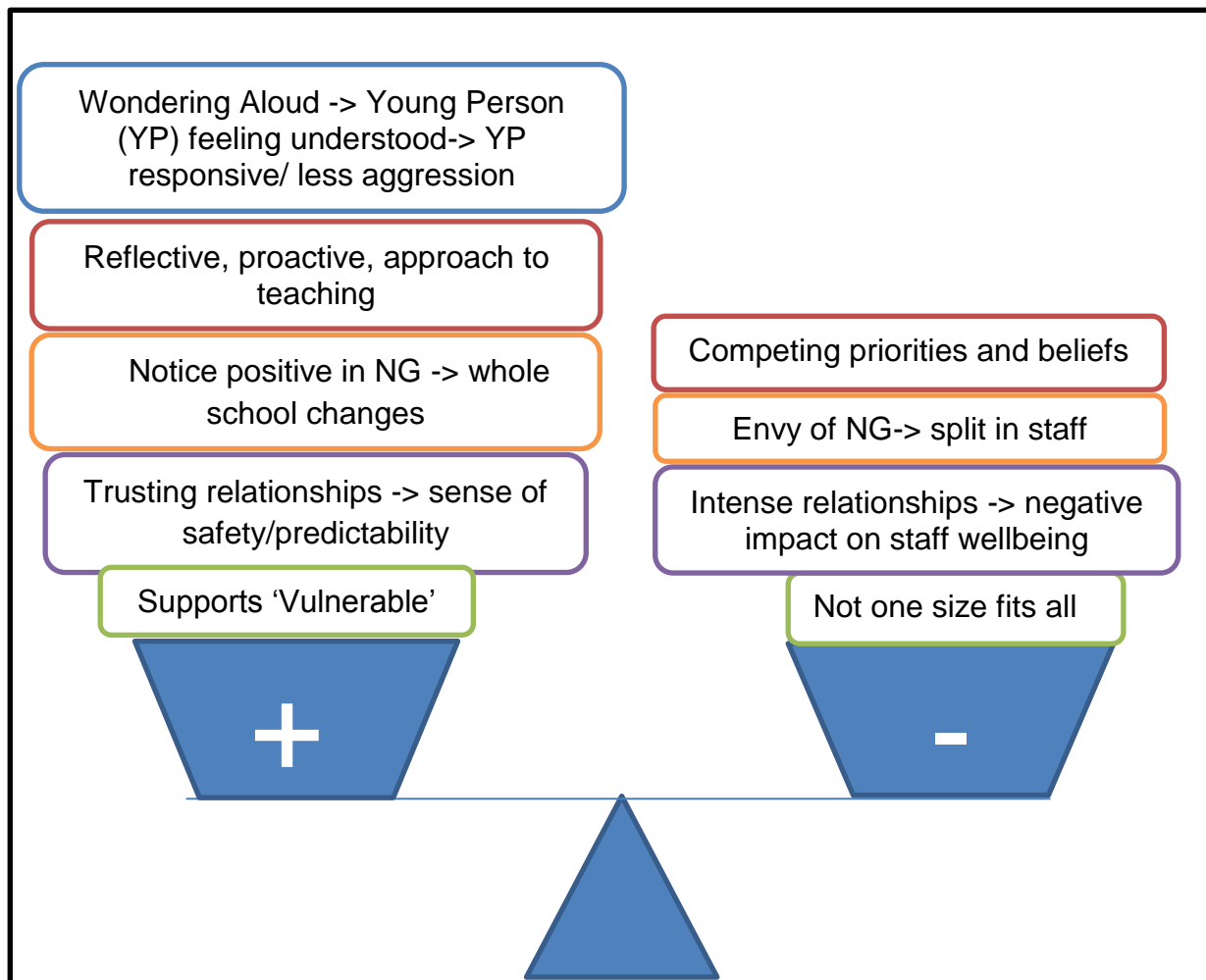


Figure 7: Balancing positive and negative impacts of the Nurture Approaches

### ***It's Definitely Been Worthwhile: Trusting Relationships and Meaningful Communication***

Table 3: Process 1: Trusting Relationships and Feeling Safe

Contexts/ Condition	Mechanisms (inter/action +emotions)	Consequence(s)
<b>Small number of teachers in NG: Predictability of staffing, environment and structure.</b>	Trust and the formation of positive attachment relationships. Sense of a 'safe base'.	Feeling 'safe' in the Nurture Group
<b>NG physically separate from rest of the school.</b>	Yong Person (YP) feeling less threatened and no pressure to "play up" to older children	Feeling 'safe' in the Nurture Group
↓		
<b>Feeling 'safe' in the Nurture Group</b>	Less disruptive behaviour and confidence to be self	Gradual increase in amount of learning produced Smoother transition into school and less disruption for whole school.

The group is described as being a "safe" environment in which the year seven students feel protected from the older children in the main school. It is believed that this is causing them to feel less anxious than previous year seven pupils have:

*"I think he just...he feels safe up there. He doesn't need to play up to all the big kids. I mean he boards and he spends time with them, but he doesn't need to try*



*and fit in and be one of the big boys, so he doesn't get bullied. Um, and up there he can just do whatever he wants, in terms of like feel safe...I don't know really know, you know what I mean, um, feel safe, and not have to play up to that."* (p5).

The group also appeared to be benefiting from the predictability of having a small number of teachers, their own classroom and consistent daily structures:

*"I think it makes it easier for them, 'cause they're used to having the same faces, and it's not such a scary and daunting, um, thing for them to come...like coming to school, and they sort of know what they're going to expect, most days."* (p4)

Within this context of 'feeling safe' the children are described as being more settled and are therefore becoming more engaged in learning tasks:

*"Um, and then we're gradually getting more and more learning done in terms of, like, Ofsted learning, like English, Maths, Science, because they're becoming more and more settled."*(p5).

This smoother transition into the school was also seen as being beneficial pupils outside of the group as they were thought to have been protected from the disruption that the year seven transition usually causes.

For particular pupils changes were described as being phenomenal, as the safe space, consistency and trusting relationships with staff had allowed them to make progress in their social and emotional functioning. For one pupil who had been part of the main school in year six, the change between the two settings was evident:

*“he spent most of his time out of lessons up there (in the main school), mainly because he could be with all the school and he could get away with being bad, and obviously he’d have to catch up and catch up on his work, but he would spend probably the equivalent of three days a week in...out of lessons. And now, up in that unit, where...he can get to the main school, he can just walk round, he’s only done that once in the whole time, um and he’s rarely out of lessons, and if he is he’ll spend five minutes out and then come back in. So he’s a lot more settled. The change in him has been phenomenal.”(p5).*

It seemed that the NG had also had a positive impact upon the relationships between the children and their teachers. These were thought to be based upon trust and were reported to have formed more quickly than usual due to the increased amount of time the teachers had spent with the pupils:

*“Um, just the relationship building, that it’s a...that relationships that would have taken me a year to form in the rest of the school, I’ve now...I feel like I’m, you know, nearly got with these pupils. You know, I know them a lot better, I know...I feel I know what makes them tick, and even when they’re really angry at you, when we go out, they look to you, and they’ll...you’re the first person they want to...you know, we went ice-skating, and they all wanna hold your hand ‘cause they’re scared about going on the ice and they go on...and you know, pupils would never have done that before at this stage in the game, so it’s...that’s really nice to have that sort of trust and relation, like, it’s still working...we’ve still got to work on it, but that- that’s what makes me know it’s, for me, it’s working. That they’re sort of forming appropriate attachments” (p4).*

It therefore seems that the young people in the group had been able to find a safe base in both the physical environment and the adults with whom they work.

Table 4: Process 2: Wondering Aloud and Calmer Interactions

Context/Condition	Mechanism	Consequence
<b>All staff trained in “Wondering Aloud”</b>	Teachers/ TAs voicing curiosity and wondering what might be underlying behaviour. Considered/thoughtful choice of language Calm body language	Calmer interactions and YP more responsive. Calmer/ less aggressive atmosphere Fewer physical intervention
	Children feeling understood/ understanding self	Confident to be self YP given a voice Showing empathy for others Positive YP-T interactions Fewer physical interventions

The positive changes in relationships were found not only in the NG but also throughout the school. This was attributed to a change in the way that teaching staff communicate with the young people. The use of “wondering aloud” techniques in which adults’ voice curiosity about what might be underlying the child’s behaviour was reported to be being used throughout the school. The young people are described as being more ‘responsive’ to this approach:

*“They’re more open, um, has uh...yeah, they’re definitely more open..... it’s the calming nature of it, I think, you know, we’re not going, “What are you doing?” you know, when you...if you think, “I wonder”, or “What you doing?”, and your whole body language changes and they respond better to a calm body language, “Now I wonder”, is calming, .....it’s the body language as well. So their- their response is much better, and much more positive, rather than negative, so if you- if you’re asking them, “I wonder how you’re feeling, I wonder”, whatever it is, their response is more calmer. I mean you can even do it when they’ve completely lost it. I mean I’ve done it too whenever one of our children, “I wonder if you just*

*walked out that door and walked outside for ten minutes, if you'd feel better about yourself?" Done it, come back, brilliant."*(p2)

In this excerpt the participant conveys how she has witnessed calmer interactions as a consequence of using wondering aloud techniques. It is reported that the whole school is calmer as a result of this change of interactional style which is believed to have resulted in less aggression and the need for fewer physical restraints. One participant expressed an increased sense of safety within the school:

*"But I would say, just a general feeling...a less threatening feeling walking around the school, maybe."*(p3).

A further consequence of the nurturing approaches, and particularly the use of wondering aloud techniques, was thought to be that it has 'given the children a voice' and has allowed them to be less defensive and more 'confident to be themselves'. When discussing the progress of a year ten pupil one participant noted that:

*"He's- he's actually... his personality, his real personality, is coming out now, and I think that's due to the way... particularly K's been working with him, and I think she's been using a lot of the nurture stuff with him. Interviewer: What is it that she's been doing in particular? What kind of things has she been...? Respondent: Just building his confidence up I think really, to sort of let him know that he doesn't have to shut people down all the time, he doesn't have to um swear at people if he gets angry. If he gets frustrated with his work, it... you know, there's other ways to- to deal with it. Um, and he now... as I say, he'll now approach me and ask me how I am and am I having a good day, and so I think*

*that's a... you know, I think he is one that I would definitely say it's had... of the older boys, I mean he's a Year 10 boy, and I think it's definitely had an impact on-on him."* (p7).

It seems that the act of being understood and provided with alternative solutions has allowed the pupil to be more able to have positive interactions with staff.

### ***Not one size fits all***

Table 5: Process 3: Not One Size Fits All

<b>Context/Condition</b>	<b>Mechanism (Emotion, Inter/Action)</b>	<b>Consequence</b>
<b>YP who is "vulnerable" as had impoverished early nurturing</b>	Feeling safe and secure	"Doing well"- benefiting from NG approach
<b>YP who is "behavioural": difficulties not seen as a consequence of early life and/or problems are too "entrenched"</b>	Resisting Nurture Approaches, Disliking approach, feeling patronised	Approach needs adapting and complimenting with other approaches. Changes take longer

However, participants note that the approach has not had an equally positive effect on all pupils as "not one size fits all". Teachers describe the NG children as fitting into two categories, those which are "vulnerable" and those who are "behavioural". It is felt that the nurturing approach (described as an environment with cuddly toys and a topic based curriculum) is supporting the vulnerable group, who are making good progress, however a more structured approach is needed for the other group who see the nurturing approach as "babyish":

*“Um, I think it’s given some of...some of the members of that group are very, very vulnerable, um, and it’s given them a safe and secure environment to learn, and they are learning and they’re doing particularly well. Um, there’s the other side of the group who...I believe that it’s too much like a primary school. They don’t like the topic based learning, so they’re not as engaged as the- the more vulnerable group.” (p1)*

Those young people who were described as not benefiting from the Nurture Approach were also described as having more entrenched problems. As the children are older than those which attend primary NGs their behaviour has perhaps been reinforced by more years of negative experiences.

*“Yeah, I think it’s, um, it really depends on the kids. Some of the kids find it a lot more difficult because their, um, behaviours are so much more pronounced.”(p3).*

Some participants wondered whether these children are resisting the approach as it does not fit their past experiences, and perhaps appears threatening.

*“Um sometimes they- they take liberties by the fact that we’re not going to intervene- intervene physically, and whereas they have in other areas, in other schools and at home and that sort of thing. So that- that- that can be a hindrance ‘cause you’re dealing with their past experience. But that’s what you’re going to do anyway. But it’s like being able to set up some new thought processes in the brain that get those synaptic sort of firing, as it were, to be able to... so that they realise that there’s a different pathway to doing things, rather than having to go, “Wah wah wah wah wah!”(p8).*

This perhaps mirrors the resistance from those teachers who cannot easily assimilate the new way of working into existing knowledge, instead finding the new approach a threat on their past experiences (discussed further in 5.4.2).

### ***Proactive, Reflective and Fluid Teaching***

Table 6: Process 4: Understanding Behaviour and Reflective Teaching

<b>Context/ Condition</b>	<b>Mechanism (emotion and inter/action)</b>	<b>Consequence</b>
<b>Understanding behaviour as a communication</b>	Breaking down what may be behind behaviour.	Proactive, reflective and fluid teaching
<b>Structures and time for reflection</b>	Considering life from the YP's perspective.	Thoughtful responses

As well as differences noted in the young people's behaviours, impacts upon the teaching staff were also observed. Teachers in the group describe their practice as more fluid, adapting to needs of the children in that moment.

*"I was very firm about action, set consequence, I've been a lot more fluid with the way I want to work, and- and that's actually hard if for...like a lot of staff to...like myself I find it really hard to let go and be so fluid and things with... you know and if something's not working, right let's change it on the spur of the moment, and things like that,....i- it has changed, we've been a lot...it's not...having structure, but being able to go with the flow a little bit more, I think that's something that we sort of got from it, as well."*(p4).

Many participants referred to the nurture principle "all behaviour is a communication" and described how throughout the school, teachers were trying to understand the underlying reasons for behaviour, leading to more reflective and proactive approaches:

*“Like people are really tryin’ to break down what is behind an action, rather than just tryin’ to deal with, like, reactively, so it’s more proactive to stuff as well, because we’re- we’re sort of predicting, you know, what- what life’s like for them, so what behaviours might we get from that?” (p4).*

### ***Shared Framework: ‘We All Talk the Same Language’***

Table 7: Process 5: Shared Framework

Context/ Condition	Mechanism (inter/action and emotion)	Consequence
<b>Whole school trained in nurture principles and approaches</b>	Understanding of intentions, motivation for change, framework for all staff member to base work around. Consistency of approach	Predictability Sense of community

The whole school training and emphasis on establishing a whole school ethos prior to starting the project had the effect of providing a consistency of approach as well as an understanding of the motivations and theory behind the project. One participant said of the training:

*“it was really good, and I think just generally...it has affected generally throughout the rest of the school as well, and it’s- it has just changed the way we- we work, you know.”(p4).*

Another noted the importance of the whole school understanding the motivations behind the project:

*“And so by giving them the training, they- they’ve got that understanding of what we’re trying to do, and that Year 7 are our future, um, and you know we- we’re trying to get the best possible educational outcomes for them in Year 11. So I think that’s helped.” (p1)*



A further benefit of the whole school training is that it seemed to have provided a shared framework for staff to base their work upon:

*“because attachment theory I think people know about, but again for new staff coming in i- it gives us a, uh, framework to work from, and so that is...that’s our framework, to work from. If we can embed those six principles in our teaching practice and our relationships with the kids, and everything else, that gives us that-...the- the ethos for the school –”(p2).*

This appeared to have provided a more consist approach amongst staff and therefore a more predictable experience for the children.

*“Because we’re using the same language. I think when everybody else was using different language, I think they were getting quite confused, you know, now we’re all using the same sort of language, I think that helps, so...”(p3).*

As discussed above, this predictability is believed to be the context allowing for children to feel safe and in turn become more settled.

### ***Splitting and Isolation***

Table 8: Process 6: Splitting and Isolation

<b>Context/ Condition</b>	<b>Mechanism (emotion and inter/action)</b>	<b>Consequence</b>
<b>Focus on establishment of NG.</b>	Others noticing what NG is getting and experiencing	Nurture seen as separate from whole school.
<b>Resources made available to NG teachers</b>	feelings of envy, neglect and resentment Splitting	Isolation of NG staff

Nonetheless, this whole school understanding and shared ownership of the approach does not seem to have remained as strong once the unit opened. Instead the nurture approaches seemed to be located by many participants as belonging to the unit, which is split off from the rest of the school. The idea that

something different, or better, may be happening in the unit, and that the staff working there are getting new resources, powers and attention from management created envy from the rest of the school (children and teachers).

*“I think...well there is- there is jokes in the staff room that we get everything we want because they’ve tried to set it up to be brand new, um, and so in terms of budget and stuff, we can...without takin’ the mick, we can do whatever we want -like, to get new stuff because- because there’s nothing up there.”(p5)*

*“we’ve put so much resources into it, you know, because it is a very high staff-pupil ratio up there, and other staff are struggling in other areas without support perhaps.” (p1)*

In turn, those in the unit (both young people and teachers) express a sense of isolation and disconnect from the whole school:

*“I mean new boys were coming in... older boys were coming in and we didn’t know who they were, and so initially we sort of if we came down into the main staff room, there was a feeling of um... personally, I felt a bit as though I was a bit out of- out of everything” (p7).*

It seems that this split has been heightened as the high level of resources needed to support the establishment of the group meant that the whole school work was seemingly overlooked for this period.

*“before we had the Year 7 nurture unit up there, I was kind of, uh, really focused on developing everyone’s strategies throughout the school, and I felt as if we were getting somewhere with that. And then that happened, and now I’m sort of divided between maths and the nurture stuff...Year 7 nurture stuff, and keeping*

*other staff up with doing what they were doing, is kind of...I've kind of lost that if you...do you see what I mean?"(p3)*

Nonetheless, the success of the project seemed to have re-motivated those in the whole school to expand the nurture model further into the older year groups in order to create a whole school nurturing approach, thus seeming to create an hour glass process: whole school- group- whole school (see section 5.4.2 for further discussion)

This process of moving back towards a whole school ownership of the project has been facilitated by those in the group being reconnected with the rest of the school through shared debriefs and break times as well as allowing the children in the group to attend whole school assemblies. It seems that continuing a connection with the whole school is needed if further splitting is to be contained.

### ***Intense for Staff***

Table 9: Process 7: High Intensity for Staff

Context/ Condition	Mechanism (Emotion and Inter/action)	Consequence
With YP for whole day	Intense relationships, sense of isolation, unable to get away from negative feelings/incidents	High intensity for staff Need to change structure Staff members leaving NG

Although staff have been able to form stronger relationships with the young people in the group, this has come at a cost as the intensity of the work impacts their emotional wellbeing. The setting up of the unit was described as *"horrendously hard work"* (p1) particularly as the staff working in the unit felt isolated from the main school and were unable to take breaks with other teachers as they ate lunch with the students:

*“it’s just really intense for the staff when you’re with them, and they behave...like, sort of, you know...the relationship you have almost is quite intense, I think. Rather than seeing a pupil for one lesson, like a traditional school, and then, you know, so you get to say goodbye and you don’t have to deal with...if they’ve had a problem, you don’t have to deal with it the whole day, and that’s quite hard if they...if you have a problem with a student, or they, you know, they start getting angry at you at the start of the day, that can carry through right through to the end of the day, and you can’t really get away from it” (p4).*

Another participant described how health difficulties meant they were no longer able to work in the unit due to the intensity of the work.

The importance of resilient teachers as well as opportunities for supervision and reflection upon staff morale and wellbeing was evident. Teachers also noted the importance of a context in which there is a supportive management and staff group who provide breaks and structures which allow time away from the unit when things become too intense.

### ***Balancing Priorities***

Table 10: Process 8: Balancing Priorities

<i>Context/ Conditions</i>	<i>Mechanism (emotions and inter/actions)</i>	<i>Consequence</i>
<b>Competing priorities and beliefs</b>	Uncomfortable dissonance, contradictions, testing out approaches, reflection	Continued process of finding a balance and approach which works for the setting

A further difficulty which was raised during the interviews was the struggle to find the balance between competing priorities: between nurture approaches and

curriculum demands, planning and time with the children, creating a classroom environment and a homely environment and between a primary based approach and preparation for transition to the main school.

*“we- we’re balancing between getting them ready for the classroom, and being a home where they can make choices and develop those skills that they need to develop, and that balance, I don’t think, is clear for us yet, like where we- where we draw the line from one and start the other.”(p5).*

Many participants spoke about the difficulty in applying a primary based model to a year seven group and the uncomfortable dissonance they felt about these two competing teaching approaches.

Participants also expressed their concern about the transition from year seven to year eight and the need to gradually prepare the children for the structures of the whole school, something which increased their reluctance to use a completely traditional NG approach.

*“And unfortunately, when they get in to Year 8, they won’t be part of that nurture unit, so we’re at a balance where we’re developing nurture, but we have to still get them ready for the main school, and to be able to sit on chairs and...’cause people have come in and said, “Oh you should have a sofa” but at the moment we don’t, and we want to, but then my thought is well if we get a sofa in there, are they gonna spend the whole time sitting on the sofa, which is fine in the nurture unit, but then when they get to school and they realise...when they get to the main school and they realise well there’s no sofa, are they gonna be able to sit round a desk and do their work? So we’ve got a weird balance going on, but, yeah, no I think it’s going really well.”(P5)*

This process of balancing these competing needs and priorities links to the dynamic process which is occurring throughout the change process described in section 5.4.2. Through reflection and adaptation the project is evolving and moving towards a point of equilibrium which provides the best fit between competing priorities (discussed in more detail below).

### ***The Nature of Nurture***

Table 11: Process 9: The Nature of Nurture

Context/Conditions	Mechanisms (emotions and inter/actions)	Consequences
<b>Introduction of a new idea with both abstract and concrete elements. No direct experience of approach.</b>	Anxiety about unknown, seeking tangible concrete understanding,	Emphasis on physical structures and definable tasks (concrete definition)
<b>Introduction of a new idea with both abstract and concrete elements. Direct experience of approach.</b>	Reflection, Reduced anxiety of unknown	The incorporation of abstract understanding of the idea as well as concrete elements

A further narrative which emerged from the data was the competing ideas of what ‘nurture’ is. Some participants spoke about the physical space as being nurturing whilst other identified particular activities or strategies which were nurturing:

*“my classroom is um... you know, I tried to initially work on the aesthetics, make it a nice calming, safe place for pupils, enabling them to learn and uh kind of building relationships with them and- and trying to make it kind of a nice, safe environment.” (p6).*

*“As I’ve said, I think they’re m-...aware of those principles, and it’s something for them to go back to and revisit, and I think they are, um...it’s given them a little...some- some more, uh...a different range of activities, I guess, teaching activities to do, which they- they’ve tried to employ a lot. I know lots of staff have*

*developed stuff across the school. I know that, um, I know that in most subjects people have tried to do some nurture- nurture stuff, so that's been good. Um, so yeah."* (p3).

Other participants, perhaps those with more experience and involvement in the project, referred to a more abstract definition of nurture as a therapeutic approach to teaching:

*"Getting them ready to be learners and looking after them in a way, sort of, a- a different approach to looking after the pupils. More sort of personal, um, yeah acting more almost as a parent figure, as well as a teacher, so..."*(p4).

As is discussed further below, there seemed to be a wish for the concrete aspects of the approach (physical space and tasks) in the early stages of change as this felt tangible and achievable, reducing ambiguity and uncertainty. Perhaps the latter abstract conceptualisation of the approach is something which develops through the dynamic process of practice and reflection (described below) as a state of mind is not able to be taught through training alone.

#### ***5.4.2 The Process of Change***

As is noted above, the nurture project was still in its infancy when the research was completed and the school was in a state of transition, trying to embed the approaches into their practice. The narratives of the participants therefore discussed their experiences of the process of change and the mechanisms and contexts which had allowed for it to happen. This process seemed to be one of finding a balance between theory and experience which allowed for sustaining and increasing motivation, sharing ownership of the project and embedding the principles of 'nurture' in to a whole school ethos.

This process is depicted in Figure 8 showing the actions, emotions, consequences and contexts and how they were found to interact during the whole school change project at Woodlands Academy. Subsequently, Figure 9 depicts a model of facilitators of whole school change based upon those found to facilitate the change at Woodlands Academy.



## Chapter 5: Results

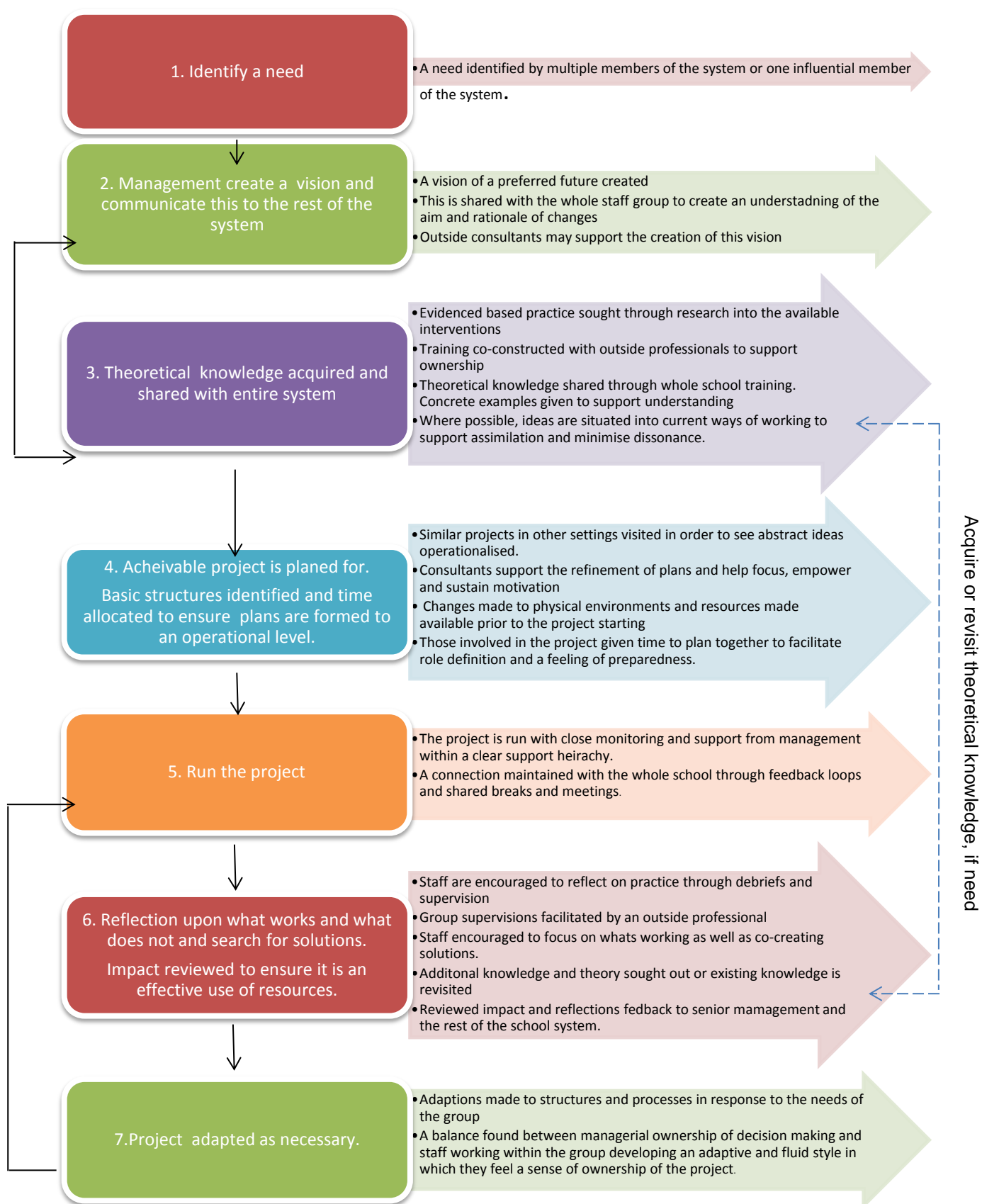


Figure 9: Model of Change Facilitators

### *Ownership of the Project*

Table 12: Process 10: Ownership of the Project

Context/ Condition	Mechanism (emotion and inter/action)	Consequence
<b>Management with vision</b>	Sharing of vision with staff group	Motivated staff group
<b>Outside professionals (EP) involved in project</b>	Knowledge giving and providing guidance through consultation. Feeling held and supported	Sustaining momentum and confidence.
	Move from expert advice to process consultation and facilitation of supervision	Increased ownership of school staff and sustained motivation.

One of the balances, which the school appeared to be endeavouring to find, was a balance between top down and bottom up processes. This was found in the narratives about the motivations for starting the project and the ownership of the project.

There was recognition of the importance of a motivated leader and the positive effect of an influential person having a vision which they are able to convey to the rest of the staff group. When asked what advice they would give to another school embarking on the same project one participant answered:

*“Make sure it’s led from the front, and the person who’s leading it has got a high profile.”(p8).*

Alongside this top down approach, there was also an acknowledgment of the need to ensure that all staff were on board with the changes and had a shared vision. As the project developed there appeared to be a growing need for bottom up processes as those working on the “front line” needed to be committed to the project and help shape its direction:

*“I think you have to- you have to pick- you have to pick the staff that- that really... you have to be committed for it, I think, because it is such a um intense environment, um, to be with that one group all the time”(p8)*

*“it has been like J (head teacher) and the senior leadership team that have pushed it forward, and then the key people have um, you know, taken it on and run with it, like K (project lead) and uh R (EP), but then L, J and R, (NG teachers) they’re the ones like on the ground floor, as it were, and they’re the ones that are really putting in all the hard work, ‘cause they’re the ones with the kids.”(p6)*

This shift from top down management towards shared ownership was also reflected in the support given from outside professionals such as the Educational Psychology Service. This support changed from the provision of directive expert knowledge and training to collaborative consultation and supervision. Participants valued the training, support and guidance of outside professionals provided throughout the change process, describing how this provided a feeling of being held and supported by the wider network:

*“I think uh it’s uh been vital. It’s been vital to know that there’s other people involved, there’s other people on board, and um that it’s more than actually just a school issue. It- it, you know, it- it is... it’s been supported from um, uh from you know from county as well.”(p7).*

However, there was also a wish to adapt the advice given by others to their own setting/needs and *“pick and choose what one they want and implement these... those sort of things.”(p8)* In order to *“put their own twist on it” (p8)* and further a sense of ownership of the project.

Support from both those inside the school and from professionals from outside the school was viewed as being beneficial:

*“most of the input has been from inside the school, but in terms of helpfulness, it’s been from both.”(p5).*

The above quote also perhaps refers to the sense of disappointment expressed by some participants, reporting feeling that they would have benefited from more support from outside professionals, not just at the initial stages of the project but also once the project was running (through supervision of teachers, consultation to managers and further knowledge and training).

As well as the benefit of support from outside professionals, teachers described the benefits of being well supported by their senior management team and the value of their close involvement in the project:

*“(the head teacher) was coming up to our meetings every night if there was an issue, because there’d been quite a few issues with behaviour up there, and he was very supportive of that, and when he realised that um we were struggling sometimes even to sit down and eat lunch ourselves, you know, he actually came up and started stepping in to take up... so that people could go and have a time away.” (p7).*

### ***Dynamic Process: Planning and Preparation vs. Reflection and Evolution***

Table 13: Process 11: Dynamic Process

Context/ Condition	Mechanism (inter/action and emotion)	Consequence
<b>Beginning of new project/change</b>	Want for certainty and structure and expert advice.	Feeling prepared for changes.
<b>Reflective spaces</b>	Process of practice, reflection, group problem solving and adaptation of practice. Feeling valued and positive.	Evolution of the project to fit group needs and increased motivation and ownership.

The change in the role of the Educational Psychology Service (from expert advice to supporting supervision and reflection) is perhaps part of a wider dynamic process. In this dynamic process planning, preparation and expert knowledge were balanced with the evolution of the project through practice, reflection and adaptation. It seems that it was/is the continuous movement between these two states which allowed change to occur and the project to be refined.

There seemed to be a desire to have a complete knowledge prior to beginning the group and a want for expert advice regarding the structure and the details of the day. Although the theoretical knowledge provided in the training was viewed as valuable there appeared to be a desire for more concrete, tangible knowledge, such as advice about the structure of the timetable and protocols for lunchtime and transitions, without which the team felt unprepared:

*“I think it was just this word, we’re building a nurture unit, and what we were actually meant to be doing in that, or actually we thought we should be doing in that, wasn’t clear, um, and maybe it still isn’t, to be honest,”(p5).*

*“(we needed) more time to plan it than we did, I think that’s something that...um, I know that it was all...and- and staff who should be...who are gonna be involved in it, should know six months, a year in advanced. ‘Cause of, for us, we didn’t actually know until...I didn’t know until the last day of term I was gonna be teaching up there and so...and then even then I didn’t know what subjects, or whether I was gonna be a- a general class teacher or just teaching my subjects. So, that was really hard for planning-wise, and to sort of get the space prepared properly. (p5)”.*

Participants also spoke about feeling that the physical space itself was not ready:

*“I guess as well, something I’m a little bit disappointed in, which we haven’t really got, which again we might...if we’d visited other schools, is the resources. Um, and- and again, that’s having time. It’s almost- almost like we weren’t quite ready for it, so they’ve got rooms up there, and they’ve got the beanbags, uh, but there’s nothing on the walls, it’s quite bare, so it’s not really feeling like...and it- it’s how to develop that, and I think it would- would’ve been useful to go and see some other schools to really get...that’s definitely not my skill base, decorating rooms, um...”(p3).*

However, this was balanced with a recognition of the value of having the young people involved in decorating the rooms, enabling them to be adapted to the young people’s needs and providing the students with a sense of ownership over the space and the project:

*“originally it was all meant to be set up, but...so we’re now having the opportunity and the boys are getting a lot more input into it, which is really good for them, and helps us as well.”... ‘Cause we’re...we are tryin’ to backtrack a little bit, and*

*sort everything out. It's good that we can now have more pupil input, don't get me wrong, I like, 'cause I think they should have an input because if we just say this is this, this is this, this is this, they're not gonna be as interested."*(p5).

On the other hand, participants highlight that a consequence of feeling unprepared was that the children were quite unsettled when they began:

*"..um, and just go with the flow, and that went horrifically. Like we had a lot of behavioural problems. Obviously we were gonna have more problems 'cause it was the start of the term and they were gonna test us, and all those things, but because they didn't know what was going on. So then we developed more and more structure. We've ended up having a set timetable, which I think works better for everyone, especially the pupils 'cause they know what's happening."*(p5).

There seems to be a desire for the physical space and resources to be prepared prior to starting, perhaps because seeing these concrete objects helps to reduce the uncertainty of a new way of working.

However, it was not only practical issues which the participants felt would have benefited from more time to prepare; it was also expressed that they did not have time to define their roles and work out how to work together which again was thought to have had the consequence of unsettling the young people:

*"Um, and just having a team that know how to work together, know what's expected of everybody's roles in the group, as well, because I think that's been quite hard. We had- we had somebody drop out who was sort of managing us and ---- so now we've had to sort of re-find how we are looking after each other,*



*who does what, and yeah, they sort of need to come into that established, because that doesn't help the kids. If you're not feeling secure in what your role is, they'll pick up on that, and so yeah, that's what I'd say, just lots and lots of preparation, so..." (p4).*

In contrast to this want for clear plans and preparation, there was also a recognition of the benefits of learning from experience, tweaking and changing as the project evolves. The project was described as being in its first form, and some participants felt they were learning from this experience in order to make improvements for future cohorts. The project was described as evolving and there seemed to be some uncertainty about the end result:

*"Cause I mean, the end- the end result of what that place is gonna look like, I don't know what it's gonna be. I mean we're developing it and we're coming up with new ideas, but how it's gonna be in the end, I still don't know." (p4).*

*"Um, so I think it is going well, but being realistic, I think as a nurture unit, it'll be up and running for the next Year 7s." (p5).*

Other participants spoke about the ongoing process of problem solving, a process which some participants referred to as 'tweaking':

*"But, you know, they...you find a problem and then you solve it, and then the next problem comes along and you solve that one. Um, and as I say, it is early days" (p1).*

It seemed like the adaption of the structure of the group was being driven through a collaborative process, perhaps linking to the importance of bottom up investment and ownership of the project mentioned above:

*“Um, well I think what we’re trying to do is, this year, trying to build it up. Because, unfortunately, due to many school issues, we didn’t really...it was meant to be all sorted over summer, and it didn’t happen, so we’re kind of now...we’ve had to take the view that we’re building this nurture unit like we’re building our family and our home, but we’re now doing it as a group”(p5).*

The spacing of training sessions was thought have supported this dynamic process as it allowed teachers to process information, practice new techniques and reflect upon the impact of changes being made. This was also supported by the structure of the training sessions which allowed for time to reflect on the changes practice as well as sessions providing further theoretical knowledge and consolidating the theory provided in previous sessions. One participant commented that:

*“I think it gave time for uh concepts to sink in, and it wasn’t a shock to the system. I’m not sure if it would have been better to have it all in one go, but I think it’s probably good to have time in between so people can process it, process the ideas, take on board the concepts, maybe try them out, and then come back- come back to another training day and they can kind of actually give some feedback or have some experience.” (p6).*

However, it was also noted that lengthy gaps between sessions sometimes caused staff to forget earlier learning therefore needing it to be refreshed each session. There seemed to be a need to find a balance between allowing enough time to elapse between training sessions so that staff are able to process, practice and reflect and not so much time that learning is forgotten.

The value of reflective spaces and indeed reflective teaching was also found in the positive narratives around supervision (at the time of data collection only those directly involved in the group were being offered supervision by the EP).

*“Um, I think it’s really good they have supervision. Uh as a school, we don’t have uh supervision, and I think a lot of these pupils have a lot of emotions. They tap into staff’s emotions and things happen, you know, that you have to kind of deal with, and sometimes its spur of the moment.”(p3).*

Here the participant speaks of the function of supervision as a space to process emotions, both their own and those of the pupils, and indeed those which the pupils have projected into the staff members. Others commented on finding the solution-focussed approach taken within supervision sessions helpful, enabling them to find new strategies whilst also allowing them to feel supported by their team and realise that others experienced similar difficulties.

*“It’s just- it’s just helpful to come up...just to talk to someone else and come up with new ideas about how you can approach things, um, and it’s...in a weird way, it’s nice to hear that other people are in the same position as you. Like, it sounds a bit harsh, but if I’m saying, “Oh I’m really struggling with”, I was just gonna say Bob again, and someone else says, “Actually, so am I”, and it’s like ok, so it’s not- it’s not me, it’s just- it’s just the situation. It’s this pupil, we’re not helping him enough yet, or whatever it is. But it...I suppose it’s just- it’s just like a group of friends, and it’s just like you’re not alone, you can work with other people, and you don’t need to deal with your problem on your own ---- and you can get help about it, and you can get new ideas, and then there’s even been things that happ-...that it’s just so happened that it’s developed onto other things, and*

*brought out new ideas, not even an issue, just, “Oh, well let’s try this”, or, “Maybe we should add this to our curriculum”, or whatever it is, it’s just- it’s just been really good and progressive for us just to develop- to develop strategies from problems and then just to bring out new ideas on what we can do.”(p5)*

This space to reflect was not only found in-group supervision but also in the one to one consultation sessions between the EP and the project lead. This helped guide, contain and provide a sense of momentum to the project.

*“That gave me a lot of guidance, but it was having that space for me to, uh, think about the direction that we’re going to go in, um, it wasn’t..it’s not even necessarily...it wasn’t necessarily guidance specifically, but it was a time for me to sort of think about, “Right, what do we need to do next? What’s the next step along the way?” So I think that’s what is most helpful about it. (p3).*

It seems that within this it is the space to think which is valued the most, rather than the guidance that was offered.

There also appeared to be motivation to use debriefs more reflectively in order to consider the reasons underlying incidents and find solutions as well as reporting upon the day.

*“so we tell them about how the pupils have done, but we haven’t really got time to discuss more in-depth what strategies are working. Um, we could- we could use time a bit better to...yeah, rather than just, “What went wrong today?”, “Well what went wrong and what can we do about it?” would be better, so, that would be nice” (p4).*

This dynamic process, of learning, planning, practicing, reflecting and adapting is one which is a “long journey” and it is evident that things did not change overnight. This appeared to be true for both the creation of the year seven NG and the whole school ethos change:

*“this is how long it’s taking. It’s taking a long time. And I guess in my head, I- i would always think five years is just really starting to establish something,”* (p3)

For some the slow process of change seemed to be a source of disappointment and they expressed feelings of impatience:

*“So, it’s a bit of a disappointment really, I think. I think we had...we- we focused a lot of time, money, resources on it, um, and it hasn’t had the impact, at the moment, of- of...you know, that we envisaged.”* (p1)

*“it just feels quite slow, and I wanna speed it up”* (p3).

### ***Embedding Theory into Practice***

As well as this dynamic process of planning, experience and reflection supporting the embedding of theoretical knowledge in practice, motivation for continuing the project was also supported by two further processes: first-hand experience of the impact of the approach and assimilation of new ideas and current belief systems.

Table 14: Process 12: Embedding Theory into Practice

Context/ Condition	Mechanism (inter/action and emotion)	Consequence
<b>Observation of the intervention in practice</b>	Seeing abstract knowledge being operationalised. Noticing benefits and considering how this applied to own practice.	Increased understanding of theory and motivation to adapt and apply aspects in own practice

It appeared that seeing the positive impacts of the NG project continued to motivate those working both inside and outside of the group (Table 14). When discussing how nurture practice was becoming embedded in the whole school one teacher commented:

*“I think they’ve seen the impact that it’s had with some of the... you know, some of the boys when we started using the um the nurture strategies, I think that they started seeing that they work, they do work, and so I think that’s actually what’s brought people on board with it, really. You know, the seeing the changes in some of the boys that actually needed it and, you know, it’s not necessarily just the younger ones that need it. Some of our older boys have missed out on nurture the stuff from their, you know, from their younger life, so they’re benefitting from- from that as well. So I think that’s- that’s probably what’s had the biggest impact” (p7).*

As discussed in section 5.4.1, the move from a whole school focus to a small group focus caused envy within the staff team affecting the staff dynamics within the school. Nonetheless it seems that the NG allowed staff to be able to see the theory they had been taught operationalised and the positive impacts of the approach became evident and observable. This in turn seemed to motivate a refocusing on whole school as well as small group changes.

As well as the need to see the project operationalised in their own setting there was also a desire from most participants to see a NG running in a different school setting. It was believed that if this had occurred prior to planning their own group they would have had a better understanding of how the theory being

presented in training sessions worked in practice and be able to make more effective plans for their own group, perhaps reducing the anxiety experienced at the start of the project.

*“I’d like to go to another school first...‘cause I always think when you see it running, it’s...it always gives you a bit of ideas how you can actually adapt it to your setting” (p2)*

This again links to the concept of ownership described above as teachers wish to take ideas and adapt to your own setting.

Table 15: Process 13: Assimilation and Accommodation of New Ideas

Context/ Condition	Mechanism (inter/action and emotion)	Consequence
<b>Beliefs underlying new intervention fits with own belief system</b>	New ideas assimilated into internal world.	Motivation and affirmation
<b>Beliefs underlying new interventions contradict those of own belief system</b>	New ideas need to be accommodated into belief system. Feeling challenged and uncomfortable dissonance.	Resistance to change

The second process supporting the move from theory to practice was the assimilation of new ideas into pre-existing beliefs and knowledge (Table 15). The more congruence there was between personal beliefs/experiences and the proposed changes, the more motivated the participant was about the change. It seemed that many participants wanted to highlight how the new way of working fit into their existing belief systems, personal philosophy or was confirming knowledge or experiences which they already had, in some cases seeming to deny that they had learnt anything new:

*“But in terms of my um personal sort of uh- uh philosophy, it fits in with that, um the nurturing. I came across a nurturing project way back in um 1999 when I was*

*at school there, and so the idea of nurture um was pretty much defined in my- in my life at that point, really.”(p8).*

Another participant said that the changes *“brought out the best in me, I think it’s brought out what I am”(p2)* explaining how it fit with her belief systems about herself and her approach to work.

However, this was not the case for all staff members as for others the new ideas contradicted previous ways of working:

*“I was a little bit unsure of it because I wasn’t really sure how it was going to work, what it would involve, and if it was actually um... not... if it was... it was a whole new approach to the way we... that I’ve been working. I mean I’ve been an LSA here for here for over 14 years, so it was quite a new approach to, um, to- to dealing with- with the children, and um, so I- I... but once I... so initially, as I say, and I was quite involved with the English department, so I was- I was a little bit um disappointed, at first, that I was being pulled out of the main school and put up there.”*

It seemed that having to accommodate new knowledge that contradicted previous belief systems caused a feeling of incompetence, uncertainty and resistance. It therefore seems important that during the initial stages of change links are made with pre-existing beliefs and ways of working in order that the process of assimilation is facilitated.

Continuing to be motivated through the long dynamic change process described above also needed supporting. It seemed that continued hands on involvement



from management and a clear hierarchical structure in which the teachers feel supported from a middle manager facilitated continued motivation.

*Um, well I- I've relied a lot on going to K and, um, I've got a good relationship with her anyway, and being able to go to her if I'm not feeling confident about it, um, I can just go to her and sort of talk to her about if I've had a- a situation I felt I didn't deal with it right, so,... --and it's been nice now, if we've got, um, CG coming up as well, and we've got more people...just a few more, um, middle management people coming up and, um, supporting the sort of...there's the three of us that are up there all the time, and that's been really nice having some support up there and just sort of, "Yes, you are doing the right thing", sort of thing. (p4).*

It was also important that training and outside support did not just occur at the beginning of the change process but continued throughout it, through supervision, consultation with those leading the project and through revisiting training.

*"Um, but just even more training to sort of...more and more training will help us get more sort of aware of the sort of things we should be doing to-- and keeping refreshed about it, and keeping enthused about it ---- 'cause that's hard to always...you know, start of the year everybody's feeling great about it, but..." (p4).*

As well as those teachers who continued to be motivated, other members of the group held a more sceptical position (perhaps those for whom assimilating these ideas into their belief system was more difficult). These staff members were described as viewing the times in which the new approaches did not have the

desired effect as an affirmation of their prior belief system, voicing the need to reverse the change.

*“Other things that hinder it? I think it’s about uh people’s willingness to uh take new ideas on and adapt. That- that- that’s- that can be a limiting factor. You only perhaps need one person in a room who uh doesn’t quite get it, and that can inflame the situation so that whatever work’s been done, conversations been had from other quarters, that um it ends up going down a different route than you wanted it to go.”... “When it becomes a bit um difficult, you know, and you’re trying everything of the principles and- and nothing’s working, or seems to be working, thing... there- there are the temptation to you go back to what you know will work, or what you think will work, or what you might have to do.”(p8).*

Perhaps these people have a role in the group in ensuring that changes being made are positive and justified, however their influence may need to be carefully managed so that they do not demotivate staff and hinder positive change.

### ***Availability of Resources***

Table 16: Process 14: Staffing Changes and Planning Time

Context/ Condition	Mechanism (Inter/action and emotion)	Consequence
<b>No time for planning and reflection</b>	Frustration, feeling stuck, delay of project and/or rushing of planning stage. Impatience.	Feeling unprepared, anxious and unmotivated. Process of change hindered.
<b>Staffing changes</b>	Inconsistency, instability, unsettling.	Delay of project, frustration.

As well as the processes described above, the availability of resources (both physical and human) also played a part in facilitating and hindering a change from occurring.

'Time' was needed both in the planning and preparation stage and during the process of change itself (time to plan and time to reflect). One participant spoke of the difficulty in finding time for both of these processes and identified that this was hindering progress:

*"time, just time. To get the time, and that's not anybody's fault necessarily, um, but to- to sort of say, "Ok, if- if we want to be able to move forward, I've got to be able to plan to move forward." Um, and to do that, I'll monitor where we've got to, you know, and that obviously requires some amount of time as well, so yeah, and I just really haven't had that this half term, at all."*(p3).

There was also the need to invest money in order to develop the physical space and buy new resources:

*"There's got to be certain areas within the classroom, certain uh equipment's got to be bought and there's got to be realistic about it. You've got plenty of- plenty of uh... for equipment... money for equipment, that sort of thing"* (p8).

A further factor that hindered progress was the inconsistent and unpredictable nature of staffing, perhaps heightened by the intense nature of the work in the school:

*"Um, and then the staffing troubles has really caused us problems, but that's also settling down now, but we had a member of staff who resigned, was in for maybe two weeks of term, and then left. And then we had another...our LSA's*

*been off sick for the last four weeks. And it just unsettles the kids and makes it harder for us so...but yeah I don't think there's been many problems."* (p5).

High turnover of staff delayed the start of the project, caused inconsistencies in the amount of training staff received and caused difficulties in sustaining the change.

## ***5.5 Answers to the Research Questions***

### ***5.5.1 Overarching Question***

**Q: What supports and what hinders the implementation of nurture based approaches in a school for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties and what impact do these approaches have?**

**A:** It seems that the implementation of nurture based approaches was supported by a number of contexts and mechanisms co-occurring within the school. A motivated and supportive management inspired other members of staff through the sharing of their vision and the reasoning behind the proposed changes. A move from top down expert management of the project to shared ownership in adaptation of the project increased motivation and ensured that the intervention was adapted to meet the needs of the school. A further supportive mechanism was found for those whose existing beliefs were congruent with those underlying the project, here the new ideas were easily assimilated into their belief system and teachers were motivated to try out the new ways of working. Conversely, when the new project appeared to challenge underlying beliefs motivation for

change was hindered which caused resistance. However, the project was further facilitated through teaching staff being able to see positive changes occurring within the NG, motivating them to include aspects of the approach within their own practice and expand the work into the whole school system.

The continued adaptation and refinement of the project was achieved through a dynamic process of learning, practicing, reflecting and adapting. This was supported by reflective spaces within the training sessions and staff supervision groups.

Throughout the project the school was supported by the Educational Psychology Service, using different approaches at different stages of the change process. This began with the dissemination of knowledge and theory in order to provide a rationale and give expert guidance, followed by managerial process consultation to sustain momentum. Subsequently, the role of the EP was the facilitation of supervision to enable reflection and adaptation of the project.

When researched, the project had only recently begun however a number of positive impacts were noted both inside of the NG itself and within the whole school system. Within the group the separation from the older children and consistency in teachers seems to have provided a sense of safety and security for the children. This allowed them to settle into the school, build relationships with one another and their teachers and feel more confident. Outside of the group the use of wondering aloud techniques and a focus on understanding the underlying communications behind behaviour were thought to be leading to a calmer atmosphere in the school and better relationships between teachers and

pupils. However, it was recognised that these positive impacts were not universal and the approach is thought to be better suited to “vulnerable” young people.

### ***5.5.2 Further Questions***

**Q: What are school staff members’ perceptions of the impact of the nurture approaches on the children with whom they work?**

**A:** The teachers reported that for some of the children in the NG there have been phenomenal changes as they are more settled, attending more lessons and acting more thoughtfully towards other group members. The young people are thought to be building “appropriate attachments” to the teachers in the group, supporting their emotional development. However, other young people had not yet shown such a positive change, perhaps feeling that the approach is too immature for them or resisting the new approach.

Outside of the group young people were described as more responsive to adults and less aggression is reported. Trying to understand the reasons underlying behaviour is also believed to be allowing young people to develop alternative ways of managing their emotions and young people are believed to be becoming more confident to “be themselves”.

**Q: What are school staff members’ perceptions of the impact of nurture approaches on the school organisation?**

**A:** The school is reported to be calmer and less aggressive and it’s thought that the approaches have led to less physical interventions. However, the focussing of resources upon the year seven group has caused some envy towards the NG

as those outside of it felt less supported by management. In turn, those in the group felt isolated and separate from the rest of the school.

**Q: What are school staff members' perceptions of the impact of training about nurture approaches on their practice?**

**A:** Many staff members were positive about the training they received on the nurture approaches. They reported changes in practice, particularly in the way that they communicate with the young people. It was felt that the spacing out of training enabled skills to be tried out and reflected upon, as well as the consolidation of knowledge through multiple trainings.

**Q: What do school staff members' believe has supported their implementation of the nurture approaches?**

**A:** Teachers reported that the implementation of the approach has been supported by a motivated management team and a move towards a shared ownership of the project, availability of resources and support from outside professionals. Furthermore, whole school training appeared to develop a shared understanding and ethos whilst seeing the progress made in the NG increased motivation for whole school change. Finally spaces for reflection allowed teachers to consider ways to adapt their practice and adapt the model to the particular needs of the setting.

**Q: What do school staff members' believe has hindered them from implementing the nurture approaches?**

**A:** Teachers expressed a wish to have had more time to prepare for the changes and to have visited other settings who are using the approaches. For some

members of the teaching group it is felt that the focussing of resources on the year seven NG meant that whole school changes were hindered, however others report that this enabled them to see the positive impacts and become motivated to make further whole school changes.



## ***5.6 Chapter Summary***

This chapter has presented a detailed report of the findings of the study, illustrated by diagrams and excerpts from the interview transcripts.

Participants spoke about their experiences of the process of change and the mechanisms and contexts that had facilitated it. This process seemed to be one of finding a balance between theory and experience, top down and bottom up ownership of the project and between planning for and adapting the project through a cycle of training, practice and reflection. The school also appeared to be finding a balance between positive and negative impacts of the NG and nurturing approaches both within the NG and the wider school system.

# ***Chapter 6: Discussion***

## ***6.1 Overview of Chapter***

This final chapter begins by locating the current findings within existing literature, both to highlight the congruencies and incongruences and to use existing knowledge to further explain the contexts and mechanisms underlying the results. The key findings will then be discussed in terms of their implications for the progression of the project, or similar projects, and for wider Educational Psychology practice and research. Subsequently, the strengths and limitations of the study will be reviewed and finally reflections on the research process will be considered.

## ***6.2 Locating the Findings within Existing Literature***

### ***6.2.1 The Impact of the Nurturing Approaches Project***

This section will further discuss the answers to the following research questions:

1. What are school staff members' perceptions of the impact of the nurture approaches on the young people with whom they work?
2. What are school staff members' perceptions of the impact of nurture approaches on the school organisation?
3. What are school staff members' perceptions of the impact of training about nurture approaches on their practice?

Comparisons are drawn between the current findings and those discussed in the initial literature review. In addition to this, further theory and literature has been sought for those elements that emerged through data analysis.

Due to the scope of this paper only the key findings are discussed below. These were selected as they were deemed to be the findings which best answered the research questions.

***Research Question 1: What are school staff members' perceptions of the impact of the nurture approaches on the young people they work with?***

Positive impacts were reported for the pupils within the year seven NG. A sense of safety was described as being fostered through the low number of teachers working in the group, being physically separated from the rest of the school, and the predictability of the environment. This finding is congruent with previous research on NGs for this age group. The notion that a sense of safety was underlying the positive impact of the group was also discussed by Gardner and Thomas (2011) in their research about a NG in a secondary school. Drawing upon attachment theory, they believed that the NG functioned as a secure base reducing young people's anxiety and providing them with somewhere to return to for security. Furthermore, the finding that the formation of relationships between young people and their teachers supported a sense of safety consistent with the findings of Griffith et al. (2014) who noted that students valued the positive relationships in the group which fostered a sense of belonging.

More broadly, research exploring what supports positive outcomes in individualised therapy has concluded that the therapeutic relationship correlates more highly with positive outcomes than the specifics of the therapy given

(Lambert and Barley, 2001). The current findings broadly supports the generalisation of Lambert and Barley's study within a school group setting as the development of positive teacher-pupil relationships was identified as being a mechanism for behavioural change.

This was also discussed by Bailey (2010), in his research into a NG in a specialist setting. Bailey concluded that children's emotional state was improved by attendance in the group. He identified mechanisms that supported this, including a sense of trust between adults and young people allowing them to feel able to give up control and become reliant upon others whilst also increasing self-esteem.

In the current study, teachers described how within the context of a safe space young people were 'settled' and engaging in academic and artistic work. Although academic performance was not directly measured and thus this assertion must be understood as a perception of the teachers, it broadly supports findings from studies of full time NGs in primary schools which noted increased academic performance due to increased engagement in lessons (Mackay, Reynolds and Kearney, 2010; Seth-Smith et al, 2010).

According to psychoanalytic developmental psychology, one of the key skills needed to successfully engage in learning tasks is an ability to tolerate anxiety and frustration. Salzberger-Wittenberg (1983) writes that:

*"learning arises in a situation in which we do not or are as yet unable to achieve what we aim to do. It thus invariably involves uncertainty, some degree of frustration, and disappointment"* (Salzberger- Wittenberg, 1983, p52).

It could therefore be hypothesised that the safe base and trusting attachments to adults within the NG allowed children to feel safe enough to embark on learning activities.

Furthermore, the identification of positive impacts of a NG in a specialist setting in this study is consistent with Bailey's (2010) research. Furthermore, the suggestion that the approach can be adapted for use with secondary aged pupils adds further support to research supporting its application with this population (Colley, 2009; Garner and Thomas, 2011; Kourmoulaki, 2013; Cooke, Yeoman and Parkes, 2008; Gates, 2010).

Many participants also described positive impacts occurring outside of the year seven NG. They described a calmer atmosphere within the whole school, claiming that there were less physical interventions being used and pupils were more responsive to teachers' verbal interventions. This was largely attributed to the use of 'wondering aloud', a strategy recommended by Bomber (2007) for teachers working with children with attachment needs. When using this technique, adults make "*tentative remarks*" (Bomber, 2007, p88) about what they think may be happening for the young person, usually starting with the phrase "*I'm wondering if...*".

In addition to being linked to Bomber's work, the verbalisation of curious remarks about what may be contributing to a child's behaviour forms part of Dan Hughes' PACE model (Hughes, 2007). The PACE model, which forms the basis of a parenting model and treatment model for 'troubled' children (known as Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy), proposes that when interacting with children who have attachment needs or who have experienced trauma, parents or

practitioners should use an approach which is Playful, Accepting, Curious and Empathetic (Golding and Hughes, 2012). Within this approach, the idea of taking a position of curiosity about a child's behaviour and intentions allows an adult to convey a desire to understand the child rather than pointing out what they is doing 'wrong'. Communicating this curiosity is believed to support the young person's reflective capacity and their understanding of their behaviour, increasing self-awareness and in turn supporting positive changes in their behaviour.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, 'containment' may be seen as one of the mechanisms underlying this process. As explained in the introductory chapter, infants are thought to develop emotional understanding and emotional regulation through experiences of containment. A 'containing' mother is able to receive children's verbal and non-verbal communications, think about their meaning, bear the anxiety attached to them, and respond in a way that shows her understanding. This parallels the process occurring when using wondering aloud techniques as teachers actively show their attempts to understand the young person's communications and respond in a calm and understanding manner. This is congruent with Bailey's (2010) claimed that the young people in a specialist NG were more confident to express their emotions as they felt contained and secure within the setting.

Bomber (2007) suggests that the wondering aloud technique also supports the child's capacity for 'mentalisation'. Mentalisation is the child's ability to recognise their own thought processes and in turn the thought processes of others (Fonagy and Allison, 2012).

Perhaps an extension upon the notion of containment, this ability is believed to develop through experiences of a mind-minded caregiver. Mind-mindedness, a concept developed by Meins (1997) can be defined as:

*“a parents’ capacity to be sensitive to what is in their children’s minds, rather than just their physical or behavioural needs.”* (Walker, Wheatcroft and Camic, 2011, p1).

The experience of being thought of as a mental agent is believed to develop the child’s ability to recognise their own intentions and emotions and think about the thoughts and intentions of others- their ability to mentalise. Research has found that the experience of a mind-minded parent predicts attachment security at one year of age (Bernier and Dozier, 2003) and reduces the likelihood of behavioural difficulties at age five (Meins, Centifanti, Fernyhough and Fishburn, 2013). In turn, mentalisation has been linked to affect regulation and self-organisation (Fonagy and Allison, 2012)

In their research Meins and her colleagues operationalised mindmindedness as a caregiver’s ability to *“comment appropriately on their infants’ putative thoughts and feelings”* (Meins 2013, p1).

When wondering aloud, the teacher could be thought of as displaying mind-mindedness as they show that they are thinking about the thoughts and feelings of the child through commenting on these. This would suggest that the children experiencing “wondering aloud” are more likely to be able to recognise their own thoughts and feelings and will in turn be more able to regulate their emotions and respond in a calmer manner. The current study does not provide direct evidence that this process is occurring, however the preliminary finding that the children

are calmer as result of the intervention suggests that it supports their ability to recognise and regulate emotions. Furthermore, one teacher commented that a child was now displaying empathy towards his classmates suggesting a higher capacity to mentalise.

Participants however highlighted that the approaches are not equally supportive for all pupils at the school, claiming it supported 'vulnerable' but not 'behavioural' pupils. There appeared to be two different beliefs as to why some young people were not supported by the approach. Firstly, some young people's difficulties were thought to have been caused by factors other than missed nurturing opportunities and were seen as needing a more authoritarian approach. For these young people it was believed that their emotional development was at a more mature level than the nurture approach catered for. Conversely, others described how pupils' behaviours were too 'entrenched' and thus their needs could not be met by the NG approach alone. It seems feasible that for this group of young people past experiences may have led them to develop beliefs about the world around them (see internal world discussed in the introductory chapter) which are not congruent with a nurturing approach and thus it may more take time and repetition to change their internal world and therefore their behaviour. In Scott and Lee's (2009) study it reportedly took longer for young people in year 4-7 to benefit from the approaches compared to those in years 1-3, perhaps as their behaviour has been repetitively reinforced. It may therefore follow that for some year seven pupils, longer exposure to the approach is needed to make visible changes to their "entrenched" behaviour.



***Research Question 2: What are school staff members' perceptions of the impact of nurture approaches on the school organisation?***

A further impact of the setting up of the NG was the view of the group as separate from the whole school causing a sense of isolation amongst those in the group and envy amongst those outside of the group. This was predominantly expressed with reference to the teaching group who envied the amount of time and resources devoted to the new group. However, some participants also made reference to the young people showing signs of envy, wondering why they hadn't had the same experience in year seven. This is consistent with Gates' (2010) research into a mainstream secondary NG.

This phenomenon does not appear to be restricted to the establishment of NGs as, when writing about change processes in schools, Fullan (2002) claimed that *"overload and fragmentation are natural tendencies of complex systems."* (Fullan, 2002, p9). Fullan writes about the importance of leaders in ensuring that there is coherence throughout the system and that fragmentation does not disrupt the change process.

Although the "nurture work" is seen by many as occurring within the year seven group, like many previous studies, benefits of establishing a NG and providing training in nurturing approaches were also found throughout the school (e.g. Doyle 2003; Bishop and Swain, 2000; Sanders, 2007; Binnie and Allen, 2008). Consistent with Doyle's (2003) findings, teachers reported that the atmosphere within the school felt calmer and less aggression was being experienced throughout the school. As discussed above, the current study's participants predominantly attributed this calm atmosphere to the use of the 'wondering aloud' communication strategy. However, they also considered that a further

benefit of the year seven group was that it protected the rest of the school from the potentially unsettling impact of the year seven transition. This protective function was also noted by Bishop and Swain (2000).

In their literature review, Cheney et al. (2013) argued that although many studies had found that NGs had a positive impact on whole school ethos the mechanisms underlying this were unclear. The current results indicate that the whole school ethos change was made possible through processes occurring in both directions (whole school to group and group to whole school). Initially, it seemed that whole school change was motivated by the provision of whole school training and the sharing of senior leaders' vision with the whole staff team. This allowed them to understand the rationale behind setting up a NG as well as changing whole school practices (a finding also noted by Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes, 2008). Subsequently, despite initial envy, refocusing resources on the smaller nurture class allowed other school staff members to observe the positive impact of the approach which lead to increasing motivation and understanding.

***Research Question 3: What are school staff members' perceptions of the impact of training about nurture approaches on their practice?***

As discussed above, the whole school training on nurture principles directly influenced the way many teachers were practicing, as they began to understand behaviour as a communication, introduce more games into their teaching practice and using wondering aloud techniques.

A number of participants described how having several training sessions with time between them allowed them to gradually change their practice through a cycle of learning, practicing and reflection. Gradual implementation appeared to

have allowed for resistance to be reduced and practitioners to test out how best to apply the new learning in their own practice. This process maps directly onto Kolb's experiential learning style theory (see Figure 10).

According to Kolb: *"Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience"* (Kolb, 1984, p38).

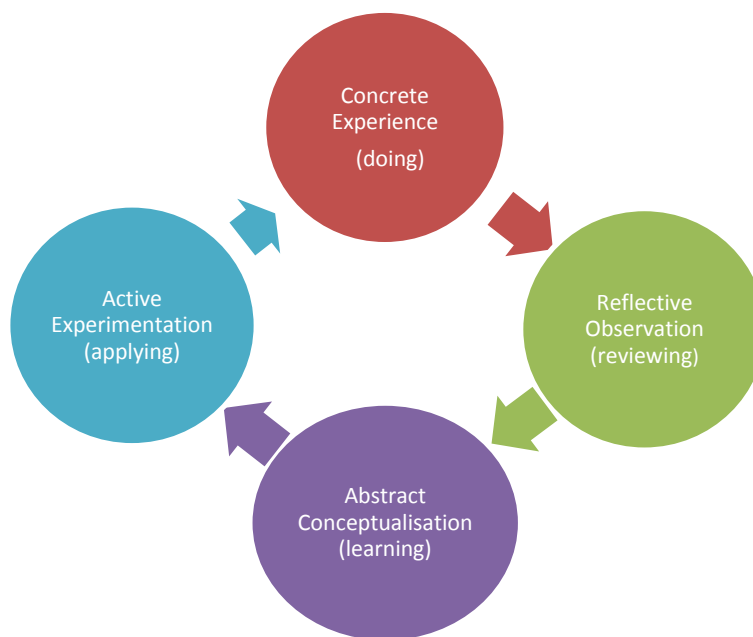


Figure 10: Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (McLeod, 2010)

It seems that the training directly supported the reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation stages of the model whilst the space between the training allowed for active experimentation and concrete experience. This dynamic process is described in more detail below when discussing the facilitating factors of the whole school change.

### ***6.2.2 The Process of Whole School Ethos Change***

This section will discuss the contexts and mechanisms which supported and hindered whole school change. This will endeavour to answer the following research questions.

4. What do school staff members' feel has supported their implementation of the nurture approaches?
5. What do school staff members' feel has hindered them from implementing the nurture approaches?

In order to answer these questions, this section will begin with a brief literature review of research identifying the facilitators of whole school change. This second literature search was completed post analysis to explore the concepts which emerged (for details of this literature search see Appendix 12).

There is a large body of literature relating to organisational change and whole school change therefore it was necessary to be selective and only those articles that were found to have relevance to the emergent theory are discussed.

After a brief contextualising summary of research, the key mechanisms found in the present study will be discussed in turn. In these discussions existing literature is referred to in order to situate the current findings within current knowledge and further understand the process of change that occurred in the school.

#### ***Whole School Change: A brief summary of findings from literature***

There is a growing wealth of literature discussing the process of whole school change, and the factors that facilitate and hinder this change. Previous authors have highlighted how, despite good intentions, whole school change is not easily

obtainable and efforts to create large changes in school settings often fail (Lick 2000, Priestley and Sime, 2005). According to Lick (2000):

*“Schools like many other organisations have rigid culture not naturally responsive to major change” (Lick, 2000, p47)*

Furthermore, King’s (2006) research also highlighted the intensity of teacher’s emotions provoked through the change process as it is not only practical curriculum changes which occur but also changes in organisational structure and pedagogical beliefs. Her research found that teacher’s emotions during the change process included worry, hate, anger, joy, excitement, frustration, confusion, anxiety, and exhaustion.

Nonetheless, several authors have described successful organisational change projects within schools and several factors seen as supporting this change have been highlighted. Lick (2000), described the success of whole faculty study groups for teachers in 75 schools in America. These study groups centred on peer learning through reading and sharing academic journals, implementing changes in practice and reflecting upon this. Lick describes how change was facilitated through learning preceding change, synergy between group members through co-mentoring, a whole school ethos able to manage change and empowerment of teachers. The importance of the engagement of teachers in the change project was also noted by Cuban (1998) calling them the *“foot soldiers of every reform”* (p459). Priestly and Sime (2005) further highlight the role of teachers as mediators of change and, drawing upon Archer’s (1988) social theory, stress the need for school cultural beliefs to be consistent with rather than contradict those underlying the changes.

When reviewing what facilitated a move to whole school inclusive practices McMaster (2013) concluded that successful projects were supported by a process of learning, acting and reflecting, within a context which allowed sufficient time for this process to take place. Further facilitating factors included a shared vision and shared definition to support the adaptation of their model to the needs of their setting.

In a literature review of whole school change projects, Dunne (2008) reported evidence that identified the importance of strong leadership, involvement of teachers in planning and implementation, a 'teacher learning environment' in which whole school staff development takes place and a strong professional community. In her own study into the facilitation of the use of the IDEAS project, key facilitating factors were argued to be the communication of clear reasons for change, time allocated to ensuring all staff understand the underlying pedagogy, a leader with allocated time for the project, a focussed and cohesive professional development plan, sharing of information between departments and the involvement of all stakeholders.

Thus, it seems that existing literature indicates that the following contexts and structures support change in school settings:

- Teachers working collaboratively
- Space and time to share knowledge and reflections
- Training in the underlying pedagogy/ theory and understanding of the reasons for change
- Shared vision and understanding
- Consistency between existing beliefs and those underlying the change

- A motivated leader who has time to implement changes
- Involvement of and communication to all stakeholders
- Sharing information on a whole school level (not individual departments)
- A process of implementation and reflection to adapt the project to the individual setting

Recently, Freeman, Wertheim and Trinder (2014) placed many of these factors into a model of whole school change depicted in the diagram below.

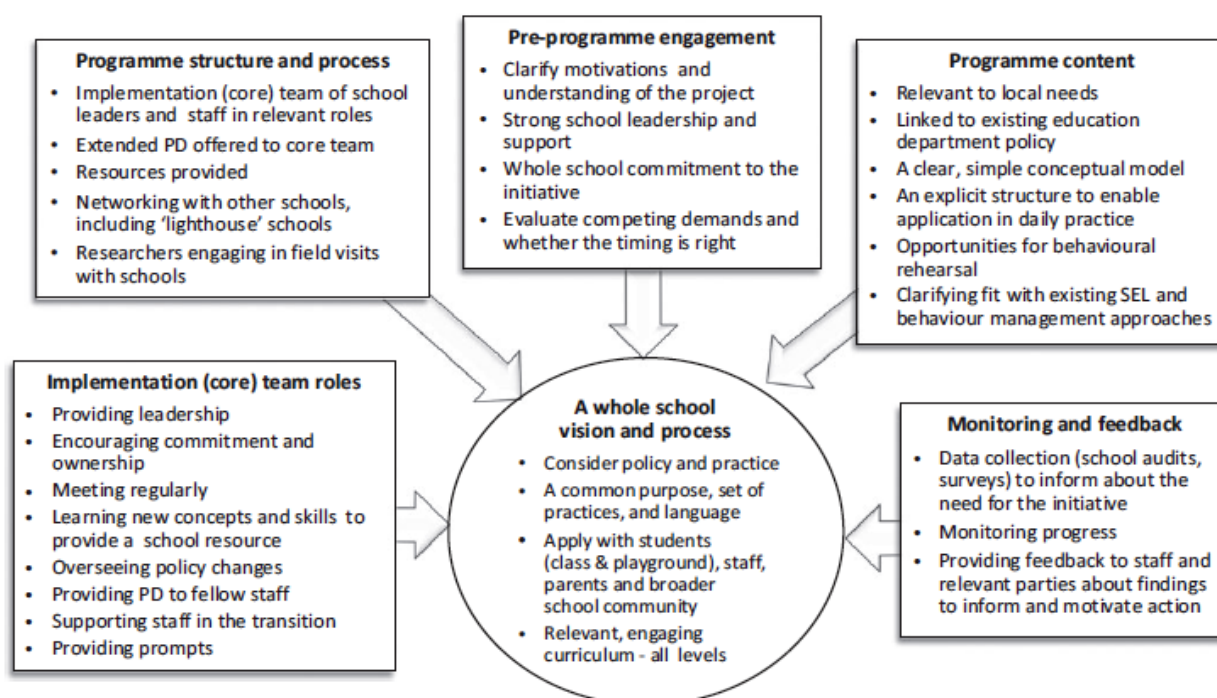


Figure 11: Freeman et al's (2014) Model of Whole School Change.

As discussed further below, many of the current findings fit well with the factors highlighted in the current review and within Freeman et al's model. Both Freeman's model and the current findings (Figure 9) include the need for top down leadership whilst also promoting ownership amongst teachers (in Freeman et al's model this takes the form of a core team). They also both suggest that a

good fit between existing beliefs and the proposed changes support motivation as does a clear shared model to work from. The models differ however in the process underlying the continued adaptation of the changes and sustaining motivation; the current research proposes this is completed through whole school supervision and reflective practice whereas Freeman et al. suggest that this is supported by a core team.

***Ownership of the Project: Increasing motivation and sustaining change through a move from top down processes to shared ownership***

The current findings suggest that a shift from top down management of the project towards a shared ownership between all involved enabled and sustained motivation for change. This concurs with Nadler and Tushman's 'beyond the magic leader principle' presented as part of their 'Organizational Frame Bending' theory in 1989. In this paper the authors propose that for successful organisational change there is a need for a leader who is able to energise others, guard the key themes or principles underlying the change and ensure there are structures and resources in place to enable others to complete the desired change once they are motivated to do so. This magic leader is both "*directive and uncompromising*" (Nadler and Tushman, 1989, p200) whilst also welcoming participation from others. However, the authors subsequently highlight that the magic leader alone is not able to sustain change and that ownership needs to be diluted amongst a larger group of individuals.

*"While magic leadership is necessary, it cannot, by itself, sustain a large-scale change. Success depends on a broader base of support built with other individuals who act first as followers, second as helpers, and finally as co-owners of the change."* (Nadler and Tushman, 1989, p200).



Furthermore, Orgland's (1997 in Fei, 2007) strategic change matrix combines traditional top down and bottom up processes with a third horizontal process, all of which are able to work together. Here, top down creation of a vision is complemented by bottom up influences, and top down planning is complimented by bottom up problem solving during a pilot of the project.

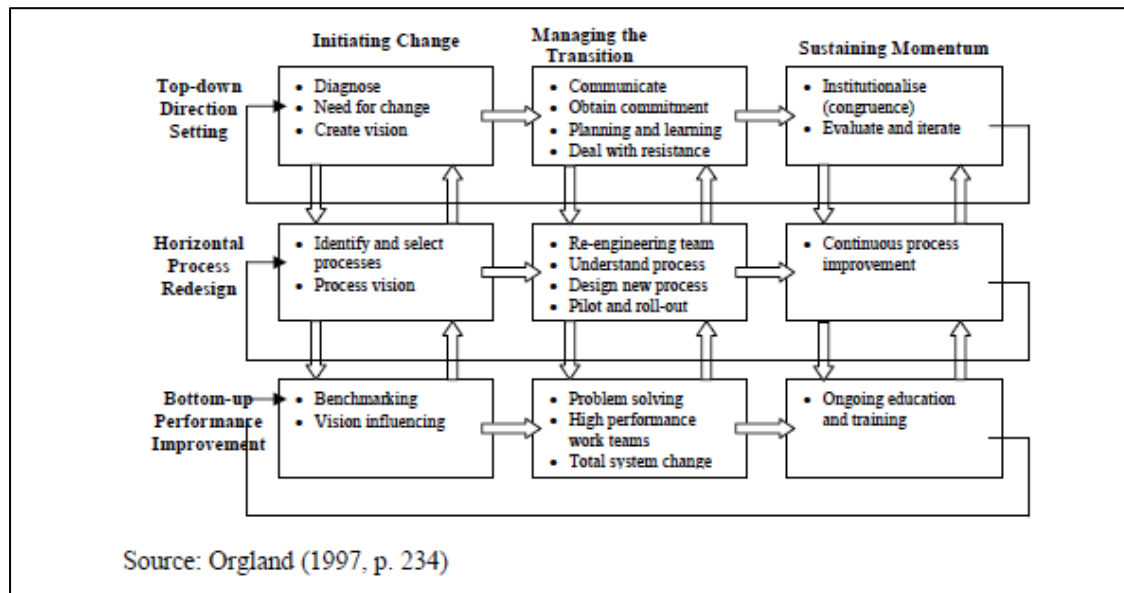


Figure 12: Orgland's Strategic Change Matrix (Fei, 2007).

In the current findings top down managerial vision is thought to be a major catalyst for change, however it is through the empowerment of ground floor teaching staff that change is continued and sustained and resistance decreased. In a review of organisational change literature, Barnard and Stoll (2010) highlighted that many studies had found that empowerment of workers reduced resistance to change. Nonetheless, they note that further studies have found that this alone did not sustain change and managers continued to play a crucial supportive role.

In a recent case study of curriculum changes in an American university (Galea, Fried, Walker, Rudenstine, Glover and Begg, 2015) it was identified that change was indeed facilitated by both a motivated leader and shared ownership of the changes.

A further feature of the current model is that motivation is increased and resistance decreased through the support of outside professionals whose approach and role varied at different points in the change process, dependent upon the particular needs of the organisation at that time. Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) also highlighted the varying activities needed to address resistance (see Figure 13).

The first three methods proposed by Kotter and Schlesinger were found to support motivation for change within the current findings. These were: 'education' (e.g. training and sharing of a vision and rationale with staff); 'participation', (e.g. staff involvement in decisions); and facilitation (e.g. providing emotional support through supervision and consultation). However, neither 'negotiation' nor 'coercion' were found to be a supporting factor during the current study. Furthermore, the model presented in this paper introduces the notion that different types of support are needed at different stages of the change process, responding to the particular needs presented at that time. This is not necessarily a linear model as some forms of support may need to be revisited later in the process (e.g. more training provided to support the next stage of change and consolidate knowledge).

Method	How to Use	When to Use	Advantages	Drawbacks
Education	Communicate the desired changes and reasons for them	Employees lack information about the change's implications	Once persuaded people often help implement the change	Time consuming if lots of people are involved
Participation	Involve potential resisters in designing and implementing the change	Change initiators lack sufficient information to design the change	People feel more committed to making the change happen	Time consuming, and employees may design inappropriate change
Facilitation	Provide skills training and emotional support	People are resisting because they fear they can't make the needed adjustments	It's a relatively easy way to defuse major resistance	Can be time consuming and expensive; can still fail
Negotiation	Offer incentives for making the change	People will lose out in the change and have considerable power to resist	It's a relatively easy way to defuse major resistance	Can be expensive and open managers to the possibility of blackmail
Coercion	Threaten loss of jobs or promotion opportunities; fire or transfer those who can't or won't change	Speed is essential and change initiators possess considerable power	It works quickly and can overcome any kind of resistance	Can spark intense resentment towards change initiators

Figure 13: Kotter and Schlesinger's (1979) Methods for Reducing Resistance. (In Barnard and Stoll, 2010)

The importance of outside support in facilitating and maintaining whole school change was also noted by Bourke, Holden and Dharan (2007) who commented that in their research:

*"Both schools reported the need for an external facilitator. Having a facilitator from outside the school community ensured that things did happen and actions were followed up."* (Bourke et al, 2007, p64).

### ***Dynamic Process: Balancing Planning with Evolution through Reflective Practice***

A second key mechanism which was found in the current study was the evolution of the project through planning and reflection. It was found that there was a need

to have more time to plan the details of the project, such as the daily structures and processes and to have decorated the physical space in order to feel prepared for when the young people started. This indicates a desire for knowledge and certainty prior to the project starting. This was balanced with the evolution and adaptation of the project through reflective processes which allowed the project to be tailored to the needs of the particular setting and student group. Through this process there seemed to be a growing tolerance for uncertainty and change.

In Barnard and Stoll's (2010) literature review they discuss the move in organisational theories away from 'planned approaches' and towards 'emergent approaches'. Emergent approaches are described as focusing on factors facilitating change whereas linear models outline sequential steps needed for successful organisational change. It is proposed that linear models are not always applicable as they assume constant conditions which the organisation is able to plan for prior to a change occurring. Instead, emergent approaches consider change as a learning process responding to and adapting to the environment.

*"The emergent approach to change emphasises that change should not be perceived as a series of linear events within a given period of time, but as a continuous, open-ended process of adaptation to changing circumstances and conditions"* (Todnem, 2005, p375).

Likewise, in the current research it was found that change was facilitated and refined through the mechanism of reflection and adaptation which was supported by structures within the organisation designed to enable a space for reflection,

such as debrief, consultation and supervision. This provides further support to research which has highlighted the benefits of supervision and reflective spaces in schools, both for emotional support and enabling behavioural change in staff (e.g. Jones, Monsen and Franey, 2013, Stringer, Stow, Hibbert, Powell, & Louw, 1992). Furthermore, this process was found to increase ownership of the project, something which is thought to support the sustainability of change (Freeman et al, 2014)

Reflection and evolution were also balanced with a need for sufficient time for preparation, training and planning prior to beginning the project. This supports the findings of Woolner, Clark, Laing, Thomas and Tiplady (2014) who identified that not having enough time for co-operative planning was felt to be a hindrance to changing school's approaches to teaching- a finding also noted by Viig and Wold (2005) and Freeman et al. (2014).

### ***Embedding Theory in Practice***

A third mechanism which was found to support the process of change in the school was the assimilation or accommodation of new ideas into existing belief systems by members of staff. It appeared that those staff members who more readily accepted the changes, where those whose existing belief systems were more congruent with the proposed changes. This finding can perhaps be explained by Piaget's theory of learning which asserts that new knowledge is either assimilated into existing schemas or accommodated by adjusting existing schema. Atherton (2013) describes the processes of assimilation and accommodation in terms of the psychoanalytic notion of the internal world (described earlier in this paper). She explains how assimilation occurs when

what is perceived in the outside world can be incorporated into the internal world without the need to change the structure of the internal world. Conversely, when accommodating, new knowledge is not easily fitted into the existing structures of the internal world and therefore the internal world has to change to accommodate the external world. Atherton (2013) claims that the process of accommodation is a more painful and difficult process than assimilation. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that many participants attach the current theory onto pre-existing beliefs and assimilate it with other similar interventions which they already use. It is also unsurprising that when the new knowledge causes a threat to the structure of the internal world or suggests an existing way of working is wrong, teachers show more signs of resistance to change.

This finding supports that of Priestley and Sime (2005) who frame this phenomenon in terms of congruence of beliefs between the proposed intervention and the existing school ethos or personal beliefs of teachers. They write:

*“Ruddock (1991, pp. 27-8) reminds us of the ‘power of the school and classroom to accommodate, absorb or expel innovations that are at odds with the dominant structures and values that hold habits in place.’ Priestly and Sime, 2005, p481.*

As in the present study, Priestly and Sime (2005), also note that it is not only the congruence of beliefs between the intervention and existing school culture which is needed to initiate change but also the resources and structures to complete the change need to be in place.

*“Thus, for example, a change may be welcomed in terms of congruence (cultural complementarities), but be difficult in terms of instrumentality and/or cost (structural constraints).” (Priestly and Sime, 2005, p483).*

As discussed in section 6.2.1, there was acknowledgement from teachers as to the importance of whole school training prior to the initiation of the project. This supported an understanding of the reasons for the changes and gave a unifying shared framework to work from, further supporting findings by Lick (2000), Freeman et al. (2014) and Dunne (2008). In the current study the spacing of learning prior to the initiation of the project was seen as beneficial as it provided time to practice and reflect. This same process was found to be helpful in Freeman et al’s study as one participant said *“The model was a good one because we had a number of opportunities to go away and trial and implement and come back and talk about it and then try again.”* (Freeman et al, 2014, p13). This links to the dynamic process described above.

As well as this dynamic process, moving from theory to practice and reducing the resistance described above was thought to be supported by seeing the benefit of small changes being made within the NG and through trying out one of the suggested interventions. This process of starting small and moving to larger changes supports the findings of Priestly and Sime (2005) that small changes in the classroom lead to larger whole school changes.

The narratives in the current study suggest that seeing the interventions in action not only supports motivation as it allows benefits to be experienced first-hand but it also allows abstract concepts to be actualised and thus the change is more easily envisaged, reducing uncertainty and resistance. This is consistent with

Kolb's experiential learning theory, described above, that proposes that concrete experience and reflection lead to abstract conceptualisation.

Furthermore, the majority of those interviewed said that if they were to give advice to others embarking on a similar project they would advise them to visit other settings already running the project. This further supports Freeman et al's (2014) model as it includes visiting similar settings in its facilitating factors.

***Supportive Contexts: Management with a vision who enable the availability of resources and the adaptation of physical space***

Certain contextual factors were also found to support the implementation of the nurturing approaches and the establishment of a NG. These were: a supportive and motivated management; the availability of time, space and money; and staffing consistency.

As discussed above, in order to initiate and sustain change a motivated management was needed. This motivated management played a crucial role throughout the process including: developing a vision and sharing it with the team; making resources available; planning the project; and supporting staff once the project had been initiated. As discussed above, the importance of the role of managers throughout the change process has been highlighted in many organisational change theories (e.g. Barnard and Stoll, 2010; Nadler and Tushman, 1989) and whole school change research (e.g. Viig and Wold, 2005; Freeman et al, 2014).

A further contextual factor required to support the change process was the availability of resources, both concrete (physical space and money) and abstract



(time). This supports the findings of previous studies such as (Woolner et al, 2014; Viig and Wold, 2005; and Freeman et al, 2014).

Most participants identified 'time' to be an influential factor, noting the need for this resource at all stages of the process: time to space out training sessions; time to plan and prepare; and time to reflect. As mentioned above, McMaster (2013) argued that time for reflection was an important facilitating factor and Dunne (2008) identified the need for sufficient planning time prior to the start of a project and a leader who has enough allocated time to facilitate the change.

Participants also discussed the importance of 'nurturing spaces'. They noted that adapting the physical layout of classrooms to support new ways of working facilitated changes as the space reflected the intended ethos of the project. In their work into the importance of physical space in promoting intervention implementation in schools Woolner et al. (2014) reported research finding a relationship between the physical environment and teaching practice. The authors highlight the need for physical environments to be adapted to suit the desired school culture or change. Furthermore, they wrote:

*"when cultural, organisational and spatial elements are mutually supportive, the school's educational approach will tend to endure and develop, rather than slipping into some uncomfortable accommodation of conflicting elements."*  
(Woolner et al, 2014, p160)

This is concurrent with the current research which found that there is a need for resource availability and a supportive physical environment alongside other factors such as motivated leadership, wider ownership of the project and structures for reflective practice.

### ***6.3 Implications of the Research Findings***

The findings discussed above have implications for both the continuation of the project at Woodlands Academy and the setting up of similar projects. Furthermore, it has implications for the role of the EP in relation to supporting children with SEMHD and facilitating whole school change.

#### ***6.3.1 Implications for the continuation of the project at Woodlands Academy.***

Due to the success of the year seven NG, the senior management team at Woodlands Academy are proposing to open a new unit for year five and six students within the next academic year. The following recommendations include those for the continuation of the current NG, the further cultivation of a whole school nurturing approach and the setting up of any further units. These were shared with school's senior management team in the summer term of 2015.

1. Develop structures to ensure that staff working in the unit(s) feel part of the whole school team in order to avoid feelings of isolation and envy. This may need to include shared breaks and meetings.
2. Continue to provide regular supervision groups to support the staff team to process the emotional impact of the work and support reflection.
3. Provide further training to consolidate and refresh knowledge and provide space for whole school reflection.
4. Gradually integrate year seven pupils into whole school structures to provide a smooth transition to year eight.

5. Ensure sufficient time for planning and preparation prior to a new group starting to reduce teacher's anxieties and ensure that basic structures and procedures are decided upon. This may include observations of other NGs.

### ***6.3.2 Implications for Schools Setting up Similar Projects***

For those embarking on setting up similar projects the following recommendations are drawn from the findings:

1. Do not rush. Ensure enough time is given prior to the start of the project for:
  - a. Multiple whole school training sessions with enough time between them to process the information provided and try out new strategies. Space for consolidation and reflection to be included as part of these sessions.
  - b. Time for key teachers and managers to plan for the start of the project and agree on key protocols and structures. This allows for the group to work out individual roles and begin establishing functional dynamics as well as ensuring that the classroom is sufficiently prepared.
  - c. Visits to similar settings to be completed by members of the teaching and managerial team.
2. Enlist help from outside professionals who are motivated supporters of the change and able to help shape the project, offer knowledge and training and provide continued motivation and support throughout the process.
3. Share your vision with the whole school team, supporting them to understand the motivations and theory that led you to choose the particular intervention.
4. Support the assimilation of new ideas by situating them within current practices.

5. Ensure that sufficient resources are available. This includes time for training, supervision, planning and management of the project.
6. Make adaptations to the physical space in line with the ethos of the project.
7. Set up structures for reflective spaces and feedback to management.
8. Through training, practice, reflection and adaptation adjust the project to meet the needs of the young people and school.
9. Involve teaching staff in planning, reflection and adaptation in order to promote a sense of shared ownership.
10. Be patient. Embedding theory in practice, reducing resistance and adapting to your setting will take time.

### ***6.3.3 Implications for Educational Psychology Practice***

The findings also have implications for Educational Psychology work when supporting children with SEMHD and the role of an EP in facilitating change in a school. These were shared with the local Educational Psychology Service during a team meeting.

Firstly, the research finds positive indications of the ability to adapt NG approaches into a specialist secondary provision for children with SEMHD. When supporting similar settings EPs may therefore want to draw upon the nurture principles and promote their use.

Furthermore, the benefits of supporting the year seven transition through a NG approach have implications for the way that other settings support the transition into their school. It seems that transitions which allow for consistency and the building of trusting relationship support young people in feeling safe and having a more settled secondary transition. This sense of predictability and ability to form

positive relationships may be created through the use of a group approach or alternatively through factors within the whole school environment (e.g. consistency of teaching support/class groups).

Furthermore, the positive impact of “wondering aloud” practices in producing a calmer school environment and enabling children to respond more positively to adults when having difficulties should be considered by EPs when supporting children with similar needs. Further research is however needed to investigate the benefits of this approach in more depth.

As well as implications for how EPs work to support SEMHD, there also seems to be a wider implication regarding the EP role within a school system. The current findings suggests that the EP role needs to be varied and include work at the systems level to ensure that evidence based practice is able to be effectively implemented. When writing about evidence based practice, Miller, George and Fogt (2005) commented on the gap between research and practice suggesting that:

*“To effectively reduce this gap, however, it is likely that school psychologists will need to become more involved in system reform, applying principles and practices of organizational change and capacity building.”* Miller, George and Fogt, 2005, p553).

The findings of this study support Miller et al’s (2005) further claim that the role of the EP when supporting change within a school goes beyond one off trainings as this is unlikely to lead to “significant changes”.

The model which emerged through this study highlights the benefit of taking up various roles and activities at particular points within the change process, dependent upon the needs of the school organisation at this time. These varying roles include:

- Supporting management to shape their vision and consider next steps in the change process through consultation with the project lead(s)
- Developing a program of training alongside the school team to make a bespoke package which meets that settings needs (This research highlights benefits of this training being completed over several sessions with sufficient time between sessions to allow for practice and reflection but not so much time that learning and motivation is lost. Building spaces for reflection as well as knowledge giving into these training sessions may also be beneficial).
- Maintaining involvement once the project has started to support change being sustained and furthered. This may include supervision sessions to support reflection, motivation and ownership of the project as well as providing a space to process the emotions being provoked by the work and the change process. It may also be beneficial to continue consultation to the project lead to support them through the change process (as expressed by the lead project in this research).

The assertion that the EP's role within change implementation is wider than training sessions reflects government advice found in the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) document "Learning and Teaching: A strategy for professional development" (2001). This promotes a change from one off trainings from outside professionals to the delivery of training alongside

support designed to increase teacher ownership, reflective practice and peer support.

The findings also suggest that when supporting schools to implement a new intervention, it is important that EPs ensure that there is time before and during the intervention for the school to gain an understanding of the underlying theory and motivations, ensure the resources and structures are available and prepare teaching staff for the changes.

### ***6.4 Strengths and Limitations of the Study.***

One of the strengths of the current project is that it explores the use of nurturing approaches in a specialist provision, something which only one previous study had investigated. It also gained views from participants in different roles within the school to provide perspectives from throughout the school system.

The timing of the research allowed for data to be collected during the change process, enabling views on this process to be captured during rather than after the change. Furthermore, it provided empirical support for organisational change theories, something which authors have previously highlighted as being lacking (Todnem, 2005).

The timing of the research is, however, a limitation as well as a strength. As the nurture practices were not fully embedded, the impact of the approaches can only be viewed as preliminary and not enough time had elapsed for evaluative data to be collected. Furthermore, motivation for the project may be heightened during this initial phase of change producing positive outcomes; however this positive impact may not be maintained if motivation later decreases. Moreover,

the knowledge that the project was being researched may have led to the changes being implemented to a greater extent than would have occurred without it. This phenomenon is known as the Hawthorn Effect, the idea that being observed or researched leads to temporary increases in productivity (Robson, 2011). It can be argued therefore that a completely realistic picture of the change process may not have been observed.

Furthermore, all participants were either directly or indirectly involved in the project and therefore may be biased to portray it as being beneficial. They may be motivated to do so consciously (as they want to promote a positive image of the project) or unconsciously (because they themselves need to believe that the project is worthwhile as they have invested such time and emotion into it). This defensiveness was picked up during peer coding (Appendix 6) as the peer noted that participants' hesitations seemed to indicate a need to defend the project. The peer coder's position as a clinical rather than educational psychologist was felt to be beneficial as it enabled her to code the transcripts without being influenced by pre-existing beliefs about school systems or the particular intervention.

It may be that the researcher was also biased to perceive and report positive elements of the project as they too were indirectly involved in the project and training as they attended meetings and training in the school. The research aimed to minimise the impact of this upon the project through reflection, an audit trail of coding decisions, supervision and peer moderation of coding.

Although precautions were taken to ensure that the identity of the school and the participants remained confidential during this write up (by using a pseudo-name



for the school and omitting detailed data regarding participant ages and genders) on reflection it is believed that more could have been done to protect their identity during data collection. As the setting is a small setting and the interviews were conducted on site it is likely that other staff members were aware of who was being interviewed. It may therefore have been preferable to have contacted the participants directly and offered to meet them at a convenient place and time outside of the school site.

As was noted in the methodology section, a further limitation of the study is that it only researched a project in one setting and thus all the findings may not be necessarily transferable to other settings. As section 4.8 of this paper states “*a full description of the contextual factors are therefore provided so that readers are able to make a considered judgement as to whether the findings, or elements of the findings, are transferable to the context or setting in which they are working.*”.

## **6.5 Suggestions for Further Research**

Having reflected upon the strengths and limitations of the project, the following suggestions are made for further research:

1. Further research into the use of wondering aloud approaches. This may investigate the long term effects of the approach, the experiences of children and young people when the approach is used, and the use of the approach in mainstream and primary settings. Although this research provides positive indications of the benefits of the approach further research is needed.

2. As noted above, one limitation of the study is that medium and long term effects of the NG, whole school nurturing approaches and the whole school change process were unable to be investigated. Follow up research looking into the medium and long term effects would therefore compliment this piece of research. It may be particularly interesting to look at the medium and long term effects of the intensity of the work on staff wellbeing and how they were, or weren't, supported to be able to continue their work.
3. Research including quantitative data regarding the impact of the NG and the whole school nurture approaches would provide further insight into the effectiveness of the approach. This may include research looking at academic progress and the use of physical restraints, inside and outside of the group.
4. The inclusion of parents and young people's views about the project would provide further evidence to support or rebuke the findings of the current study. This may also explore the effect the group has upon parental engagement.
5. Research looking more closely at the individual experiences of those involved in the project (teachers, students and/or parents). One method that may facilitate such research is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009) a qualitative tool that looks closely at the lived experiences of individual participants.

6. Research into the setting up of similar projects in both specialist and mainstream settings to see if similar impacts and processes are found. This will give an indication of whether the findings of this study are transferable to other settings and whole school change projects or specific to the current setting and/ or NG intervention.

### ***6.6 Researcher Reflections***

Reflecting upon the process of completing this piece of research, many parallels can be drawn between the experiences of the school staff and my experiences as a researcher. I found that although I had a clear focus and plan prior to starting the project and was comforted by the certainty of this plan, contextual factors outside of my control (staffing changes) delayed the start of the project, creating a high amount of uncertainty and anxiety. At this stage I sought guidance from 'expert' supervisors who helped to contain my anxiety, guide my thinking and reformulate a plan for my research. This paralleled the guidance provided to the school through consultation with their EP. As the project continued to change, I adapted my research to explore this change process and thus was able to see it as an opportunity rather than a hindrance. I sought to explore the mechanisms underlying these changes, taking a critical realist stance and adopting an exploratory grounded theory methodology. The dynamic process of the evolving project was therefore reflected in the evolving design of the research.

As well as my experiences of setting up the research mirroring that which was occurring in the school, parallels were also apparent between the grounded

theory methodology and the emergent theory. Throughout the analysis I went through a process of data collection and reflection, altering my thinking about the project and thus my questions throughout the data collection process. This iterative process, which supported the evolution of the theory, can also be paralleled to the dynamic process which supported the evolution of the nurture project. I, like the participants, experienced this as both exciting and frustrating at times.

Through making contact with the project lead to organise interviews, I became a part of the system around the project. My phone calls were used to debrief about what was happening, as she seemingly searched for containment and advice. I often wished that these phone calls could have been transcribed and analysed as they formed a rich source of information as to the evolving project and the preoccupations of the school at that time. I was able to use my research diary to note down thoughts on these and use them when thinking about the data during analysis. I was aware throughout the project that my own emotional involvement in the project, as well as my belief systems based upon past experiences in similar settings, may alter my analysis of the results. It was therefore confirming when peer coding indicated that this wasn't the case and that the many aspects of the emergent theory fit with existing literature.

Although challenging at times, the process was ultimately a rewarding one. I am able to directly see the change within the school and continue to hear about how the project continues to evolve. I am also able to directly see the impact of the research on the project as managers wish to use the results to shape its future. Furthermore, through the research I have learnt a substantial amount both about

real word research and about supporting change within schools and the potential power of supporting schools on an organisational level.

### ***6.7 Concluding Thoughts***

This research has found several positive impacts of the use of a NG approach in a specialist secondary school for young people with SEMHD, indicating that the approach is able to be successfully adapted to this setting.

Success however did not happen overnight, as the team at Woodlands Academy developed the project over several years, dedicating a substantial amount of time and resources to the work, sustaining motivation to make positive changes in their school. The research was able to capture the thoughts of a range of school staff during this change process, witnessing how the school worked to find a balance between competing priorities, desires and needs and used reflective spaces alongside training to develop the project. The project was supported by a number of EPs, throughout the planning, implementation and the maintenance stages of change, adapting their support to meet the needs of the school at that point.

The project continues to evolve and expand as the process of planning, practice, reflection and learning is maintained in the school. The outline of the project within this thesis is certainly not the end of the journey.

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***Appendix 1: A Brief History of Social and Emotional  
Difficulties in the UK Education System***

Shortly after education was made compulsory in 1880, there was recognition that not all children were medically able to fully engage in education and therefore school medical officers were appointed to arrange treatment for children in public schools. In 1908, a school medical officer in Birmingham argued that there was a need for applied psychology in the school medical department as there was growing interest in children's behaviour and juvenile delinquency (the first court for juvenile delinquency opened in 1905). Subsequently, in 1913 the first school psychologist, Cyril Burt, was appointed. In 1925, Burt published "The Juvenile Delinquent" a collection of case studies which noted the complexity of causes of juvenile delinquency (Underwood Report, 1955).

In the late 1920s, the first independent specialist boarding provision for "nervous and difficult" children was opened. Subsequently in 1929, The Tavistock Clinic recommended that an eight year old girl whom they were treating be sent to a private home for 'rickets, debility and nervous disorder', and this was agreed to be paid for by the Local Education Authority (LEA). This represented the first agreement of an LEA to fund specialist boarding schools for "maladjusted" children. By 1939, there were 46 maintained schools for "nervous, difficult and retarded children" (Underwood Report, 1955).

In the 1944 Education Act, six additional categories of the 'educationally subnormal' were identified including 'maladjusted' pupils. Maladjusted pupils were defined as:

*"pupils who show evidence of emotional instability or psychological disturbance and require special educational treatment in order to affect their personal, social, or educational re-adjustment"* (Ministry of Education, 1953, Part 3, cited in Vissor, 2003)

Ten years after the publication of this act, the first review of 'maladjusted children' was published, known as the Underwood Report (1955). This report defined maladjusted children as:

*“..developing in ways that have a bad effect on himself or his fellows and cannot without help be remedied by his parents, teachers and the other adults in ordinary contact with him. It is characteristic of maladjusted children that they are insecure and unhappy, and that they fail in their personal relationships. Receiving is difficult for them as well as giving, and they appear unable to respond to simple measures of love, comfort and reassurance. At the same time, they are not readily capable of improvement by ordinary discipline”* (Underwood, 1955, p23)

The paper went on to name six symptoms of maladjustment: nervous disorder, habit disorder, behaviour disorder, psychotic behaviour, education and vocation difficulties and organic disorders. The report therefore provided early recognition that emotional and behavioural needs are varied in their presentation (as mentioned in the main body of this thesis in section 1.2.1).

The Education Act of 1981 relabelled all difficulties as ‘special educational needs’, however the term Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) was widely adopted in place of the former maladjusted category, a term used in the Underwood Report (Vissor, 2003). In the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was growing recognition of the social and contextual factors involved in the presentation of children with EBD, a move away from the within-child model implied by the earlier ‘maladjusted’ label (Vissor 2003). In 1994, a government circular highlighted this and described EBD as being caused by *“social, psychological and sometimes biological factors or, commonly, interactions between these three strands”* (Vissor, 2003, p13).

This was taken further in the first Special Educational Needs Code of Practice in 1994, which noted that:

*“Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties may result, for example, from abuse or neglect; physical or mental illness; sensory or physical impairment; or psychological trauma. In some cases,*

*emotional and behavioural difficulties may arise from or be exacerbated by circumstances within the school environment.” (DfE, 1994, p65).*

In a revised version of the Code of Practice, published in 2001 (DfEE 2001), the term Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) was used, a term which recognised that social difficulties are an integral part of the category of need. Although many educational professionals continued to use the term BESD until recently, others preferred to use the term Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, as they believed that the social difficulties are most pronounced and it is these that cause the behavioural difficulties observed (SEBDA, 2006).

As was mentioned in section 1.2.1 of the main text, this category of special educational need has recently been relabelled as social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMHD) (Code of Practice, DfE, 2014). The addition of the term “mental health” in place of “behavioural” perhaps reflecting a growing recognition of the complex aetiology behind children’s challenging behaviour as well as the large number of children and young people attending UK schools who present with diagnosable mental health difficulties.

Although, as is described above, the term used to describe children who present with needs which are currently known as SEMHD has changed over time from maladjusted to EBD to SEBD and finally to SEMHD, the notion that there is a group of children who’s social and emotional functioning requires additional support and intervention has been present since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continues today.

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***Appendix 2: Literature Search Summary Table******(Nurture Group Research)***

Author (year)	NG Type (classic/ adapted)	Primary or Secondary	Study Design	Data Analysis	Key Findings
<b>Bailey (2010)</b>	Both	Specialist	Mixed Methods	Case Study and Thematic Analysis	Found that attendance in the NG improved the young people's emotional state, interpersonal relationships and internal regulation. Furthermore, he also found that these improvements were most significant for those who attended the provision full time rather than part time.
<b>Binnie and Allen (2008)</b>	Part-Time	Primary	<p>Within groups repeated measures.</p> <p>Pre and Post Measures: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), Boxall Profile (BP) and behavioural indicator of self-esteem scale (BIOS).</p> <p>Parent, teacher and head teacher questionnaires also analysed.</p>	Quantitative: T-Test	<b>Significant improvement</b> on BP ( $P=0.001$ ), significant improvement in self-esteem as measured by BIOS ( $p=0.0001$ ), significant difference on teacher rated SDQ ( $p=0.0001$ ), significant improvement in parent SDQ ( $p=0.003$ ). 97% of parents reported that the NG had had a positive impact on their child and 100% reported overall effectiveness of the group, 94% of staff reported that the NG had had a positive impact on the individual children who attended and 63% reported a positive impact on whole school ethos.
<b>Bishop and Swain (2000)</b>	Classic	Primary	Qualitative- Semi-Structured Interviews	Analysed Interview- no analytical tool specified	"The nurture group had been a success and its demise was regretted by all."p19 Benefits for pupils, teacher and whole school recounted.

<b>Cheney, Schlösser, Nash and Glover (2013)</b>	Both	Both	Systematic Literature Review	Systematic Literature Review of Quantitative Analysis	“Participants made <b>significant gains</b> on all sub-strands of the Boxall Profile immediately after the intervention, across a number of NG variants. Where scores did not reach significance, a trend toward improvement was noted. Two papers also reported significant enhancement of self-esteem” (p20)
<b>Colley (2009)</b>	Both	Secondary	Literature Review	Literature Review	The majority of evidence of <b>success of secondary NGs</b> comes from Ofsted reports and professional testimonies. Colley reviewed this preliminary evidence and highlighted that secondary NG’s range from temporary provisions for children experiencing crisis to structured NGs which children attend for two or more afternoons a week. He provides anecdotal evidence of the success of these provisions, however this report is tentative in nature and thus Colley suggested that further exploration was needed into this area.
<b>Cooke, Yeoman and Parkes (2008)</b>	Part-time	Secondary	Pre and Post Boxall Profile and Case Study	Data Comparison: No statistical analysis	Reported <b>consistent improvement on developmental strands of BP</b> and inconsistent improvement on diagnostic strands of BP “with improvements in some areas but not others” p310. “Dramatic” improvement reported in case study.
<b>Cooper and Whitebread (2007)</b>	Both	31 Primary (+ 3 secondary)	Mixed Methods: Pre and Post SDQ and BP. Four different control groups (no SEBD in NG school, SEBD in NG school, no SEBD no NG school, SEBD no NG school)  Staff Parent and Pupil	Independent Samples T-Test and Chi squared Analysis.	<b>Very significant improvement of NG children</b> on SDQ and BP ( $p=0.000^{**}$ ). Significant improvement for children with SEBD in NG school not attending the group ( $p=0.001$ ) however this effect was mediated by the length of time the NG had been open as those in established NGs show significantly greater improvement than non NG controls.

Questionnaire					<p><b>Those pupils not in the NG made significantly more improvement in a NG school than a non NG school</b> (p=0.007**)</p> <p>Questionnaire data not reported in this paper.</p>
<b>Doyle (2003)</b>	Classic and Whole School	Primary	Case Study	Case Study	<b>100% reintegration into mainstream class.</b> School “calm, pleasant and busy”.
<b>Garner and Thomas (2011)</b>	Part Time	Secondary	Qualitative: Focus Groups and Interviews	Thematic Analysis	“Nurture Groups can be implemented into a secondary setting and provide <b>beneficial support for children with SEBD</b> ” p219 Key difference between secondary and primary NGs were found to be: more equal relationship between teacher and pupil, more teaching of social skills and used as a secure base which children can use as and when needed.
<b>Gerrard (2006)</b>		Primary	Mixed: Pre and Post Boxall Profile data, control non NG school. Staff Questionnaires +CATM (dynamic assessment)		<b>100 out of 108 children made ‘statistically significant’ behavioural gains</b> (as measured by BP). No significant gains in non NG school. 110 out of 130 children made significant improvement on SDQ no significant change in control. “Unusually high level of approval from staff about the efficacy of the nurture groups” p253. 66% of NG children made significant improvement in learning style as measured by CATM (p<0.01).
<b>Griffiths, Stenner and Hicks (2014)</b>	Classic	Primary (KS2)	Qualitative: Focus Group	Thematic Analysis	<b>NG Children positive about experiences.</b> Children placed value on the relationships they built in the NG, feeling they belonged to a family. Children spoke about the strategies they had developed for managing their

					behaviour. They spoke about beneficial learning strategies used in the NG.
<b>Hughes and Schlosser (2014)</b>	Both	Both	Systematic Literature Review	Systematic Literature Review of Quantitative Analysis	All studies which conducted statistical analysis found <b>significant improvements on at least some strands of the BP</b> . Concluded that NGs are an effective intervention for improving emotional wellbeing for children with SEBD (at least in short term).
<b>Iszatt and Wasilewska (1997) (also reported in article by Bennathan 1997)</b>	Classic	Primary	Descriptive Statistics	Descriptive Statistics of reintegration results	87% of NG children returned to their mainstream classroom within one year and furthermore 83% required no additional provision.
<b>Kourmoulaki (2013)</b>	Part Time	Secondary	Qualitative: Pupil and Staff Interviews.	Thematic Analysis	NG was an <b>effective intervention</b> which had boosted children's confidence in social situations, their ability to express and regulate emotions as well as their peer relationships. NG viewed as stepping stone between KS2 +3. Structured routine of breakfast and social skill games
<b>Lyndon (1992)</b>	Classic	Primary	Descriptive case study	Case Study	After a term and a half in the NG all children returned to their mainstream classes and were described as behaving more appropriately and showing more willingness to learn.
<b>MacKay, Reynolds, Kearney (2010)</b>	Both	Primary	Literature Review	Literature Review	"Clear link between attachment and academic achievement, that nurture groups directly address key attachment issues and that by doing so they have a <b>beneficial impact on academic achievement</b> " p106

<b>O’Conner and Colwell (2002)</b>	Classic	Primary	Quantitative: Pre and Post Boxall Profile Data and follow up (time not specified)	T-Tests	Significant improvement in Boxall on pre and post data ( $p<0.001$ ). At follow up no significant deterioration was found on sixteen of the twenty substrands however there was deterioration on 4 substrands, authors called this a “relapse” in maladaptive behaviour.
<b>Sanders (2007)</b>	Part-Time	Primary	Mixed: Boxall Profile Data, Staff, Parent and Pupil Interview.  Comparison group in non NG school	T-Test,	Majority of NG children remained in mainstream after two terms. Made <b>significant social and emotional gains (<math>p&lt;0.01</math>) and academic gains</b> . Gains significantly greater than comparison group. Greater levels of concentration and acceptance of adult requests. More involved in class discussions, more positive relationships and able to regulate behaviour. They were also better able to problem solve and reflect.  Calmer atmosphere across the school and fewer behavioural incidents. More parent-school communication. Parents reported children were more confident and happier at school. Withdrawn children seemed to make greatest gains.
<b>Scott and Lee (2009)</b>	Part-Time	Primary	Case Control Design: BP, Literacy, Numeracy and Motor Skills Assessment and Teacher Diary.		<b>Significant Improvement in Social and Emotional Functioning</b> ( $p=0.03$ , $p=0.02$ ). No significant gains in academic achievement however improvement in line with peer group.

<b>Seth- Smith, Levi, Pratt, Fonagy &amp; Jaffey (2010)</b>	Classic	Primary	Quantitative: non-randomised Pre and Post test design using a matched control group (SDQ, BP and NC Levels)	Multi-Level Mixed-Effects Linear Regression	<b>“Significant improvements</b> were found in terms of overall social, emotional and behavioural functioning on total score of the SDQ. Children in the nurture group showed significant improvements in their peer problems and pro-social skills (SDQ sub scales). They also showed a significant decrease in hyperactivity over time. The nurture group children progressed significantly more than comparison group children in teacher ratings of general academic progress with some of the comparison group’s ratings remaining virtually unchanged.” P30
<b>Shaver and McClatchey (2013)</b>	Part-Time	Primary	Mixed Methods: questionnaire, focus groups, standardised measures and semi-structured interview	Paired Sample T-Test	<b>Significant gains</b> ( $p>0.05$ ) were found on 15 out of the 20 items tested on the pre and post BP. Staff reported that children now have more confidence, are better able to build attachment, respond to adults in a different way and are making academic progress. They also reported that the culture of the school was also changing.

### ***Appendix 3: Information Sheet and Consent Form***



EPS LOGO

02 November 2015

**Invitation to take part in a Local Authority Doctoral Research Project  
(Supervised by the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust):**

Project title: An exploration of factors which support and hinder the use of 'Nurturing Approaches' in a secondary provision for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Dear Sir/Madame,

To understand more about the Nurture Approaches, which are being introduced in your school, I would like to interview you to find out more about this project and gain your opinions about what has supported and hindered the implementation of a 'nurturing' approach in your work. This research will help to inform future educational psychology work in yours and other similar settings.

Supporting those young people who are experiencing social, emotional and behaviour difficulties is both a local and a national priority for the government and therefore it is important that we ensure that the interventions which this vulnerable group of young people receive and the approaches used in their education are as effective as possible and are able to meet their needs. Your contribution, as someone working directly with this population of young people and having experience of working within a school team aiming to adopt a 'Nurturing Approach', would therefore be highly valued.

- *What you will be asked to do?*

The interviews will last for approximately 45 minutes. In this you will be invited to discuss your views on the use of a 'Nurturing Approach' and how this is implemented in your own practice and in the school as a whole. You will also be invited to discuss what supports the use of this approach in your school and what has hindered the implementation of this approach. Additional time will be protected after the interview for debriefing about the research if necessary and discussing any concerns you may have.

- *What will happen to the information you share with the researcher?*

We will not be linking the information we collect with your personal details and the information will be collected and stored in a secure and confidential way. This will remain confidential unless it needs to be shared for legal reasons in order to ensure that harm does not come to yourself or others.

This project is being completed as part of a Doctoral degree at the University of Essex and Tavistock and Portman NHS trust. Data generated in the course of the research will be retained in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy.

- *What happens if you decide you do not want to take part in this research?*

Involvement in the project is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw consent at any time, and to withdraw any unprocessed data supplied. Furthermore, participation in the research will have no impact on the service or support you receive from the Educational Psychology service.

- *What do I do if I have any concerns about the research project?*

This project has been deemed ethical by the Tavistock Research Ethics Committee. If participants have any concerns about the conduct of the investigator, researcher(s) or any other aspect of this research project, they should contact Louis Taussig, the Trust Quality Assurance Officer [ltaussig@tavi-port.nhs.uk](mailto:ltaussig@tavi-port.nhs.uk)

I would be happy to speak with you further about this and answer any questions you may have. You can contact me at Surrey Educational Psychology Service by telephone on 01483 519220 or via email at [kathryn.rees@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:kathryn.rees@surreycc.gov.uk)

Please complete the consent form attached to indicate whether you are willing to take part in this research.

Yours sincerely,

Kathryn Rees (Educational Psychologist in Training)

**EPS LOGO**

**Informed Consent Form**

Research Project Title: An exploration of factors which support and hinder the use of  
'Nurturing Approaches' in a secondary provision for children with social, emotional and  
behavioural difficulties

I \_\_\_\_\_ **give my consent/ do not give my consent (please delete)**  
to be interviewed about the impact of the Nurture Group training and provision for research  
purposes.

Please tick that you have read the information sheet attached and understand that:

- ☐ Participation in this project is *voluntary* and you have the *right to withdraw* from this research project until the data is processed.
- ☐ Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed, however this data will be stored securely and destroyed within three years of the project's completion.
- ☐ The information you share will remain *confidential* unless this may cause harm to yourself or others.
- ☐ The results gathered will form part of a doctoral thesis and may be published in a scientific journal. Themes will also be fed back to the school and educational psychology service however precautions will be taken to protect your identity.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title \_\_\_\_\_

Start Date of work at School (month/year) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

***Appendix 4: Interview Schedules***

## ***Refinement of the Interview Schedule***

### **Interview Schedule**

#### **Opening questions**

Tell me about the nurture project that your school are completing?

What do you think is important for me to know about the project?

Tell me about your experiences and involvement in the nurture approach project?

#### **Questions around impact/change**

What if, any do you think the impact has been of the project?

- self
- Whole school
- Young people

What changes, if any have occurred as a result of the project?

- staff approach
- Whole school
- Young people

How, if at all, have you noticed your thoughts/ actions have changed since the start of the project?

How have others thoughts/ actions changed since the start of the project?

#### **Questions about factors supporting and hindering change**

What factors, if any do you think supported the use of a nurturing approach?

Who, if anyone, has supported you in this process?

What, if anything, do you think has hindered the use of a nurturing approach in your setting?

What, if any, particular aspects of the project do you think have supported the use of a nurturing approach?

Having had this experience, what advice would you give to another school who want to make similar changes?

#### **Closing Questions**

Is there anything else that you think would be helpful for me to know about the project?

Interview questions and research questions were discussed in supervision on 10.10.2014. Subsequently questions were added to ensure all research questions were addressed

### **Opening questions**

Tell me about the nurture project that your school are completing?

What do you think is important for me to know about the project?

Tell me about your experiences and involvement in the nurture approach project?

How many sessions of training and/or peer supervision sessions have you taken part in?

### **Questions around impact/change**

What if, any do you think the impact has been of the project?

- self
- Whole school
- Young people

What changes, if any have occurred as a result of the project?

- staff approach
- Whole school
- Young people

What, if anything, was the impact of the whole school training on the nurture approaches?

If involved in peer supervision: What, if anything, has been the impact of peer supervision groups?

How, if at all, have you noticed your thoughts/ actions have changed since the start of the project?

How have others thoughts/ actions changed since the start of the project?

How, if at all, have you noticed young people's actions/behaviour change since the implementation of the nurture approaches?

How has the project been received by the young people?

### **Questions about factors supporting and hindering change**

What factors, if any do you think supported the use of a nurturing approach?

Who, if anyone, has supported you in this process?

What, if anything, do you think has hindered the use of a nurturing approach in your setting?

What, if any, particular aspects of the project do you think have supported the use of a nurturing approach?

Having had this experience, what advice would you give to another school who want to make similar changes?

### **Closing Questions**

Is there anything else that you think would be helpful for me to know about the project?

**14.10.2014: Questions were reviewed further and slight adaptations made to ensure they were aligned with the research questions.**

### **Opening questions**

Tell me about the nurture project that your school are completing?

What do you think is important for me to know about the project?

Tell me about your experiences and involvement in the nurture approach project?

-How many sessions of training session on the nurture approach have you taken part in?

-Have you been involved in any peer supervision groups as part of the project?

### **Questions around impact/change**

What if, any do you think the impact of the nurture approaches project has been?

- self
- Whole school
- Young people

What changes, if any, have occurred as a result of the project?

- staff approach
- Whole school
- Young people

What, if anything, was the impact of the whole school training on the nurture approaches?

If involved in peer supervision: What, if anything, has been the impact of peer supervision groups?

How, if at all, have you noticed your thoughts/ actions have changed since the start of the project?

How have others thoughts/ actions changed since the start of the project?

How, if at all, have you noticed young people's actions/behaviour change since the implementation of the nurture approaches?

How has the project been received by the young people?

### **Questions about factors supporting and hindering change**

What factors, if any, do you think supported the use of a nurturing approach in the school?

Who, if anyone, has supported this process/ the positive changes you mentioned earlier?

What, if anything, do you think has hindered the use of a nurturing approach in your setting?

Who, if anyone, has hindered this process?

What, if any, particular aspects of the project do you think have supported the use of a nurturing approach?

Having had this experience, what advice would you give to another school who want to make similar changes?

### **Closing Questions**

Is there anything else that you think would be helpful for me to know about the project?

## **Final Interview Schedule**

### **Opening questions**

Tell me about the nurture project that your school are completing?

What do you think is important for me to know about the project?

Tell me about your experiences and involvement in the nurture approach project?

-How many sessions of training session on the nurture approach have you taken part in?

-Have you been involved in any peer supervision groups as part of the project?

### **Questions around impact/change**

What if, any do you think the impact of the nurture approaches project has been?

- self
- Whole school
- Young people

What changes, if any, have occurred as a result of the project?

- staff approach
- Whole school
- Young people

What, if anything, was the impact of the whole school training on the nurture approaches?

If involved in peer supervision: What, if anything, has been the impact of peer supervision groups?

How, if at all, have you noticed your thoughts/ actions have changed since the start of the project?

How have others thoughts/ actions changed since the start of the project?

How, if at all, have you noticed young people's actions/behaviour change since the implementation of the nurture approaches?

How has the project been received by the young people?

### **Questions about factors supporting and hindering change**

What factors, if any, do you think supported the use of a nurturing approach in the school?

Who, if anyone, has supported this process/ the positive changes you mentioned earlier?

What, if anything, do you think has hindered the use of a nurturing approach in your setting?

Who, if anyone, has hindered this process?

What, if any, particular aspects of the project do you think have supported the use of a nurturing approach?

Having had this experience, what advice would you give to another school who want to make similar changes?

### **Closing Questions**

Is there anything else that you think would be helpful for me to know about the project?



***Appendix 5: Diagrams Depicting Contexts, Emotions,  
Inter/actions and Consequences***





## ***Appendix 6: Notes from Peer Coding***

## TRANSCRIPT

File name: Recording4.mp4 (Participant 5)

Audio length: 03:19

Date: 28/10/2014

INTERVIEWER:

Um, can you tell me what your role is in the school?

RESPONDENT:

Role in  
school

(So I am a Year 7 nurture teacher. I teach P.E., science, film studies, games and so on. I have a bit of a mentorship, up there. Varied roles

INTERVIEWER:

Ok.

RESPONDENT:

Age of  
children  
working  
with

(And then I'm also involved in games for all of Key Stage 3 and all of Key Stage 4, in the main school.

INTERVIEWER:

Right, ok. Um, can you tell me about the nurture project that's been happening here?

RESPONDENT:

Support for  
setting up  
project  
children  
struggling

Um, so it was- it was decided to set up a nurture unit because, um, I think quite often the Year 7s struggled, 'cause a lot of these have been out of school for a long time. We've got three pupils that had been out of school for a year, 'cause of exclusions. Um, so it was decided to set that up to get them back into school in a slightly less kind of school-based environment, um, and get them back into school and then hopefully get them up the Year 8 and Year 9. 'Cause once they leave Year 7, they're no longer in that nurture unit.

Non-verbal  
One indicating  
uncertainty!

to make things  
less 'school  
like'

INTERVIEWER:

ok.

RESPONDENT:

The  
start of  
the  
project.

(Um, and then we kind of... not within the main school, but I took three Year 6s, three of our Year 7 pupils in May I think it was, we had them, and we tried to start it. Not in terms of like a classroom, but in terms of how we were working on it, tuition and we tried to start it then for those guys, because otherwise they wouldn't have been to a school, because they'd been permanently excluded from their mainstream school.

Not a  
physical  
space.

Children  
Excluded  
from  
mainstream

Does it feel difficult to go back to books almost in a climate focused on attainment & achievement?   
 Lack of confidence in what they are doing?

So what did that look like? [\*\* 0:08:23]

RESPONDENT:

Um, we were up in a completely different area, uh, we had quite a free timetable, so there was no complete syllabus, um, what we did, is we did a lot of, um, learning through interactive stuff, so they really... for example, to start off with, they couldn't even get on, at all, but like really hated each other, so we started with just some games, just to get them to communicate, um, played a lot of games like... a lot of those mixture games like Tictac, um, The Mixology Object, just communication, um, trust, did lots of team building and trust stuff, um, and then we did more practical stuff, so we went outside, um, and would just do really the cars and do charts on that, and just things like that, it was not really structured, set lessons, ~~objectively we think~~, but it wasn't like a set timetable, um, and they did a lot of final tech, a lot of it, but a lot of less classroom-based stuff.

INTERVIEWER:

Mhm.

RESPONDENT:

But that wasn't, the start of the nurture unit was basically September.

INTERVIEWER:

Ok, um, and what does the nurture unit look like now? What's going on up there?

RESPONDENT:

Uh, so we've got three classrooms, uh, but only two classes at the moment. Um, we've got one group of five which are the more, um, challenging in terms of behaviour and then we've got... I was split, and then we've got the other three boys are the more vulnerable group.

INTERVIEWER:

Ok.

RESPONDENT:

Uh, so we split it like that just 'cause of bullying and things that happened, um, so we've got two classes. Um, we've got three teachers up there, um, and then we've got two teachers who come in and over see it.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

RESPONDENT:

Because two of us are NQTs, and the other lady, she would have been NQT, but she trained in Canada, so she's not technically. So we're all new teachers, um, and then we... so they only have three teachers for their subjects. We all teach set

Lots of non-verbal stuff indicating how unclear the beginning of the project was.

Building on communication social skills first -

Working flexibly/creatively

Depending what they are doing

Not all felt exposed yet

categorising children into challenging / s, vulnerable

High ratio of adults

New teachers in the project

Does this make a difference?   
 Less confident/experienced but more flexible?

Holding  
children's  
needs in  
mind?

← is this something  
that they recognise  
as being more  
important than?

subjects, so they have consistency that way, and they have a set timetable, which  
we stick to every week. Um, they go off one twice a week.

The importance  
of routine  
for the  
children.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh right

RESPONDENT:

Um, we do Fri... Cause they're only in until 11 o'clock on Fridays, they do Fridays  
it's just swimming, and then every Monday afternoon they do a trip. Um, they  
look out things, yes animals, so they've done the farm, um, and then (audience  
are invited as pollution so we went to Mercedes-Benz World 4.11), what else have  
they done? Oh we went to Bird World. We do a trip every week, anyway...

Out of  
school  
trips

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

RESPONDENT:

— um, to get them used to being outside, as well as working in a classroom.

Developing  
out of  
class working

Again,  
justifying  
why going on 'nice' trips?

INTERVIEWER:

So it's just the three teachers with no other support up there?

RESPONDENT:

Oh we do have, um... at the moment we have one member of support staff, so one  
LSA --

Have  
support

INTERVIEWER:

Oh.

RESPONDENT:

Struggling  
to do something  
(AAI literature)  
↓  
being difficult?

— up there. Um, it's been a bit of a struggle for the boys, because originally  
we had another member of staff but she left, and then we had another member of  
staff who was our other LSA who's off sick, so we've now got a supply member in  
for the last three weeks. So it hasn't been quite as scaled as it would have, what  
we would have planned or wanted, but yeah, so we've... there's three members of  
teaching staff up there. Um, two members of staff kind of collectively lead it, so if  
one's up, one's not, like that way, and then we have one LSA. So there's nearly  
always two members of staff in a classroom at a time.

Start didn't  
go as well  
as hoped

Start  
didn't go  
as well  
as hoped

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, thanks. Thank you.

RESPONDENT:

That's alright

INTERVIEWER:

Um, what do you think's important for me to know about the project?

RESPONDENT:

Building  
solid  
foundations

What's important for you to know? Um, well, I think what we're trying to do is this year trying to build it up, because, unfortunately, due to many school issues we didn't really... it was meant to be all sorted over summer, and it didn't happen. So we're kind of now... we've had to take the view that we're building this nurture unit like we're building our family and our home, but we're doing it in a group... And just we're.

INTERVIEWER:

Right.

RESPONDENT:

Kids  
involved in  
decisions

Children  
learning  
basic  
skills

Comparing  
to other  
nurture  
groups

Height  
experience

-- um, which is... originally it was all meant to be set up, but... so we're now taking the opportunity and the boys are getting a lot more input into it, which is really good for them and helps us as well. Um, but yeah basically the aim of it is to develop all their social skills, and all the things that they didn't have when they were a kid. Basically, um, and all those basic things that my kids for granted, like, you know, making something with your family, or doing some cooking together, or... mean, I had a boy the other day who asked for toast for breakfast, and he said, "I wanna do it, but will you show me how to do it 'cause I have no idea", and at 11 years old, you should know how to use a toaster, like, or you'd assume you did. So it's just basically all those things, while sticking to the curriculum, and developing the stuff in the curriculum. So we're in that weird balance. Um, but I don't think ours is a typical nurture unit. Because usually they might spend part of their time in nurture, and then part of their time in lessons, whereas ours is all contained. And unfortunately, when they get in to Year 8, they don't have part of that nurture unit, so we're at that point where we're developing nurture, but we have to still get them ready for the main school, and to be able to do set pieces, and... 'cause people have come in and said, "Oh you should have a sofa" but at the moment we don't, and we want to, but then my thought is well, if we get a sofa in there, are they gonna spend the whole time sitting on the sofa, which is fine in the nurture unit, but then when they get to school and they realise... when they get to the main school and they realise well there's no sofa, are they gonna be able to sit round a desk and do their work? So we've got a weird balance going on, but yeah, no I think it's going really well.

INTERVIEWER:

Cool. Um, on to the next question, how... how much do you think the impact of the project has been so far?

RESPONDENT:

Reluctant

I think it's been very up and down. I think we started... we were told to start with this, basically no timetable --

Disappointed /  
angry at  
school?

Didn't go  
as an identity  
coloured

Philosophy  
of the unit

Making up  
for childhood  
experiences  
of neglect  
etc.

Kids express  
unhappiness

Trying  
to balance  
nurture  
experiences  
with the  
curriculum

Many people  
not prepared  
for children  
in mainstream  
or even  
starting things  
later?



INTERVIEWER:

OK.

RESPONDENT:

-- on, and just go with the flow, and that went fantastically. Like we had a lot of behavioural problems. Obviously we were going to have more problems 'cause it was the start of the term and they were going back, and all those things, but because they didn't know what was going on. So then we developed more and more structure. We've ended up having a set timetable, which I think works better for everyone, especially the pupils 'cause they know what's happening. Oh, but from the first week that they came here, we've made big progress, definitely, with a lot of the pupils. Most of the pupils. Um, so I think it's going well, but being realistic, I think as a nurture unit, it'll be up and running for the next Year 7s.

INTERVIEWER:

OK. What do you think will be different then, that will make it more of a (p 107-108)

RESPONDENT:

Well, it'll be already made, I say, we all know - we all know more of a plan of what we're doing because, to be quite frank, I've never been to a nurture unit before. We're... I'm organising a visit to another school's, because I don't really know what it's meant to look like, apart from what people have told me. I've never seen one, and all this - all the basic things, like that all had to be built over the summer, so the day they arrived there was nothing on the walls, there was just a classroom, just basically like this, just four walls and some chairs and some tables. It wasn't impressive.

INTERVIEWER:

OK.

RESPONDENT:

So I think by next year... well obviously we're developing all that all the time, we haven't just... I make it sound like we've given up, you know we haven't at all, but um, by next year, we will have all that stuff all collected, and know exactly how we start, and I think it'll, I think it's been successful so far, but I think next year it'll really... well hit the ground running and just go for it, um, but yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

So what have you noticed - what differences have you noticed in the children?

RESPONDENT:

Oh, well, obviously to the three children I had before summer...

INTERVIEWER:

Strong word  
Larger struggles?  
Anxiety.

Structure  
containing  
to adults  
therefore  
children  
contained  
or children  
reading  
structure?

Testing the  
boundaries

Kids making  
progress  
but still  
need  
more  
work  
to do

Stop  
not know  
what they  
want

Practicality  
of  
starting  
something  
new.

series of  
being  
developed  
this  
year.

Thinking there  
is a concrete  
thing that  
is a future  
group?  
A way it  
should be  
done?

'Daring'  
strategy  
to individualise

Anders  
common at  
start of  
something.  
Managing  
uncertainty.

We want enough?

OK.

RESPONDENT:

— um, changes in class in the nurture unit, one pupil, for example, can I say James, OK?

INTERVIEWER:

No.

RESPONDENT:

OK, so one pupil, um, he spent most of his time out of lessons up there, mostly because he could be with all the school and he could get away with being bad, and obviously he'd have to catch up and catch up on his work, but he would spend probably the equivalent of three days a week in... out of lessons.

Description  
of child before.

Quite  
punitive.

Seen as 'Instrumental'  
in the child's control.

INTERVIEWER:

OK.

RESPONDENT:

And now, up in that unit, where... he can get to the main school, he can just walk round, he's only done that once in the whole time, um, and he's rarely out of lessons, and if he's he'd spend five minutes out and then come back in. So he's a lot more settled. The change in him has been...

Settled in  
class.

INTERVIEWER:

Wow.

RESPONDENT:

-- phenomenal! Um, yeah, he's done really well. Uh, it hasn't been quite as effective for the other two pupils, but you have seen positive changes with them. Um, but in terms of from the start, they're just a lot more settled in themselves, they're... they're very comfortable with the fact that they're not part of the main school, they don't need to worry about them. They interact with them at fixtures, some of the boys, which they spend time with them, um, but they don't need to worry about all the big kids or anything. So I think they... they feel very safe up there, um, and then we're gradually getting more and more learning done in terms of like, cycled learning, like English, maths, science, because they're becoming more and more settled. Um, so yeah, I think we've seen progress, definitely, um, but the biggest progress has been, um, can you see how successful it has been from that one student, 'cause he spent that time in that main school, and now he's in there. So I think that's the biggest difference you can see.

Some changes  
in other  
pupils.

The learning  
taking place  
in the  
'safe'  
environment.

Stress response  
stuff, but  
learn when  
over 'anxious'.  
Trauma, it  
& 'hypersocial'  
in children.

INTERVIEWER:

And what do you think it is that's helping him?

RESPONDENT:

'Seeing' the  
difference.  
Giving confidence  
to what they  
are doing.

'Change  
phenomenal'

Nothing  
that it's  
difficult  
to be part  
of main school

Not having  
to impress

I think he just... he feels safe up there. He doesn't need to play up to all the big kids. I mean he hangs out and he spends time with them, but he doesn't need to try and fit in and be one of the big boys, so he doesn't get bullied. Um, and up there he can just do whatever he wants, in terms of like he feels safe. I don't know really know, you know what I mean, um, he's safe, and not have to play up to that. Um,

able to  
act younger

and for example, last year he was trying to fit in with the- the bad boys (supposed like the boys that were mean, I don't mean sex scared, by others, but you know what I mean. Like, the the ones that were... then were the bad boys, let's... If he himself, the bad boys to start and end. Oh, but now, he's been given awards for standing up to bullying um, and being- being a good friend to people, because there have been times where one of his- one of his friends, one of his class. I mean he's in the same class naturally the Dealing class um, and one of his friends was maybe, well there was no incident where he pushed a boy to the other class, and all. This boy chose to instead of go with all his friends in his class, he stayed back and he looked after him, and he said, 'Look, you just need to keep away from him, like he's the struggles with stuff like that, so just keep away from him. I've had problems with him too.' Oh, so that's... the change in him is phenomenal, he's quite happy.

and  
developing  
positive  
self.

empathy

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. What's he got for the stuff? What's the he got down for stuff?

RESPONDENT:

One, who picks up on for the whole staff?

INTERVIEWER:

Back, so for you [11:12:15]

RESPONDENT:

challenging  
No breaks.

Oh, so for us, it's been very hard because until two weeks ago we've been on 100 per cent thresholds with no breaks due to staffing, so we've been... we have them up there as break-time and lunch-time, or they go outside with us. So, for the first five weeks of term, we were with them from 11:00 am till 12:00 pm, no breaks, um, and that was just, well, it was getting too hard for us, like, um, so it's not really fair on the kids as well, because we don't have time to plan or anything, it was just... but now we've got that... that's all sorted. I think it- I think it's done well. The only thing, I don't feel as part of the main school now.

INTERVIEWER:

When.

RESPONDENT:

But I am. I am... I am... I mean I've been a dispute today with the main school with some of the boys in Year 7, but you don't spend as much time with... like we don't really do debates very often with the main school 'cause there's no point. Um, and I know one member of staff, don't know if I should talk about other people, but she's the only one that's got up there.

→ feel separate from  
main school  
it's their.

How to  
feel  
more  
integrated?

→ This response  
was the way about  
the boys hearing  
to integrate back  
into mainstream

## ***Appendix 7: Notes from Member Checking***

## ***Member Checking 14.05.2015***

### ***Strategy used for member checking***

Six of the eight participants were consulted during member checking (one was on maternity leave and another absent on the day member checking was completed).

One member of senior management was consulted in an individual session (participant 1) as was the project lead (participant 3). Four members of the teaching team (participants 2, 4, 5 and 7) were seen in a focus group. This strategy was used as senior managers expressed a preference to be seen individually and furthermore it was felt that the teaching staff may be more able to be open about their views without senior management present.

Participants were shown the answers to the research questions (section 5.6) and figures 7 and 8. Participants were asked to read these descriptions and comment on the aspects which they felt were correct or incorrect and add any additional comments they wished. They were given the choice to do this verbally or in written form. This was then followed by further discussions evoked through this process.

### ***Feedback regarding answers to research questions***

All participants confirmed that they believed the answers given were a good representation of the views they held about the project at the time of research. Three participants asked to keep a copy of figure 8 to support next steps for the project. In addition to agreeing with the answers provided, participants made the following comments:

Participants 2, 3, 4 and 5 discussed particular agreement with the inclusion of “time” in the key facilitators and felt that the missing out of this step in the process had hindered the progress of the NG project. They described how although through supervision the group reflect and create ideas about ways forward these often do not come to fruition as there is not enough time to plan for or manage changes.

Participants 2,4,5 and 7 further discussed the level of stress felt by the teachers in the group, caused by the intense relationships between pupils and teachers and the amount of time spent with the group. Some teachers spoke about being on the “brink of breakdown” at points in the year and two teachers who had worked in the group commented that the stress had negatively impacted upon their health. Participant 3 also mentioned the impact the group had had upon the teachers working in it, saying that she felt that they were much happier now that they are given time in the main school away from the group, stressing the importance of not isolating the teachers in the group.

The concept of “not one size fits all” was also discussed at length by participants 2,4,5 and 7. They said that they felt that the nurture unit had allowed some of the children to become so “comfortable” that they had become “unsafe” in the group. They felt that this was also impacted upon by the fact that they did not have positive peer pressure from older members of the school as they did not come in to contact with them. This was also mentioned by participant 3.

Participant 3 said that she felt that the whole school were now embedding the nurture principles (referring to nurture games being used in lessons) and that displaying the principles in the staff room had facilitated on going motivation. Nonetheless, she said she felt that the school had not yet taken on board the nurture principle regarding the importance of transitions and described how changes in groupings and staffing continued to occur without sufficient preparation and planning. Participant 2, 4, 5 and 7 agreed that they felt transitions continued to be managed “terribly”.

The focus group of teachers agreed that the training had been “great” but more time was needed for further training and to visit other settings, agreeing with the dynamic process depicted in figure 8. They also discussed that time was needed to bridge the gap between theory and practice (further agreeing with figure 8).

The teachers also agreed that there was jealousy amongst the young people as well as the staff towards the NG. They said that this was particularly present when the group were provided with sofas. It was reported that the group are beginning to be called the “retard group” by those outside of the group.

### ***Further discussions***

#### ***When is it too much nurture?***

Participant 2,4,5 and 7 discussed their concerns about when and how to transition children out of the group. Although they maintained that the NG was useful they raised concerns about it “delaying the problem” of joining the school, and caused children to need to complete two transitions (one to the NG and one to the main school). All participants reported that since the research had taken place some of the group have moved out of the nurture unit into the main school. These were the children referred to as “behavioural” in the “not one size fits all category”. Teachers described how this transition was not planned for effectively and happened quickly due to an increase in violent behaviour within the group. They said that their relationships with the children had been difficult after they were moved into the main building, however this had since settled down and the children would now work with all staff but return to them when needed (although there was some ambivalence here as teachers felt that they got the more aggressive behaviour due to their close relationships). The teachers spoke at length about when they felt children should be moved out of the nurture group expressing concern that if children remain in there for too long they become over reliant on the teachers and do not build up the resilience to be part of the main school, “delaying the problem”. They also spoke about the need to transition the children slowly into the main school and thought that this could be done through joining assembly and their house teams for house sessions. In this narrative they seemed to be talking about a further balance between enough vs too much time in the group. One participant described it as a “fine balance”.

### ***Nurture Group improving parental engagement?***

Participant 1 described the current work she is completing with 'achievement for all' to improve parental engagement. She said that she believed that parents of the children in the nurture group were more engaged with the school than those parents of children in other years. She believed that this was due to the consistency of teachers in the group as this meant that parents' communications were with an adult who had had first-hand experience of an incident rather than it being relayed second hand by a key worker. She reported that most of the year seven group's parents had attended the Christmas and Easter parent-child events in the school and three parents had worked with the school in a discussion group to help problem solve around an incident and develop a consistent approach between home and school. It seems that the same mechanism which is supporting young people's engagement in the group is also supporting parental engagement (consistency of teaching staff leading to the building of trusting relationships which in turn leads to feeling safe and therefore more positive engagement).

### ***Moving back towards a whole school focus***

Participant 3 described recent developments in the project, explaining how the school had returned to a whole school focus. The whole school had been assessed using the Boxall Profile and targets had been created based upon this analysis. Strategies to support the young people reaching these targets had then been developed through considering the relevant advice in the Boxall Profile handbook. She also described several recent observations of teachers using nurturing approaches in their lessons within the main school. These examples were all instances when a teacher had used games to support engagement in learning, aiming to make the lesson appropriate for the children's emotional developmental stage.



## ***Appendix 8: Example Coded Segments***

Screen shots of coded segments are provided below. These show open codes

Full coding analysis can be found in Appendix 8 on the CD Rom attached.

Example from participant 3

..whole school ethos  
..embedding principles

.. "doesn't just change over night"  
..desire to be more therapeutic

..staffing issues

..difference within y7 group

..positive group work  
..positive group work  
..attachment with staff  
..trust  
..feeling safe  
..producing good work

framework, to work from. If we can embed those six principles in our teaching practice and our relationships with the kids, and everything else, that gives us that...the- the ethos for the school --

61 **INTERVIEWER:**

62 Mhm.

63 **RESPONDENT:**

64 -- So, I don't think we're anywhere near there yet, but I- I do think that it's something to work towards, um, us being more therapeutic, more understanding, um, and moving away from sort of behaviourist approach, if you like, and moving towards a more therapeutic approach. Um, I think for the Year 7s up there, it hasn't been easy because we've had staffing issues, there's been a lot of changes to staffing, um, so i- it wasn't perfect when it started, but we kind of thought that might happen anyway. Um, but they've felt very safe up there because they are...they're separate from the whole school, so they're very contained, um, and they're beginning to settle. They've had some really good trips out, um, we've got a sort of more vulnerable group, and more...slightly more difficult group, behaviourally.

65 **INTERVIEWER:**

66 Ok.

67 **RESPONDENT:**

68 Um, but they're- they're beginning to, um...they've had some- some really amazing trips, an ice-skating trip where they all sort of...all confronted their fears and sort of helped each other and, um, swimming trips as well, where i- it's been very positive. So there's a lot of uh...there's a lot of positive group work going on up there, um, and they're definitely forming strong attachments with the key adults that are up there, um, which is...it's really...it's very obvious in that they feel safe in- in those relationships up there, already. Already there's a lot of trust up there, um, and they're producing some really good sort of arty-type stuff, and...

69 **INTERVIEWER:**

Example from participant 4

..more fluid

..time to get used to it

..outside perspective helpful

..smoother transition for y7

..trust

60 Yes, I think I...I think I...yeah I do think it has- has changed in some- some of the things where, um, I was very firm about [well 0:36:04] action, set consequence, I've been a lot more fluid with the way I want to work, and- and that's actually hard if for...like a lot of staff to...like myself I find it really hard to let go and be so fluid and things with... you know and if something's not working, right let's change it on the spur of the moment, and things like that, so...yeah things like that, that's been quite hard, but it's good to...i- it has changed, we've been a lot...it's not...having structure, but being able to go with the flow a little bit more, I think that's something that we sort of got from it, as well.]

61 **INTERVIEWER:**

62 Ok, um, and the peer supervision groups, you mentioned that you've been in one of those earlier. How are they going? What's...?

63 **RESPONDENT:**

64 Yeah, we had, um...it was- it was good, it was- it was the first one, so it was sort of getting to used to what sort of things you've got to say, and, um, getting...feeling ready to open up about it really, 'cause it's quite hard to do it on the fir...but it was- was really good to speak to R, and him just...his...he brings a completely new perspective, because if you've been talking to the same people all day, they think the same as you, and then someone comes in and's like, "Oh, that actually could mean this", and you're sort of...that sort of changes your...and it can make you a bit more positive about a situation, so...

65 **INTERVIEWER:**

66 Ok. Um, have you noticed the young people's actions and behaviour changing at all?

67 **RESPONDENT:**

68 Well, because I've been mostly...I've still been with Year 7s, but since we've...I've really seen them settle really nicely, and that's been...you know, when they first came to us, they were obviously very anxious, didn't know what to do, and then they sort of got a bit more confident and the behaviour sort of went with that. And you can see them settling, and then sort of...they sort of learn to trust us, and that- that's...it- it...I feel like we- we...they've been allowed to trust us more because of...they're with us, and we've got more opportunity to show them that we're gonna be here and we're not gonna let them down. So, I think that's been really good, and from just up in the Year 7s, so...

## ***Appendix 9: MaxQDA Analysis***

MaxQDA analysis is provided on the CD Rom attached.

In order to open the files MAX QDA reader is required. This can currently be downloaded for free from <http://www.maxqda.com/products/maxreader> (this address and offer was available in May 2015 at the time this thesis completed).

## ***Appendix 10: Transcripts***

Full Interview transcripts are provided on the attached CD Rom

## ***Appendix 11: Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement***

### Confidentiality Agreement

I, \_\_\_\_\_ transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentations received from Kathryn Rees related to her research study titled: 'Exploring the use of 'Nurturing Approaches' in a specialist setting'.

Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents.
2. To not disclose any information received for profit, gain or otherwise.
3. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized titles of the transcribed interviews texts, unless specifically requested to do so by the researcher, Kathryn Rees.
4. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession.
5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any back-up devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally responsible for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber's name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Transcriber's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

***Appendix 12: Literature Search Terms and Strategy Used for  
Whole School Change Literature Review***

***Literature review strategy used to find literature on whole school change***

Literature was searched for in March 2015 using the “discovery” search engine. This is a single search engine combining all EBSCO Host search engines.

The term “whole school change” was searched for within the field “title”. This search was completed within the title only in order to focus the number of articles found.

34 articles were found in this initial search. The abstract of each article was read and relevant articles were selected. Further articles were searched for using a snowball effect (searching for articles cited in these papers).