

**Teaching assistants' influence on the peer relationships of pupils  
with SEND: A grounded theory study from the perspective of  
teaching assistants.**

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## I. Abstract

This study investigates the influence of teaching assistants (TAs) on the peer relationships of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in mainstream schools. Peer relationships are central to development. Whilst there is an increasing body of research into TAs' contribution to academic outcomes, there are comparatively few studies into their social impact. The majority of studies investigating the impact of TAs on the peer relationships of pupils with SEND highlight concerns that TAs deployed in a one-to-one role inadvertently hinder pupil relationships.

This study sought to explore and explain the strategies used by TAs and the underlying contextual factors which facilitate or constrain the development of positive peer relationships for pupils with SEND. The purpose of the research was to identify, from the perspective of TAs, 'what works, for whom, in what contexts and with what outcomes'. Qualitative data from interviews with six TAs working in primary schools was analysed using a critical realist position and grounded theory methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

The results propose that TAs use 'manager' and 'coach' strategies to influence pupil peer relationships, via the core category of 'social agency'. The 'manager' enabled short-term reductions in pupils' level of social 'risk', problems and isolation, but constrained the development of social skills and increased dependency in the longer-term. The 'coach' encouraged pupils to take controlled, short-term risks, but facilitated their reflective thinking, social skills and independence. Three causal factors influenced TAs' use these strategies; the level of social need of pupils, TAs' values, knowledge, skills and integrated

experience and the school context. The concept of 'social agency', applied to both TAs and pupils, explains the properties of, and relationships between the above components. The theory has implications for the practice of TAs and educational professionals and provides a basis for future research.

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Note: All participants and the persons they referred to during interviews have been given pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.

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## VI. List of abbreviations

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Definition</b>
BPS .....	British Psychological Society
CYP .....	Children and young people
EP.....	Educational Psychologist
EPS.....	Educational Psychology Service
'General' TA / role .....	Refers to the deployment of a TA to support all pupils in a classroom, rather than predominantly those with SEND, as in the one-to-one role (see below) <sup>1</sup> .
GT .....	Grounded theory
One-to-one .....	Refers to the deployment of a TA to support one pupil, usually a pupil with SEND, rather than many or all pupils.
SEND .....	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SENCo .....	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
TA .....	Teaching assistant <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> No consistent term for this role was found in the existing literature. The term used here, 'general' TA, was used by the TA participants during interviews.

<sup>2</sup> In line with common usage, the term 'teaching assistant' is used to encompass similar classroom-based roles including classroom assistant, higher level teaching assistant, learning support assistant and nursery nurse (Sharples et al., 2015). This is differentiated from the broader term 'support staff', which includes all non-teaching school employees.

UNESCO ..... United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural  
Organisation

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Chapter overview

This chapter introduces the study, in which teaching assistants (TAs) were interviewed to investigate how their practices may facilitate or constrain the development of positive peer relationships for pupils with special educational needs and disability (SEND). The chapter explains the background to the current study, including the national and local contexts, and a brief synopsis of the research relating to peer relationships and TAs. These will be linked to the rationale, purpose and aims of the study, which are translated into research questions. The potential outcomes, relevance and impact of the study for educational practitioners will then be discussed.

## 1.2 Background and context

### 1.2.1 Peer relationships

Peer relationships play a key role in teaching, learning and human development (Ladd, 2005), yet the influence of peers and how we learn from them is often overlooked and underestimated in educational theory and practice (Pellegrini, Blatchford & Baines, 2016). The term 'peer' usually refers to individuals of equal status or children and young people (CYP) of the same age. CYP's ability to interact with peers goes through significant changes throughout childhood as their ability to coordinate social interaction improves (Pellegrini et al., 2016). CYP spend increasing amounts of time with agemates as they get older and peers



become more important. By adolescence, CYP tend to identify with peers in place of family as their primary reference group (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984).

Positive peer relationships and social competence have been associated with educational achievement, even when other causal factors such as socio-economic status and disability are taken into account (Criss, Pettit, Bates, Dodge & Lapp, 2002; Wentzel & Asher, 1995). Studies have highlighted a wide range of skills that are often enhanced by peers, including managing joint attention, self-regulation of emotion and inhibiting impulses, imitating another's actions, understanding cause-and-effect relationships and developing language (Hay, Payne & Chadwick, 2004). The evidence-base for peer-based teaching and learning methods, such as cooperative learning, peer collaboration, and peer-tutoring is extensive, including for pupils with a wide range of SEND (Gillies, Ashman & Terwel, 2008; McMaster & Fuchs, 2002; Slavin, Hurley & Chamberlain, 2003).

Problems with peer relationships in childhood are indicative of short and long-term negative outcomes (Parker & Asher, 1987). Low social acceptance and poor peer relationships in primary school have been linked with difficulties in adolescence and adulthood, including low academic attainment (Dodge, Coie & Lyman, 1998), behavioural disorders and truancy (Coie, Terry, Lennox, Lochman, 1995) and mental health problems (Cowen, Pederson, Babigian, Isso, & Trost, 1973). Most of these studies are correlational, so it is not clear whether early difficulties with peers actually cause later problems or whether they are indicative of wider risk factors. However, the risks of CYP with difficulties are compounded by negative peer experiences, while positive peer relationships protect against later psychological problems.

### 1.2.2 The peer relationships of pupils with SEND

Inclusion is a broad and contested term with a variety of definitions and meanings. It is defined in this study as the maximisation of the participation of all learners in mainstream educational settings, regardless of their identities, via the development of policies, curricula, cultures and practices that ensure diverse learning needs can be met (BPS, 2002). Advocates of inclusion have proposed that it should lead to increased opportunities for social participation, interaction and friendships with typically developing peers (UNESCO, 2009).

On balance, reviews of the outcomes of inclusion using a range of different methodologies have generally identified a marginal advantage of mainstream placements for students with SEND, for both academic and social outcomes (Lambert & Frederickson, 2015). In a review of 26, mainly US studies, Kalambouka, Farrell, Dyson and Kaplan (2005) found that 23 per cent of studies indicated positive academic and social outcomes of inclusion for CYP without SEND, 53 per cent a neutral impact, 10 per cent a mixed impact and only 15 per cent a negative impact. Some studies have claimed that the majority of students with SEND seem to do well socially in mainstream schools, managing to form and maintain positive relationships and feeling part of the social network (Pijl, Frostad, & Flem, 2008; Webb, 2009).

However, the positive effects of inclusion named by studies are often qualified by the fact that students with SEND often experience social difficulties, including amongst their peers (Lambert & Frederickson, 2015). Several meta-analyses have found that CYP with SEND are:

- not as socially integrated as their typically developing peers (Odom et al., 2004);
- poorly accepted, more often rejected and have lower levels of social skills and higher levels of problem behaviours (Gresham & MacMillan, 1997);
- less well accepted, have significantly fewer friends and interactions with classmates and are over-represented in social 'at risk' categories by a factor of two or three (Koster, Pijl, Nakken & van Houten, 2010);
- in a less favourable social position than CYP without SEND (Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009).

This has led some to suggest that inclusive education in the UK does not constitute actual inclusion, since CYP with SEND are often socially excluded (Rogers; 2007). Given the social position of pupils with SEND and the importance of peer relationships, it is essential that future research helps to identify practices and strategies for effectively involving these pupils in peer learning and school life (Baines, Blatchford, & Webster, 2015). This will be of vital importance to the effectiveness of EPs at improving outcomes for pupils with SEND.

### **1.2.3 The role of teaching assistants**

The proportion of full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching assistants (TAs) in the UK has more than trebled since 2000, from 79,000 to 263,000 FTE posts (DfE, 2016). In mainstream schools, TAs make up a quarter of the workforce and the number of TAs continues to rise faster than the number of teachers (DfE, 2016). Schools now spend approximately 4.4 billion a year on TAs; 13% of the education budget (Sharples, Webster & Blatchford, 2015) and numbers continue to rise despite threats to government funding of education. The most

recent government figures the nursery/primary sector show a 5% annual increase in full-time equivalent TAs (DfE, 2016).

Similar increases are apparent internationally, although they are more pronounced in the UK (Blatchford, Russell & Webster, 2012). Giangreco and Doyle (2007) report comparable increases in school support staff in Australia, Italy, Sweden, Canada, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Iceland, Ireland, Malta, South Africa and the USA.

There are likely to be multiple causes for the rise in the number of TAs, however several authors state that the principle factor has been the increase in the numbers of CYP with SEND being taught in mainstream schools and the accompanying funds available for staff to support them (Blatchford et al., 2011). With the introduction of statements for pupils with SEND in 1981, pupils with SEND were often allocated a specific number of hours of support from a TA (Troeva, 2015). Schools therefore increasingly employed staff whose contracts were often short-term and linked to particular pupils (Lee, 2002).

In the UK, the deployment of TAs has inadvertently become the key means by which inclusion is facilitated (Baines et al., 2015). The educational experiences of pupils with statements are characterised by the almost constant presence of a TA (Webster & Blatchford, 2013; 2014). Around a fifth of students with SEND's time is spent interacting with a TA compared with only 2-4% for those without SEND (Webster, 2015) and the amount of individualised attention from TAs increases with higher levels of pupil need (Blatchford et al., 2012). For pupils with SEND, time spent with TAs far exceeded time with teachers (Blatchford et al., 2009). TAs have become almost exclusively the way, rather than

one of many ways, to support students with SEND in mainstream classrooms (Giangreco, 2013). Increases in the number of TAs, particularly in the primary sector, has been identified as the key difference between the experiences of pupils with and without SEND (Webster, 2015).

While TAs engage in a variety of activities, their roles have become increasingly pedagogical and instructional over time (Giangreco, 2013). TAs now spend by far the greatest amount of their time on direct teaching of pupils, providing learning support primarily to low attaining pupils and those with SEND (Blatchford et al., 2011). TAs have the primary responsibility for the education of pupils with SEND. Given their central role in the process of inclusion of pupils with SEND, the practice of TAs is therefore of vital importance to educational psychologists (EPs) aiming to improve outcomes for pupils with SEND (1.3.4).

There is an increasing body of research which focusses on TAs' contribution to academic outcomes. Several studies have shown that when given appropriate training and guidance support to implement targeted curricular interventions, TAs tend to have a positive impact on pupils' academic progress (Alborz, Pearson, Farrell & Howes, 2009; NFER, 2014).

However, there are well-established concerns from studies in the US (Finn, Gerber, Farber & Achilles, 2000; Gerber, Finn, Achilles & Zaharias-Boyd, 2001) and the UK (Klassen, 2001; Moyles & Suschitzky, 1997) that one-to-one TA support does not benefit, and can inadvertently inhibit pupils' academic progress. By far the most rigorous and comprehensive study into the impact of TAs, the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project, found an overall negative relationship between the level of support provided by TAs and pupils' academic achievement, which is not accounted for by pupil characteristics such as

prior attainment and level of SEN (Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, Russell & Webster, 2009). The more support pupils received, the less progress they made and this effect was more pronounced for pupils with higher levels of SEND.

Whilst there is an increasing body of research that focuses on TAs' contribution to academic outcomes, there is comparatively little research into the social impact of TAs, particularly on pupil relationships (Blatchford et al., 2012) (2.4). This reflects wider trends in research, policy and practice that prioritise academic outcomes. This research project therefore combines two relatively under-researched areas; TAs and the peer relationships of pupils with SEND.

#### **1.2.4 Teaching assistants and peer relationships**

What research there is into this phenomena has suggested that TAs have a significant impact on pupil peer relationships. There is a small amount of evidence which indicates that TAs can be trained and supported to implement effective social interventions under specific conditions (Giangreco & Hoza, 2013). There are several social skills interventions, many with a good evidence base, that usually involve intense and/or extended work with an individuals or small groups CYP with similar needs outside of the classroom, and TAs are often given responsibility for their implementation (Baines et al., 2015).

There is less data on the social impact of TAs within the classroom context, where TAs and pupils with SEND spend the majority of their time. To date, only one study (Dolva, Gustavsson, Borell & Hemmingsson, 2011), has been found which focuses solely on the

influence of TA classroom support on the peer relationships of pupils with SEND. The majority of studies with relevant findings also focussed on academic outcomes, or other types of support for pupils, such as teaching format. The trends in the existing literature relating to the positive and negative influence of TAs on the peer relationships of pupils with SEND will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

## **1.3 Rationale**

### **1.3.1 Aims and purpose**

This research seeks to explore how TAs can facilitate or constrain the development of positive peer relationships for pupils with SEND in Years 5 and 6, from the perspective of TAs themselves. It aims to develop a theoretical explanation for the generative mechanisms and contextual factors that provide the conditions for TA practices, which in turn affect the peer relationships of pupils with SEND.

The purpose of this study is therefore exploratory and explanatory. Explanatory research endeavours to understand the relationships that define a particular phenomena, including an explanation of cause and effect (the 'why'). Exploratory research aims to increase understanding and generate hypotheses for future research (the 'what') (Creswell, 2003; Robson, 2011). Exploratory research is often more descriptive, aiming to build an accurate, informative picture of a phenomenon, in order to identify the central factors and variables (Robson, 2011).

The development of an explanatory theory, which aims to identify the causal factors and mechanisms of TA practice, which in turn produce specific outcomes, is deemed more useful than the exploratory aim, which is likely to produce a more descriptive account, documenting the characteristics of TA practices and pupil peer relationships (Robson, 2011). A study with explanatory power has more potential for practical application within professional social contexts, since it offers to further develop rationales for professional decisions. However, given the size and variation within this aspect of TA practice relative to the resources of the study (one researcher with limited time), it is recognised that an exploratory aim is also necessary. It would be impossible to claim to have documented causal mechanisms of TA practices that are generalizable beyond their specific, localised social contexts. Thus, in relation to the broader context of TA practices beyond the participant schools, the findings in this study will be largely exploratory. In relation to wider generalisability, the study aims to produce accounts and hypotheses which can then be further investigated, verified or refuted in future research (5.7). Given paucity of research into this area, this is also deemed valuable.

Causality is a broad, complex concept that can be understood in many different ways. The understanding of causality in this study is based on critical realist and grounded theory (GT) understandings of cause and effect as underpinned by a complex interplay between internal (psychological) and external (social) causal mechanisms. This study aims to understand social causality by analysing TA participants' own conceptualisation of their behaviour as embedded within wider social structures. It intends to use TAs' qualitative accounts to explain how individuals may interact with and produce particular social patterns, generating specific outcomes for the peer relationships of pupils with SEND under specific conditions



within their school contexts (Oliver, 2011). For further descriptions of these understanding of causation, see 3.3.1, 3.5.1 and 3.5.4.

This conceptualisation of causality is distinct from more traditional understandings within psychological research based on positivist methods and experimental designs. Many researchers would argue that the best way of determining causal relationships is to use randomised control trials, in which participants have been randomly assigned to conditions which reflect the manipulation of potential causal variables (Howitt & Cramer, 2008). While, it is agreed that experimental designs often offer convincing evidence for cause and effect in relation to simple, linear relationships made up of specific variables and easily measurable outcomes, they cannot account for the more complex social processes at work in real world settings, such as schools.

### **1.3.2 Gaps in the current literature**

This study aims to partially address five gaps in the existing literature:

#### **1. TAs**

- Despite the proliferation of TAs in the UK and internationally, there is still a paucity of research into the efficacy and practices of TAs.

#### **2. TAs and peer relationships**

- There is comparatively little research into the impact or influence of TAs on social outcomes, namely the peer relationships of pupils with SEND.

### 3. A 'what works' perspective

- There is little research into TA practice from a 'what works' perspective, documenting which TA strategies or actions work well, or less well (Baines et al., 2015). In particular, much of the current research is 'problem-focussed', outlining concerns with an absence of descriptions of 'best practices'. There is a lack of 'theoretically grounded, field-tested, decision-making models' of TA support for pupils with SEND, which aim to support TAs to improve outcomes (Giangreco, 2009, p.4); what can TAs do to support inclusion?

### 4. TA perspectives

- There is relatively little research 'on the ground', documenting the everyday practices, experiences and perspectives of TAs and the pupils they support (Mackenzie, 2011). These 'insider accounts' can provide valuable sources of information when developing practice (Billington, 2006).

### 5. The actions and interactions of TAs as causal mechanisms

- While the small existing literature, outlined in chapter 2, highlights several possible causal mechanisms for the impact of TAs on the peer relationships of pupils with SEND, there is relatively little research which explicitly describes what this looks like in real life social activities and events; as the actions and interactions of TA with pupils.

### 1.3.3 Research questions

Primary research question:

- How do teaching assistants influence the peer relationships of pupils with SEND?

Secondary research question:

- What are the contexts and mechanisms underpinning TA practices that facilitate or constrain the development of positive peer relationships for pupils with SEND?

The research questions were kept deliberately open-ended, so as to minimise making prior assumptions about the phenomena or employing constructs derived from existing theories, which is central to the Grounded Theory (GT) method (Willig, 2013).

### 1.3.4 Relevance and impact

This study has an action agenda, aiming for the findings to influence or change TA practices and therefore make a difference to the lives of pupils with SEND (Robson, 2011). Developing effective TA practice as a means to raise standards for pupils with SEND should be a priority for virtually all stakeholders in education; governments, schools, TAs, students and their families. As the primary location of pupil's peer interactions, all educational settings have a duty to 'promote positive outcomes in the wider areas of personal and social development', support students to 'participate in society, including having friends and supportive relationships' and to be proactive to 'prevent discrimination, promote equal opportunity

and foster good relations' (DfE, 2015, p.93). It is hoped that the answers to the research questions will:

- constitute a theory of the positive and negative influence of TAs on the peer relationships of students with SEND, which will in turn improve practitioners' understanding and stimulate discussion, thereby developing practice;
- enable TAs to provide better guidance for pupils with SEND to develop the skills that can enable them to engage in constructive and positive peer interactions (Baines et al., 2015);
- identify 'what works' and the potential barriers in relation to TAs' effective promotion of the peer relationships of pupils with SEND;
- help to inform the practice of other school staff, including the utilisation, deployment and training of TAs by school leaders and teachers;
- generate ideas and hypotheses for further research into the phenomena, including studies with an evaluative and emancipatory focus.
- inform the practice of EPs by adding to the evidence base about how TA practitioners and educational settings can develop positive peer relationships for pupils with SEND.

#### *1.3.4.1 Local context*

While the topic is not a named priority of the local authority, there is a need for progress in this area locally. In informal conversations with the researcher, many potential stakeholders including the Principal EP, other EPs, teachers, TAs and parents have all noted the

prevalence of TA support for pupils with SEND within the borough, shared concerns and optimism about this model of inclusion and expressed support for, or an interest in the study. Findings will be disseminated locally, both orally and in written formats to the participant school, other schools, the commissioning educational psychology service (EPS) and wider networks. It is hoped that the study can provide a theoretical framework to help professionals in the borough understand how pupils with SEND can be effectively supported by TAs.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Chapter overview

This chapter reviews the existing research literature about TAs influence on the peer relationships of pupils with SEND. The search strategy will be outlined, followed by a critical appraisal of the quality and breadth of the literature. This will be used to highlight gaps in the literature and provide a rationale for the current study.

### 2.2 Search question

This literature review aims to answer the following question:

- What does existing research say about how TAs influence the peer relationships of pupils with SEND?

### 2.3 Search strategy

In line with the original Grounded Theory (GT) tradition, the literature review was conducted after the data analysis was complete in order to minimise the risk of the researcher bringing prior assumptions into the analysis process, thus constraining the development of an emergent theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). More recent GT researchers have emphasised that such a naïve position is neither possible nor desirable, suggesting that

familiarity with and critical use of existing literature can be useful to inform the design of the research and enhance researcher sensitivity to the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) (3.7.1).

Thus, an initial, superficial review of the literature was carried out prior to data collection. In March 2016, five databases, PsycINFO, Education Source, the Education Resource Information Centre (ERIC), Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection and PsycARTICLES, were searched using key terms, including 'teaching assistant\*', 'peer relationship\*' and 'special education\*'. The title and abstract of articles were scanned and studies deemed relevant studies were read in full. Notes were taken in order to develop the researchers' knowledge of existing research and enhance sensitivity to the phenomena in question. See 3.7.1 for a discussion of how this existing theory was then considered during the data analysis phase.

After data collection and analysis were complete, a systematic and comprehensive approach was used to explore the literature in full. This is distinct from systematic literature reviews, such as Cochrane or Campbell Collaboration-style reviews, which were deemed beyond the scope of this study. The search aimed to identify studies that related to the three key features of the phenomena in question; the practice of TAs, pupils with SEND and their peer relationships. To ensure that all variants of and synonyms for these terms were identified the author brainstormed the terms himself and then entered them into the thesaurus function in the EBSCO host search engine. Five variants of the term 'TA' and seven of 'peer relationships' were identified (7.1). These terms were then weighted in order of those predicted to yield the most relevant results, based on their level of usage in the UK and internationally. The terms were then combined systematically for searches (7.2).

### 2.3.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Studies were selected using the following criteria:

Inclusion criteria:

- Study published in a peer reviewed journal.
- Study written in English.
- Study uses a research design (analyses data).
- Topic of study is relevant, relating to TAs, pupils with SEND and peer relationships.

Exclusion criteria:

- Duplicate items.
- Unpublished study.
- Study not written in English.
- Study does not use a research design (does not analyse data):
  - Opinion article.
  - Practice or policy report or guidelines.
  - Practice book.
- Study relates to irrelevant topics, including:
  - Specific, targeted interventions or strategies.
  - Study of Early Years settings.



Studies that related to specific, targeted interventions or strategies were excluded from the search. The aim of this study is to explore the 'everyday conditions' of TA practice in their most common form and contexts; the actions and interactions between TAs and pupils in the classroom and playground. There is a significant amount of research focussing on the impact of specific interventions, strategies or circumstances to facilitate the inclusion and thus peer relationships of pupils with SEND, however less is known about what happens between pupils and TAs on a day-to-day basis. This distinction between 'naturalistic' and more controlled conditions has been drawn by several other studies into TA practice (Blatchford et al., 2012; Symes & Humphrey, 2012; Webster & Blatchford, 2013). As Blatchford and colleagues (2009) state:

'interventions have value, but it was thought more useful and strategic to first find out what the situation was like more generally in schools, rather than examining what might be possible under certain circumstances' (p.18).

Obtaining empirical evidence of what pupils with SEND experience on a daily basis, where most TA resources are used, is essential to improving TA practice (Webster & Blatchford, 2013).

Studies that related to early years settings were excluded on the basis that the nature of the peer relationships of the under-five-year-olds were too different to make sufficient comparisons with the pupils supported by TA participants in this study, aged 9 to 11 years.

Due to the paucity of research into the phenomena in the UK, international studies were included in the criteria. The nature of the deployment of TAs in other developed countries has been described as similar to that of the UK (Blatchford et al., 2012; Giangreco, 2013), allowing for relevant conclusions to be critically applied to UK population.

### **2.3.2 Appraisal tools**

Various versions of the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) research appraisal tools were used to assist the researcher to select and evaluate the quality of the existing literature. The CASP tools were selected as appropriate due to the range of different methodological studies identified in the literature, with the CASP offering a tool for the majority of research designs. Two variations of CASP tools were used to critique qualitative (Greenhalgh, 1997) and cross-sectional studies (Guyatt, Sackett & Cook, 1994), due to their suitedness to the nature of studies found in the search.

### **2.3.3 Search results**

In August 2017, five databases, PsycINFO, Education Source, the Education Resource Information Centre (ERIC), Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection and PsycARTICLES, were searched using the key terms (see 7.1) yielding a total of 2,055 results, with 1,013 excluded by the search engine or the researcher as duplicates, leaving 1,042. The searches and number of hits are shown in 7.2. The title and abstract of articles were scanned and relevant studies were selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria and appraisal tools, described above. For those studies for which it was difficult to include or exclude

based on the title or abstract alone, a full copy of the study was read. A summary of the reasons for the exclusion of studies can be found in 7.3. 11 relevant studies were selected from these searches. This was then supplemented using snowball sampling techniques (Greenhalgh & Peacock, 2005) including a hand search through the most frequently cited journals, the reference lists of the studies found in the initial search and articles which have cited those studies. This returned a further 2 relevant papers, making 13 in total, which are summarised in 7.4.

Only one study, that by Dolva et al. (2011), was found which focuses solely on the phenomena in question; the influence of TAs on the peer relationships of pupils with SEND, with most also focussing on academic outcomes and/or the role of teachers. The studies included focus on the research phenomena as a major theme.

## **2.4 Research evidence**

The selected studies described below have been grouped in relation to three themes within their findings; the negative impact of one-to-one TA support, TA closeness versus distance and helpful TA roles. Within these themes, studies have also been grouped in relation to their methodology and methods, since studies with similar methods often produced similar findings. Findings from quantitative studies are explained first, since they describe more general, overarching patterns about the phenomena in question, with qualitative studies subsequently offering more rich, detailed explanations.

The studies were not placed in a hierarchy of evidence relating to these criteria (e.g. RCTs at the top, qualitative at the bottom). This study asserts that each type of method offers a different useful perspective on the phenomena in question and therefore cannot be adjudged better or worse based on methodology and methods alone.

In the description of studies below, key synonyms from the international literature have been replaced by the UK terms, so as to enable consistency and comparison. For example, 'paraprofessional' has been replaced with 'TA'.

#### **2.4.1 The negative impact of one-to-one TA support**

The majority of selected studies (10) focussed on concerns about the impact of one-to-one TA support on the peer relationships of pupils with SEND. The one-to-one role can be defined as when a TA is in close proximity to a pupil with special needs or focus pupil, such as sat next to them during lessons.

##### *2.4.1.1 Quantitative systematic classroom observation studies*

Several studies used structured, systematic observation schedules to collect quantitative data to measure the impact of TAs on the frequency of interactions between pupils with SEND and their peers. Pupils' behaviours and interactions were categorised by observers using pre-defined criteria.

## Findings

In a US study, Carter, Sisco, Brown, Brickham and Al-Khabbaz (2008) observed 23 secondary students with learning difficulties (and some with additional needs), aged 12 to 18 years, within mainstream classrooms to examine the factors that impacted on the level of peer interactions and academic engagement. Factors included instructional formats (i.e. one-to-one, group, or whole class activities) and proximity of teachers and TAs.

Results found that the proximity of TAs reduced both social and task-related interactions between pupils with SEND and their peers, whereas the presence of teachers reduced social-related, but increased task-related interactions. TAs also reduced the overall level of peer interactions for pupils with SEND more than teachers. The lowest rates of peer interaction occurred when pupils with SEND were receiving one-to-one instruction from a TA. However, TAs and teachers increased the levels of academic engagement to similar levels, particularly when working one-to-one.

These results suggest that there is something specific to the practice of some TAs, as opposed to teachers, that inhibits the peer relationships of pupils with SEND. The fact that academic engagement was higher when TAs were close, particularly when working one-to-one, also suggests that improved academic engagement in these conditions may come at a social cost. The authors concluded that TAs presence and practices meant that 'all academic related interactions must be channelled through' them as well as 'reducing the likelihood' that pupils will 'attempt to initiate social-related interactions' (pp.489-90).

In another study, Webster and Blatchford (2013) used data from the observation of 48 pupils with SEND and 151 control pupils aged nine and 10 to compare the educational experiences of pupils with and without SEND, particularly their interactions with teachers, TAs and peers. Pupils were recruited from 45 schools in six local authorities in the UK.

Results showed that pupils with SEND experience a high degree of separation from their peers, with the deployment of TAs identified as the key causal factor. Relative to controls, pupils with SEND:

- had far fewer peer interactions (18% vs. 32%), dropping to less than half within the classroom context (13% vs. 32%);
- directed more interactions toward adults (8% vs. 1%), with three times as many interactions with TAs than teachers (6% vs. 2%);
- were almost constantly accompanied by a TA in all contexts;
- spent over a quarter of their time away from the mainstream classroom and experienced segregation within the classroom by having an individual workstation away from others.

The study concluded that TAs, mainly deployed in a one-to-one role, 'cut across, replace and reduce' opportunities for pupils with SEND to interact with their peers, resulting in 'a subtle form of separation' (pp.13-15).

In a further study, Webster (2015) compared the same quantitative data as Webster & Blatchford (2013) to the data from six other systematic observation studies conducted between 1976 and 2012, with the aim of analysing how the classroom experiences of pupils

with SEND in mainstream UK primary schools have changed over time in comparison to those without SEND. Historical studies with similar designs, data collection and sampling methods were selected for comparison, with common variables identified as the basis for analyses.

Results showed that since the 1980s:

- pupils without SEND show an increase in the amount of time spent interacting with peers (from 18% to 32% of the time), whilst pupils with SEND showed almost not change (19% vs 18%);
- the proportion of time pupils with and without SEN spend not interacting is almost the same (23% vs 25% or 26% for both).

As with Webster and Blatchford (2013), the increase in the number of TAs working to support pupils with SEND in mainstream primary classrooms is identified as the key explanatory factor in the change in pupils with SEND's experience over time, relative to their non-SEND peers. The fact that pupils with and without SEND's level of peer interactions were the almost same in historical studies (18% and 19%) and the fact that they spend almost equal amounts of time not interacting (Between 23% and 26%), add weight to the idea that TA support is the cause of the negative changes in pupils with SEND's reduced opportunities for peer interaction in the classroom.

## Critique

These three quantitative observation studies have several collective methodological weaknesses that limit the strength of the findings. The conclusions that can be drawn from systematic observation techniques are generally limited to broad patterns of behaviour, which can hide more subtle differences between groups or individuals (Blatchford, Bassett & Brown, 2005). The data suggests that the broad impact of one-to-one TA support is detrimental to the number of interactions between pupils, but there is no data about the impact of other factors such as the nature of pupil SEND or the types of one-to-one TA support. The studies have little power to explain what it is that TAs may do, besides being in close proximity to pupils, to cause a reduction in peer interactions; what are their actions and interactions with pupils?

The findings are also based on specific samples, who may show different results to the participants in the current study. Carter et al.'s (2008) results were based on a relatively small sample of secondary-aged pupils from the USA and the study did not have a control group, such as the comparative data for pupils without SEND used by Webster and Blatchford (2013). Webster and Blatchford (2013) analysed data from pupils in the UK with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) or behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) in Year 5. However, this constitutes a relatively large and diverse sample that is similar to the pupils supported by the TAs in the current study. The study analysed a large amount of data (810 data points and 13.5 hours of observation per pupil).

The study by Webster (2015) has the added methodological difficulty of comparing data from different research studies, which have variations in samples, data collection and analysis methods. The author's ability to make longitudinal comparisons and interpretations



across the studies is weakened by these differences, although Webster (2015) takes these limitations into account, remaining cautious about the conclusions drawn from the data.

However, all three studies are well designed, using explicit and rigorous systematic observation schedules and appropriate quality control measures, such as inter-observer reliability. The principal conclusions about the 'replacement' and 'separation' effects of TAs on the peer interactions of pupils with SEND are consistent across the three studies, suggesting that the findings are relatively trustworthy and potentially generalisable to other populations and contexts.

#### *2.4.1.2 Quantitative questionnaire studies*

Only one study used data from questionnaires to measure the impact of different types of TA support (O'Rourke & Houghton, 2008).

#### *Findings*

O'Rourke and Houghton (2008) used the Student Perceptions of Classroom Support Scale (SPCS) questionnaire, developed in their own previous research (O'Rourke & Houghton, 2006), to measure the perceptions of 60 secondary-aged students (13-18 years), with a range of SEND, from seven schools in Australia, about the academic and social support mechanisms they received in mainstream classes. The SPCS has 28 items on a Likert scale relating to curricular, instructional, physical and peer support mechanisms. Statistical analysis using item affectivity and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was applied.

Results revealed that social and academic support mechanisms, including TA support, appeared to be at odds with each other, with those that were perceived positively by pupils in terms of academic outcomes not scoring highly for social outcomes, including developing relationships with peers. The study supports the suggestion of Carter et al. (2008) that the academic benefits of TA support come at a social cost. There were also concerns for the overall social impact of TA support.

Low q-values were indicative of items that students consider more helpful, whilst high score indicate those considered less helpful. One-to-one support in class from a TA was perceived as the most helpful support strategy for academic purposes ( $q=0.22$ ), but less helpful socially ( $q=0.45$ ), whilst shared support from teachers and TAs was perceived as the most helpful social support ( $q=0.34$ ), but less helpful academically than one-to-one support ( $q=0.0.27$ ). Leaving the room with the TA was perceived as the least helpful social support ( $q=0.59$ ) and academic support ( $q=0.32$ ), suggesting a greater negative social than academic impact. These figures indicate that TA support, particularly one-to-one, is helpful in terms of academic outcomes, but appears to be offset by the creation of obstacles to pupils' peer relationships.

### Critique

The study has several limitations. Questions remain about the validity of the SPCS measure. In their development of the instrument, O'Rourke and Houghton (2006) found variability in student's perceptions of the social impact of one-to-one support with those who receive

lots of support seeing it a helpful socially, versus those who receive less support seeing it as socially inhibiting. The effects in the current study may hide more complex pupil perceptions of the social impact of TA support, although this 'over-simplification' criticism can be levied at most quantitative measures. The study did not have a control group and the sample does not match the age of pupils supported in my study.

However, the sample from which to draw conclusions is of moderate size and the procedures and methods appear to be rigorous, with features such as the reporting of the measures of internal consistency for the SPCS. Overall, the findings add weight to the concerns from other studies about the negative social impact of one-to-one TA support.

#### *2.4.1.3 Mixed methods studies:*

Two studies used both quantitative data from systematic classroom observations and qualitative data from unstructured field observations and/or individual interviews.

#### *Findings*

Harris (2011) used a multiple-case study design based on quantitative, systematic and qualitative, field observations and individual interviews with TAs, to explore the effect of TAs' proximity on the interactions of pupils with visual impairments (VI) in mainstream classrooms. Four TA-student dyads, with pupils aged 7 to 13 years, were studied. Within-case and cross-case data analysis was applied, with categories developed for each case study then compared between cases to determine common characteristics or concepts.

Results showed that more interactions with peers occurred when TAs were physically distant from pupils with VI. Chi-square test results showed that the relationship between proximity and the students' interaction was statistically significant, with Cramer's statistic showing the strength of the relationship to be  $<0.6$ , indicating a strong relationship. Peers were more likely to interact with pupils with VI when the TAs were distant (57.14%) than when they were near (42.86%). A significant relationship was also found between proximity of the TA and who initiated the interactions, with Cramer's statistic showing the strength of the relationship to be  $<0.6$ , indicating a strong relationship. When the TAs were at a distance, the students (50.59%) and peers (58.18%) were more likely to initiate interactions.

In another study, Symes and Humphrey (2012) used quantitative data from systematic observations, using observation schedules involving 120 pupils in 12 mainstream UK secondary schools, and qualitative data from unstructured observations of 21 pupils. The primary, quantitative phase investigated the extent to which pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) were effectively included in lessons, not including the impact of the TA, whilst the secondary, qualitative phase explored how the presence of a TA influences the inclusion/exclusion process.

The authors found that the presence of a TA appeared to exacerbate the social difficulties of pupils with ASD, reducing the number of interactions with peers. With a TA present:

- typically-developing peers interacted more with the TA than with the pupils with ASD;

- pupils with ASD interacted more with the TA than their peers, often choosing to work with their TA, with the TA unlikely to encourage them to work with peers instead;
- pupils with ASD were less likely to help their typically developing peers with classwork.

Overall, TAs were found to replace interactions between pupils with ASD and their typically-developing peers.

The study found a small amount of evidence that TAs could facilitate interactions between pupils with ASD and their peers. Some TAs were found to facilitate group work by helping groups stay on task and by fairly assigning roles to pupils. However, these positive strategies were only present in a small number of observed interactions, were not explained in detail and did not constitute a major finding.

### Critique

There are several weaknesses to the above studies. The relevant findings are based on relatively small or moderate sample sizes of pupils with specific types of SEND (VI and ASD), and may not be generalisable to other populations. Both studies also provided very little discussion of their use of qualitative data. For Harris (2011), it is difficult to ascertain what value the data obtained from qualitative interviews added to the study. For Symes and Humphrey (2012), there was no reference to the use of qualitative quality control measures,

meaning conclusions from the qualitative phase, which were those that were relevant to this study's research question, lack transparency and trustworthiness.

However, the both studies appear to be relatively well designed, with critical discussions of the results, plausible, coherent findings and quality control procedures for the quantitative phases, such as measures of inter-observer reliability. As such, the findings can be critically added to the relevant literature. These studies support the idea that TAs have a negative impact on the level of interaction between pupils with SEND and their peers.

#### *2.4.1.4 Qualitative observation and interview studies*

Several studies utilised qualitative data from unstructured classroom observations, combined with individual interviews with participants.

#### *Findings*

Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli and MacFarland (1997) used field observations and individual interviews with staff and parents to analyse the effects of the proximity of TAs on pupils with SEND in mainstream classrooms in the USA. There were 11 focus pupils aged four to 20 years, with a range of SEND, drawn from 11 schools in the US.

The findings almost exclusively documented the detrimental impact of close TA support, although there was a recognition that some proximity was sometimes desirable or essential to provide academic, communication and physical (rather than social) support. The negative

consequences were divided into eight themes, three of which related to the peer relationships of pupils. Firstly, TAs were found to physically separate pupils from their classmates by positioning them away from peers inside or outside of the classroom. Secondly, TA proximity created a barrier to peer relationships by replacing opportunities for interactions with peers, inadvertently creating social stigma and dominating group interactions between students. When TAs were not in close proximity to students with SEND, pupils with and without SEND were observed to interact more often. Thirdly, TAs caused a loss of pupil with SENDs personal control. Although, the authors did not explicitly link this final theme to peer relationships, the examples they provided demonstrated that this effect occurred in the context of pupil with SEND's relationships with other pupils. The authors did recognise that these negative social outcomes did not occur in all cases, but these were exceptions and were not described in detail.

In another study, Giangreco, Broer and Edelman (2001) also used field observations and individual interviews with 103 school staff, including teachers, TAs, speech and language therapists and school leaders (although many were only observed or interviewed, rather than both), to explore how TA support in mainstream classrooms relates to teacher engagement with, and inclusion of pupils with SEND in the US. Focus pupils had a range of SEND and were aged between 4 and 18 years.

The findings indicated that pupils with SEND assigned support from TAs were often 'isolated', interacting with the TA rather than the teacher or their peers. Pupils receiving support were often physically separated from peers by their positioning within the classroom. The authors described 'insular relationships' between pupils and TAs, with some

benefits in terms of bonding, but predominantly negative outcomes via unintended social exclusion. It was suggested that one-to-one support was 'stigmatising' for pupils with SEND, with adult participants describing how some pupils felt 'unfairly singled out', embarrassed or made to feel different. The impact of TA support on the reduced levels of teacher engagement with pupils with SEND was proposed as the key causal mechanism for these negative consequences.

In another US study, Malmgren and Causton-Theoharis (2006) used field observations and individual interviews with one pupil, the TA who supports him, his parent and three of his teachers. They investigated how various factors, including TA support, affected the peer interactions of the focus pupil, aged seven, who has an emotional and behavioural disorder.

Many factors were found to affect the peer interactions of the focus pupil, including type of grouping, structure of the task and specific classroom management routines. However, the proximity of TA support was identified as the 'only important pedagogical decision' that influenced peer interactions, with close physical proximity impeding the number of peer interactions for the focus pupil (p.309). Of the 32 interactions that occurred with peers during observations, only three took place when a TA was present. Two of these were ended by a TA, telling the pupil to be quiet. A TA was present for 270 of 420 minutes of the observations (64% of the time), so over 90% the pupils' interactions with peers occurred during 36% of the time he was observed without a TA in his immediate proximity. The authors concluded that one-to-one TA support was an 'isolating bubble' in which pupils with SEND 'find themselves learning alongside their peers', rather than with them (p.310).



## Critique

These three qualitative observation and interview studies have several collective methodological weaknesses that limit the strength of the findings. They use subjective observation methods, yet the authors do not appear to reflexively, critically examine their own perspectives or methods, raising questions about transparency, trustworthiness and credibility. The studies, particularly those by Giangreco and colleagues (Giangreco et al., 1997; Giangreco et al., 2001) have a strong negative focus about the influence of TAs. It would seem unlikely that qualitative data collected from TAs, teachers and school staff would be as overwhelmingly negative about TA practice as the results suggest, raising the concern that the conclusions in the study may reflect the concerns of the researchers more than the experience of participants. The Giangreco and colleagues (1997) and Malmgren and Causton-Theoharis (2006) studies also have small samples sizes, making generalisations difficult.

For Malmgren and Causton-Theoharis (2006), given that the study analyses the impact of pre-identified factors on peer interactions, and results report mainly on quantitative figures, a factorial, quantitative design may have been more suitable. The process of coding qualitative data using pre-identified variables is not sufficiently explained and there were potential confounding variables, such as the pupil's level and nature of SEND.

However, since we do not have access to the data used in the studies, the questions of trustworthiness and credibility described above are difficult to determine with any certainty. The methods and processes used would appear to have sufficient rigour, with a

reasonable description of sampling, data collection and data analysis, including the verification of reciprocal findings between the authors and the triangulation of observation and interview data. For Malmgren & Causton-Theoharis (2006), some quality control measures were used, including peer review to test for inter-observer reliability and the fact that all of the pre-identified variables except the proximity of the TA were found to have no impact on the pupil's interactions gives the findings more credibility. Moreover, the findings about the detrimental effects of TA proximity on peer interactions are relatively plausible and convincing and broadly corroborate with the concerns found in the wider literature.

#### *2.4.1.5 Qualitative interview studies*

One study which found that TAs had a detrimental impact on peer interactions used qualitative interview data.

#### *Findings*

In the US, Broer, Doyle and Giangreco (2005) interviewed 16 young adults with mild to moderate learning difficulties, aged 19-29 about their previous experience of receiving TA support in mainstream secondary education, when aged 11-18 years old. Qualitative data was analysed using categorical coding (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Results identified four roles that TAs took when supporting pupils, that of mother, friend, protector, and primary teacher. Although pupil participants described both positive and negative features of these roles, the authors emphasise that each represents cause for

concern overall. Each role was characterised by the primacy, and sometimes exclusivity of the relationship between pupils and TAs, which affected the pupils' self-perceptions and interactions with teachers and peers.

For the first role, the TA as 'mother', some pupils described a close, positive relationship between themselves and their 'mother-like' TAs, whilst others identified this role as unwanted, particularly since it denied pupils opportunities to develop peer relationships and a 'sense of self'. The authors added that the mothering role is likely to reinforce negative stereotypes of pupils with SEND, creating negative implications for how classmates may perceive and treat them.

In the TA as 'friend' role, TAs were found to 'fill the companionship void' that these pupils experienced as a result of their social 'isolation' (p.421). Pupils spent more time with TAs than anyone else and therefore 'erroneously' labelled them as friends, in place of classmates. The 'friend' role was also identified by some participants and the researchers as restrictive of peer relationships.

In the TA as 'protector from bullying' role, the TA being in close proximity served to shield them, temporarily, from mistreatment by peers by acting as a buffer, advocating for the pupils amongst other staff or directly challenging the students who enacted the bullying. However, bullying occurred most often when pupils were not accompanied by an adult and some participants identified TA support as causing social stigma, which served as a catalyst for being bullied. The authors highlighted concerns that this TA protection may exacerbate

bullying by reducing opportunities for pupils with SEND to learn the skills to confront bullying and by reducing the likelihood that other staff will address the issue themselves.

Whilst some pupils reported TAs who were able to gradually withdraw their support in response to changing pupil needs, in the fourth role, the TA as 'primary teacher', participants expressed frustration at the constancy and proximity of TA support, which limited their independence and embarrassed them. The authors added that this close support is likely to be 'socially stigmatising', 'contribute to negative feelings of difference' and reduce learning by disenfranchising and separating pupils (p.423).

### Critique

Broer, Doyle and Giangreco (2005) is a small study, with limited generalisability. There also appear to be few quality control measures used, such as peer review, member checking or researcher reflexivity, to verify the claims of the authors. Given the strongly negative findings, in addition to similar findings in previous studies by Giangreco and Broer described above (Giangreco, Broer & Edelman, 2001; Giangreco, Edelman & Luiselli, 1997), these corroborative processes would have added to the rigour and trustworthiness of the study.

Nevertheless, the methods described were sufficient to warrant the study's inclusion. The findings, derived from pupil perspectives and qualitative interview data, offers a more detailed, nuanced account than most other studies of how different TA actions or types of support may influence student outcomes. With the four 'types' of TA support, the study

tenders some explanations for the negative social outcomes of TA support identified in other studies.

#### 2.4.2 TA roles: closeness versus distance

The findings from two of the 13 selected studies focus on the degree of change in the proximity of TAs to the pupils with SEND as a basis for different one-to-one TA roles. These studies purported a differential influence between TAs who stayed close to focus pupils versus those who were able to stay close *and* move away from pupils, with the later having better outcomes for pupil peer relationships. They suggest that TAs in the one-to-one role who are able to withdraw their support at appropriate moments are able to provide more effective support, *without* detrimental social outcomes. These studies therefore offer a more complex, nuanced interpretation of the potential impact of one-to-one TA support than the studies described above (2.4.1), which focused on the effects of close TA proximity alone. This effect was also briefly referred to in a third study by Broer et al. (2005), but it did not constitute a significant finding, so the study has not been included here.

##### 2.4.2.1 *Qualitative observation and interview studies:*

One study by Hemmingson, Gustavsson and Borell (2003) that reported findings related to TA closeness versus distance used similar methods to those of Giangreco et al. (1997; 2001) and Malmgren and Causton-Theoharis (2006), collecting qualitative data from unstructured field classroom observations and individual interviews.

## Findings

Hemmingson et al. (2003) observed and interviewed seven pupils and their TAs to explore how TA help is provided and the consequences of this for pupils' participation. Focus pupils had physical disabilities and were aged between seven and 15 years.

Findings identified three types of TA support based on the distance of the TA from the supported pupil:

- 1) The TA as a stand-in for the pupil; the TA is in close proximity to the supported pupil. TA support is provided spontaneously without being asked for by the pupil and TAs often perform parts of learning tasks that the pupil was supposed to perform.
- 2) The TA as a help-teacher; the TA is sat within a group of pupils, but at a distance from the focus pupil and sometimes left the pupil alone. The TA only provided help when asked to do so by the pupil and aimed to avoid affecting the pupil's initiative or peer relationships.
- 3) The TA as a back-up resource; the TA is seated outside of the group of pupils. The TA only provided help when asked to do so and pupils were generally expected to manage for themselves.

The roles had differing consequences for the peer relationships of pupils. The 'stand-in' TA reduced focus pupils' opportunities for peer interaction and also sometimes resulted in jealousy from classmates towards pupils with SEND due to the academic advantages of intensive TA support. The helper-teacher and back-up TA roles were more likely to provide support to peers as well as focus pupils and include peers in and support provided to focus

pupils, therefore avoiding negative social outcomes and providing more opportunities for interaction. However, there was very little discussion of what this positive support entailed; what the actions and interactions of TAs were that facilitated positive change.

From interviews with pupils, the study found that the majority of pupils with SEND were more concerned with the social, rather than academic impact of TA support. Whether or not the TA support was perceived to facilitate or hinder pupils' social participation was identified as the key factor for pupils' acceptance or rejection of support. If assistance was perceived by pupils to increase opportunities for social participation, then it was appreciated. If pupils believed TA support threatened their peer relationships, they tried to avoid or reject that support. Most pupils with SEND also preferred to receive minimal support from TAs, although some preferred to receive as much support as possible.

These pupil preferences for social participation sometime conflicted with the prioritisation of academic outcomes by school staff, particularly within the TA stand-in role. This supports the findings from Carter et al. (2008) and O'Rourke and Houghton (2008) that the academic benefits of TA support may come at a social cost.

Yet the helper-teacher and back-up TA role, wherein TAs were aware of the importance of peer relationships, reflected on the potential clash between social and academic outcomes and made efforts to include non-SEND peers in their support, managed to positively influence both social and academic outcomes. The finding that TAs may be both a facilitator and a hindrance to social relationships, as well as potentially simultaneously beneficial to both social and academic outcomes, provides an important contrast to the overwhelmingly

negative findings about the social impact of TA support within other studies, although these positive roles or strategies deployed by TAs were not describe in any detail.

### Critique

This study has similar methodological limitations to the qualitative observation and interview studies described above, with the subjective field observation methods being open to researcher bias and relatively few quality control methods used to ensure the trustworthiness of the results. It also has a small sample size, offering limited generalisability.

However, the methods and procedures described appear to be relatively rigorous. The findings therefore offer some 'thick' descriptive data to understand the influence of TA support within the given context and theoretical generalisability to other populations.

#### *2.4.2.2 Qualitative interview studies:*

A second study related to TA closeness and distance, by Whitburn (2013) utilised qualitative interview data.

### Findings



Whitburn (2013) analysed data from focus groups and individual interviews with five secondary-aged pupils with visual impairment (VI) from a single school in Australia to explore their experience of receiving TA support.

Using GT analysis methods, the findings identified two overarching concepts of 'heavy' (inhibitive) and 'light' (facilitative) TA support. Light support was characterised as discreet, subtle and unobtrusive, wherein TAs scaffolded their actions, providing just enough support in order to maximise students' academic progress and withdrawing where possible. This support mainly consisted of VI-specific academic strategies, such as braille transcription and use of specialised equipment. This subtle support was deemed to be effective for peer relationships due to the minimisation of the negative social effects of 'heavy' support, described below, rather than having positive consequences for peer relationships in and of itself.

In contrast, 'heavy' support was associated with negative social implications for students.

These included:

- social isolation due to sitting with a TA apart from peers and/or increased interactions with the TA and less with peers;
- imposed dependency or reduced autonomy, particularly in relation to their learning, which accentuated their social differences with other students;
- feelings of embarrassment and humiliation amongst peers due to their dependency on TAs.

Some pupils believed these social costs were outweighed by the academic benefits of 'heavy' TA support, however all participants agreed that the social costs were present. This supports the conclusions of Carter et al. (2008), O'Rourke and Houghton (2008) and Hemmingson et al. (2003) that the academic benefits of TA support may come at a social cost.

### Critique

Whitburn (2013) is a small-scale study in a single setting with pupils with VI and the findings have limited generalisability. There is also little evidence of the use quality control techniques within the study. The researcher themselves had a VI, yet a critical reflection on their opinion on TA support for pupils with VI and their relationship with participants and their potential bias is not addressed in sufficient detail.

Yet the study appears to have sufficient rigour to be included in the review. It is based on a large amount of qualitative data (3 focus groups and 28 individual interviews), with a sufficient description of data collection and analysis procedures and results that appear detailed and credible. It offers a detailed, in-depth exploration of TA support via pupil's experiences, shedding light on the potential mechanisms for the impact of TA support on peer relationships from the perspectives of pupils. The concept of 'heavy' support could, theoretically, account for the negative impact of one-to-one support identified in other studies.

### 2.4.3 TA roles with positive outcomes

Only one study was found, by Dolva et al. (2011), which identified significant positive outcomes of TA support on the peer relationships of pupils with SEND. In addition, Hemmingson et al., (2003) also found that TAs could facilitate pupils' social participation by increasing opportunities for interactions, however, this was not described in detail and cannot therefore be included here.

#### 2.4.3.1 *Qualitative observation and interview studies*

##### Findings

Using qualitative data from the classroom field observations and individual interviews with teachers and TAs, Dolva et al. (2011) explored how teachers and TAs provided support to facilitate the social participation and peer interactions of six, 10-year-old pupils with Down syndrome in six mainstream schools in Norway.

Analysis showed that TAs used a variety of strategies to facilitate peer interactions for these pupils. A key finding was the concept of the 'supported ego' role provided by TAs, in which TAs aimed to compensate for the cognitive difficulties of the focus pupils, particularly their difficulties with social perception or understanding social interactions, by 'guiding' or 'coaching' the pupil about how to interact in more socially accepted ways. This social understanding provided by TAs, and 'lacking' in the pupils with Downs syndrome, has three sequential components:

- 1) what is going on in an interaction; what the individuals involved are doing and why;
- 2) how to initiate a new interaction or how to enter an ongoing interaction;
- 3) how to interpret or respond to what the other pupils taking part in the interaction said or did.

This TA support is conceptualised as a necessary bridge between pupils with and without Downs syndrome, particularly during free activities and unplanned situations, such as in the playground.

Yet, these findings also recognised the potential negative impact of one-to-one TA support and referred to the differential impact of TA closeness versus distance. A key property of the 'supported ego' role was to find a balance between proximity of the TA to the pupil, whilst maintaining the pupils' autonomy. Physical proximity was a key goal, since it enabled TAs to see what support was needed and to provide it, yet TAs were also found to reflect on the danger of depriving the pupil of self-determination and necessary challenges. TAs often had the strategy of stepping aside to observe or to be on 'stand-by' when peer interactions were going well, keeping an eye on interactions so as to be ready to help if necessary. The findings add weight to the potential negative social impact of one-to-one support, as well as a recognition of the need for TAs to be able withdraw support and gain physical distance from focus pupils.

This study provides a different angle to the previously described studies. Primarily, these qualitative findings describe the details of the actions and strategies implemented by TAs with the aim of increasing pupils' opportunities for interaction with peers. This contrasts

with the quantitative and mixed method studies described above, which primarily focus on the broad, measurable impact of TAs on overall number of interactions, with predominantly negative findings.

### Critique

This is a small study, based on the subjective interpretations of the researchers and participants, with little explanation of alternative or competing explanations. It therefore offers little potential generalisability. It may be that the 'supported ego' role, may only be relevant or have positive outcomes for pupils with Downs syndrome or similar needs. It may also be that negative outcomes for TA support may have been present in this context, but were not present in the data, thus inaccessible to the authors. This study is based on the experiences of its TA and teacher participants', whom are often not aware of the 'unintended and troubling' consequences of one-to-one support (Webster, 2015).

However, the authors describe several quality control measures, including peer review, triangulation of observation and interview data and a repeated 'back and forth' analysis between developed categories and data. The findings also have good theoretical generalisability to the practice of TAs in the UK, providing important counter evidence to the predominantly negative findings of other studies.

## 2.5 Summary of existing research evidence

### 2.5.1 Summary of findings

The principal conclusions found in the existing literature about the influence of TAs on the peer relationships of pupils with SEND relate to the negative impact of one-to-one TA support (2.4.1). In the majority of studies, TAs who worked in close proximity to pupils with SEND were found to inadvertently reduce their level of peer interactions. This effect was consistently found in qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods studies. Some studies, particularly those using qualitative data suggested some potential causal mechanisms for these effects, including TAs replacing interactions with peers, creating physical and social barriers between pupils, inhibiting focus pupils' sense of personal control or independence, damaging their self-perceptions and creating social stigma amongst peers. However, these explanations did not often go into depth about how these causal factors may operate, particularly in the form of actions of and interactions between TAs and students.

Two studies emphasised the importance of TAs in the one-to-one role being able to switch between being in close proximity and at a distance from focus pupils (2.4.2). This graduated support was proposed as an effective way of minimising or even removing the negative social consequences of close support.

Four of the selected studies suggested that the negative social costs of TA support are offset by academic advantages (Carter et al., 2008; O'Rourke & Houghton, 2008; Hemmingson et al., 2003; Whitburn, 2013). This view appeared to particularly prevalent amongst pupil participants, suggesting a possible conflict between prevailing staff priorities, favouring academic outcomes and those of pupils, favouring social outcomes. However, in contrast to

this idea, numerous studies which focus on the academic impact of TAs within classrooms, which are not included in this review, have refuted the idea of an overall positive impact of TAs on academic learning (Blatchford et al. 2012; Sharples et al., 2015).

One study presented significant findings of a positive role and impact for TAs working one-to-one on the peer relationships of pupils (2.4.3). While these findings present an important contrast to the negative findings in majority the existing literature, the study also recognised the potential negative social impact of close TA support and as a small qualitative study, it offers little generalisability.

### **2.5.2 Summary of critique**

A number of weaknesses exist within the selected studies. Firstly, the studies are dominated by the use of classroom observations as sources of data, with 10 of the 13 articles using primarily observational methods. Although there are advantages to examining behaviour within natural settings, there are also inherent difficulties with analysing the real-life interactions of pupils, whether categorising them to produce quantitative data or interpreting them for qualitative data. There is also a distinct lack of randomised control trials, although this is understandable given the practical and ethical difficulties with assigning pupils to long-term treatment conditions in real-world educational contexts. There are also more studies from the USA (six) and other countries (four) than the UK (three), although the similarities of TA practices within these countries (Blatchford et al., 2012; Giangreco, 2013) makes critical generalisations to the UK context possible. There is a lack of studies which can explain the reasons for the apparent negative impact of TAs on the peer

relationships pupils with SEND, such as studies which explore what TAs do during interactions with pupils, their actions and interactions, and how these may lead to positive or negative outcomes. There is also a lack of studies which investigate the impact of other variables, such as type of pupil SEND, age of pupils and different types of TA support.

## **2.6 Chapter Summary**

The aim of this chapter has been to describe what conclusions can be critically drawn from the existing literature about the influence of TAs on the peer relationships of pupils with SEND. While there is a growing body of evidence on the negative social impact of TAs in the one-to-one role, there is a lack of studies with the explanatory power to describe the causal mechanisms for this effect or how different types of TA support, besides one-to-one support, may produce different outcomes.

Chapter 5 will revisit the themes outlined in this review, linking and comparing them to the findings of the present study.



## 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Chapter overview

This chapter describes the methodological approach, orientation and methods of the current study. The chapter provides a rationale for the critical realist position of the research and the use of grounded theory. It details the data gathering and analysis procedures and discusses the trustworthiness of the research and how ethical considerations were addressed.

#### 3.1.1 Research aims and purpose

The primary aim of the study is to answer the question, 'how do teaching assistants influence the peer relationships of students with SEND?' This question will be explored from the perspective of TAs. In order to understand how TAs may engender different outcomes, a second question of the study is, 'what are the contexts and mechanisms underpinning TA practices that facilitate or constrain the development of positive peer relationships for students with SEND?'

The study has both an exploratory and explanatory purpose. Firstly, it seeks to explore the phenomena TA practices and how they may influence the peer relationships of pupils with SEND. It aims to describe the characteristics of the phenomena and identify possible factors and variables that promote positive or negative outcomes. Secondly, it aims to explain how

different factors may act as underlying causal mechanisms to produce specific outcomes; to understand the relationships which define TA practice and the peer relationships of pupils.

## **3.2 Orientation**

### **3.2.1 Epistemology and Ontology**

Research methodology flows from the researcher's choice of a research paradigm; their position on ontology and epistemology guides the assumptions behind the research, which in turn constrains the selection of tools and methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Matthews, 2014). Ontology is the philosophical study of the nature of reality, existence and being, whilst epistemology is concerned with the study, acquisition and production of knowledge, focussing on what makes knowledge valid and how valid knowledge can be obtained (Robson, 2011).

## **3.3 Critical realism**

This study adopts a critical realist position to explore TA practice and the peer relationships of pupils with SEND. Critical realism is one of several philosophies that has been used to bridge the gap between the two binary positions of realism and relativism. The realist or positivist approach views the world as existing regardless of people's perceptions of it. Objective truths can be uncovered through empirical testing of hypotheses against facts and causal relationships can be demonstrated between events and experiences can be described and observed (Robson 2011). The relativist perspective holds that there are not absolute

truths and that multiple truths exist at any one time. Objective truth is considered unattainable, since there is no external reality independent from the beliefs and perceptions of those experiencing it.

Critical realism draws on components of both realist and relativist methodological strains in its account of ontology and epistemology. Critical realism critiques both realism and relativism for committing 'the epistemic fallacy' (Bhaskar, 1998); reducing reality (ontology) to our knowledge of it (epistemology). Reality cannot be reduced to what can be empirically known through positivism (extreme realism), but neither can it be viewed as entirely socially constructed via human knowledge or discourse (extreme relativism).

Rather, critical realism proposes that an objective reality exists independently of our thoughts about it (Thistleton 2005), but that there are limitations to how accurately that reality can be known (Scott, 2007). Critical realism embraces 'epistemic relativism' Bhaskar (1979; 1998); the idea that there are many ways of knowing, all of which are imperfect. All descriptions of reality are mediated through the filters of language, meaning-making and social context and human knowledge can only capture a small part of greater, hidden strata of social reality (Oliver, 2011). Critical realism combines the realist aim to gain a better understanding of what is 'really' going on in the world with the relativist acknowledgement that the tools at a researcher's disposal may not provide direct access to that reality (Willig, 2013).

The challenge for the critical realist researcher is to search for grounds for determining which representations constitute better knowledge than others (Fairclough, 2005). These

judgements are made via theories, which can be more or less truth like (Danermark et al., 2002). We can temporarily accept interpretations as explanations of causal mechanisms and descriptions of reality, made via social structures (Bhaskar, 2013). The best we can hope for is to reveal approximate evidence of tendencies, rather than absolute proof and theories will inevitably be refined and replaced by new theories with better explanatory power (Bhaskar, 1975).

### **3.3.1 Social mechanisms, context and the individual**

This study aims to use a critical realist stance to explain social events through reference to causal mechanisms (Fletcher, 2016). 'Mechanisms' refer to how social structures and the agency of individuals (i.e. their ability to take flexible and creative actions based on reasons) interact to produce 'regularities' or patterns of human experience and behaviour (Matthews 2003). They seek to explain the reasons for agents' action or non-action by identifying social rules operating in their context and the wider social structures which generate or maintain these rules (Sayer, 1992). Critical realists aim to answer the question 'what works, for whom, in what circumstances?' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 210).

According to critical realism, causality is usually highly complex, since social structures and causal mechanisms operate at many sites and on many levels and consist of a multiple, potentially countervailing forces (Angus & Clark, 2012). Mechanisms and structures are often not directly observable and can only be understood and estimated by their effects (Ayers, 2011). Critical therefore permits a theory to extend beyond what is immediately

knowable or easily, but maintains an obligation to test that theory in the realm of real-world experience and against alternative theories (Oliver, 2011).

Using critical realism, this study aims to explain the interdependent relationship between structures (the social mechanisms and contexts acting upon TAs) and agents (the TAs as individuals), which are seen as separate, but mutually constitutive (Archer, 1995); causal social conditions both impact on and are impacted on by TAs (de Souza, 2014). Structures constrain and facilitate, but do not determine individual agents' behaviour, providing the conditions for their actions. In turn, agents' activities influence whether existing social structures are (re)produced or transformed through social interactions (Archer, 1995; Bhaskar, 1998). As a critical realist project, this study therefore has a dual focus on agency and structure; the individual and wider society; TAs and their contexts (Oliver, 2011).

### **3.3.2 Educational psychology and critical realist research**

A critical realist approach has been seen as an appropriate framework for research in the applied professions, including educational psychology (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). The complex reality envisaged by critical realists reflects EP practice, with a delicate need for balance between the search for an external reality and a qualified 'truth' (realism) with the recognition that all meaning made of that reality is socially constructed (relativism). EPs can never fully capture the nuances of our clients' lived experiences, but the social constructions that we (co)create can constitute what we know as the reality of our social worlds. Some accounts can be adjudged better or worse, truer or less true than others. The obligation to

search for an account that most closely resembles that reality provides the impetus for this study's inquiry (Oliver, 2011).

The complex, multi-layered, multi-causal view of the interactional forces operating between individuals and their social contexts makes critical realism well suited to analysing the real-world social phenomena identified in this research and suggesting possible means for social change (Fletcher, 2016). Critical realism enables researchers to remain firmly grounded in the real world of schools and their occupants by attempting to explain the connections between concrete events, abstract social structures and mechanisms and individual people. TAs are viewed as occupying particular structural positions defined by their role and tasks, which are associated with particular resources, constraints, predicaments and powers that motivate them to engage in particular practices (Bhaskar, 1979; Buch-Hansen, 2014).

### **3.4 Quantitative and qualitative methods**

Quantitative research methods have generally been associated with realist positions, whilst qualitative with relativist ones. In line with critical realism, the researcher in this study holds that both methods have a role to play in creating useful knowledge in the practice-based professions, and that the privileging of either approach constrains and limits our capacity to understand phenomena.

Quantitative methods were rejected, primarily based on the difficulty of applying positivist methods in real world, open systems (Robson, 2011). The non-laboratory, school setting makes researcher control over variables, random allocation to conditions and the search for nomothetic, generalisable laws difficult to achieve. Quantitative methods, based on

abstractions of number and hypothetico-deductive methods would be inappropriate to highlight the complex social processes at work during TA-student interactions.

Qualitative methods were selected for their suitability for studying people in their natural settings, aiming to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. This research gave preference to the richness, depth and authenticity gained from idiographic, verbal accounts as a means of producing understandings that can be used to create and develop policy and the practice of TAs (Pawson & Tilly, 1999), which is a central aim of the project (1.3.1).

### **3.5 A rationale for grounded theory**

#### **3.5.1 Introduction to grounded theory**

The central aim of grounded theory (GT) is to generate new theory from data (Robson, 2011). Initially developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), GT aims to study and theorise localised social processes, avoiding preconceptions by 'grounding' the theory in the actions, interactions and processes of the people involved (Willig, 2013). GT begins with inductive logic, using ideas about the data to build a theoretical analysis (Charmaz, 2009). This inductive process makes the GT method particularly suited to new applied areas of research, such as the phenomena under question in this study, where there is a lack of theory to conceptualise what is going on (Robson, 2011). The GT approach can generate hypotheses and future research questions based on the newly developed framework (Willig, 2013).

GT offers a set of systematic, yet flexible techniques for analysing large amounts of ill-structured qualitative data, providing an explanatory framework with which to understand the phenomena under investigation. It affords credibility to qualitative enquiry by explicating social phenomena 'grounded' in their contexts (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2006). Empirical checks are built into the analytic process, ensuring that researchers are in continual interaction with their data while developing their analyses, examining all possible theoretical explanations for their empirical findings (Bryant & Charmaz, 2012).

Most GT studies aim for a causal theory of social processes, explaining how social structures, situations and relationships influence patterns of behaviour, interactions and interpretations (Tweed & Charmaz, 2012). GT examines what works, for whom, in what contexts and with what outcomes. GT therefore fits well with the aims of this study to identify and explain how and why TAs influence the peer relationships of pupils with SEND. GT offers to enable the study to clarify how and why certain dynamics develop and change over time, and which types of TA strategies under which conditions are likely to support or undermine positive peer relationships (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

A GT researcher should aspire to a level of theoretical abstraction, but also ensure that the theory reflects the complexity of social reality, so as to be useable and practical (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A 'grounded' theory has greater applicability to those within the studied context, being derived from and connected to their lives and practices. It is hoped that the knowledge gained through this study will enable professionals in the participant schools to better understand, explain and take action to alter and change situations (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This 'grounding' in the participants' accounts of reality in



their contexts is in contrast to much existing research on TAs, which has tended to use more deductive, top-down approaches.

### **3.5.2 Other qualitative methods**

Other qualitative research methods for the study were considered. In particular, discourse analysis and thematic analysis could both have been appropriate for analysing individual TA's experiences within wider social frameworks. Both would have been compatible with the critical realist aims of the study; capable, to an extent, of reflecting both the realist and relativist view by explaining how individuals interact with their social world.

Thematic analysis has a theoretical flexibility; it is not tied to a particular theoretical approach and has been used to address research questions originating from a variety of philosophical positions, including those that seek to represent both social reality and how it may be subjectively experienced (Willig, 2013). Thematic analysis enables researchers to identify the predominant and important affective, cognitive, social or symbolic themes raised (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Discursive studies hold that language (or discourse) constructs shared understandings of reality, including social phenomena. Different discourses construct social phenomena in different ways and therefore entail different possibilities for human action (Burr, 1995).

Discourse analysis can therefore be used to highlight potential linguistic social mechanisms; how socially constructed meanings within and across cultural contexts and can influence individuals' behaviour.

However, both discourse analysis and thematic analysis were rejected on the grounds that they are less suited to the aims of the study. Principally, unlike GT, both methods are not designed for the development of explanatory theory of complex social processes, gaining understandings of the generative mechanisms underlying social and psychological processes, which interact to influence the practice of TAs and outcomes for pupils (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). GT is likely to extend the analysis beyond the identification and description of themes around TAs and peer relationships, which would be enabled by thematic analysis, towards a contextualised conceptualisation of relationship between these themes or concepts. Similarly, whilst discourse analysis can propose how discourses might shape individual experience and action, it does so at the expense of alternative accounts of causal factors, such as the role of individual agency or the nature of organisational structures (Emerson & Frosh, 2009). The value of the theory produced by GT, in comparison to more descriptive qualitative research, is the overarching structure; the framework that explains why things happen (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Similarly, narrative analysis would not have been able to address the critical realist, explanatory aims of the study, since it sits further within relativist, social constructionist frameworks, which hold that there is no reality independent of people's perceptions of it (Willig, 2008). Narrative analysis is based on the premise that humans think, perceive interact and make choices according to internalised narrative structures, which are the vehicle for how we experience ourselves and the social world (Smith, 2015).

### 3.5.3 Types of grounded theory

Although GT studies have much in common, GT is generally seen as an umbrella term covering several different variants, each having its own philosophical foundation and subsequent approach to data gathering and analysis (Charmaz, 2009; Corbin, 2009). Three main versions dominate the GT field, existing on a continuum from positivist to constructivist; the classical version (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), Strauss and Corbin's (1990; 1998; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; 2015) more structured approach and Charmaz's (1990, 2000, 2002, 2006) constructivist version.

Glaser and Strauss's (1967) original GT study aimed to bridge the gap between theoretical perspectives, aiming to harness the empirical rigour of positivist methods for use within a qualitative methodology. Glaser and Strauss intended to invert the dominant understanding of the relationship between research and theory, whereby hypotheses were deduced from theory and tested empirically, to that where theory was induced from empirical analysis. Traditional GT therefore essentially adopts a realist position, wherein the role of the researcher is to uncover external social processes through categorising and theorising (Willig, 2013). These processes are assumed to exist regardless of whether or not, or how they are captured by the researcher. Theory is understood to 'emerge' from data or be 'discovered' by the researcher, suggesting that the researcher can avoid projecting their own subjective interpretation onto the phenomena in question.

Corbin and Strauss (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; 2015) developed a step by step guide to GT that advised researchers to look for certain patterns in the data.

They suggested that categories could be linked and organised using pre-determined, higher order codes, namely the concepts of 'process' and 'change' (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2006). This inclusion of a more prescriptive, specific coding paradigm was designed to ensure that researchers are sensitised to those elements of the data that are deemed to be fundamental to our ability to understand social phenomena (Willig, 2013). The paradigm is essentially a set of nomothetic, generalised questions to ask of the data, designed to facilitate an understanding of the conditions, actions and interactions and associated consequences within a given context (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These changes added a deductive element to GT, moving from deriving all categories and concepts from data to developing a set of ideas which can then be used to explore and structure data (Willig, 2013).

Glaser vehemently opposed these developments, arguing that the use of a-priori criteria for analytic procedure was too prescriptive and inflexible, since it limited or forced the ways in which data could be analysed (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2006). He asserted that patterns in data can only be deemed valid if they emerged or are discovered through the process of analysis and that the researcher must be completely free from restrictions to achieve this genuine interaction with the data (Glaser, 1992). Glaser (2005) has rejected the adoption of any specific philosophical tradition for GT, arguing that doing so reduces the wider potential of the method.

More recently, Charmaz (1990; 2000; 2002; 2006) has led the development of a social constructivist GT that is more aligned with a relativist position. Charmaz holds that it is impossible to separate theory from a researcher's interpretation of data, focussing on the

role of the author and their relationship with participants as central to the creation of any new theory. It is the researcher's perspectives, assumptions and subjectivities that drive the process of analysis; concepts do not emerge, but are co-constructed by the researcher during their interactions with participants and data (Willig, 2013). Concepts and ideas are created rather than discovered, knowledge is socially produced from multiple perspectives and cannot be divorced from its cultural context (Charmaz, 2006). Theories are not seen as accounts of an independent social reality, but as a reflection of the meanings that are given to events by participants and researchers; external events are not as significant as how individuals experience, interpret and respond to them (Corbin, 2009). Constructivist GT's acknowledgement of the active role of the researcher in the co-construction of theory necessitates making researcher reflexivity central to the analysis process and resulting theory (3.8.5; 5.5.2).

#### **3.5.4 A rationale for Corbin and Strauss (2015)**

Corbin and Strauss's (2015) form of GT was deemed as most appropriate for the aims of this study, to explore and explain the complex social phenomena of TA practices and their influence on student peer relationships. Whilst classical GT (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) emphasises the role of external contexts, consequences and structures in organisations and constructivist GT focuses more on the internal, lived experiences of participants (Charmaz, 2006), Corbin and Strauss (2015) GT (2015) is most suited to a combining both perspectives to gain a more complete and complex understanding of social psychological phenomena (Willig, 2013).

A constructivist GT was considered, however it was concluded that the focus on internal psychological processes would not have matched the equally important external social world and applied focus of the project. In particular, turning inwards to examine myself as a researcher, my research situations, process and products has the potential to detract from the aim of identifying external social realities that influence TA practices (Charmaz, 2009).

Corbin and Strauss (2015) GT can be used to counterbalance a focus on the external social world (realist) and with the recognition that researchers and participants construct meaning to make sense of it (relativist) (Corbin, 2009). This 'both and' position is central to the critical realist focus of the study, which aims to understand social causality by integrating participants own analyses of their behaviour (psychological mechanisms) within broader social rules and structures (social mechanisms) (Oliver, 2011). Although Corbin and Strauss (2015) have never explicitly aligned their methods with critical realism, preferring instead to embrace pragmatism and symbolic interactionism (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; 2015), several authors join me in asserting that their methodological approach equates to an acceptance of the critical realist position (Oliver, 2011; Rennie & Fergus, 2006; Sutcliffe, 2016).

A Corbin and Strauss GT (2015), underpinned by critical realism, is also a best fit for the applied, practical focus of this study, aiming to answer the question, 'what works for whom in what circumstances?' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). Both critical realism and Corbin and Strauss (2015) GT intend to identify the causal mechanisms that enable events and explain how different mechanisms manifest themselves under different conditions (Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen & Karlsson , 2002). The critical realism and Corbin and Strauss (2015) emphasis on balance between the internal/external, individual/social, realism/relativism

dualisms enables researchers to create plausible, credible and contextualised accounts of the phenomena in question, which in turn offers opportunities to reform practice by providing a language for joint action (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This has the potential to reinforce the theory-practice connection in a field where research has struggled to impact the front line of TA practices (Oliver, 2011).

## **3.6 Data collection**

### **3.6.1 Purposive sampling**

Participants were initially sought through purposive sampling, which does not aim to identify representative samples, as the participants are chosen to help the researcher formulate theory rather than to achieve statistical generalizability (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2006; Robson, 2011). In keeping with the aims of GT, initial sampling parameters were kept broad in order to minimise making prior assumptions about the data; allowing an unconstrained investigation into the selected phenomena (Bryant & Charmaz, 2012).

TA participants were required to meet two inclusion criteria:

1) To be working with students in Years 5 or 6:

- TAs in primary schools spend more time with and have more in-depth relationships with and knowledge of students than secondary TAs. Primary TAs were considered better positioned to provide in-depth data about potential causal social mechanisms of their practice and outcomes for pupils.

- Research with Years 5 and 6 is likely to have more relevance for educational policy and practice. It is generally accepted that peer relationships become increasingly important throughout childhood and into adolescence. Students in Years 5 and 6 have been shown to predominantly identify peers as a primary reference group (Ladd, 2005). Social difficulties also often become increasingly acute as young people approach adolescence. Interventions that support the development of peer relationships often target the later primary age group, due to evidence about the importance and effectiveness of early intervention before adolescence (Pellegrini et al., 2016).

## 2) To work with students on the school's SEND register:

- The exact nature of this 'work' the students' 'SEND' were kept deliberately vague. This allowed the researcher to investigate different TA roles and pupils' SEND as potential causal conditions of pupil outcomes, rather than derive assumptions or hypotheses from existing research or practice. This is essential to the GT methodology (Bryant & Charmaz, 2012).
- These wider parameters would also better facilitate the creation of a broad, more general theory about the influence of TAs on the peer relationships of students with various types SEND, rather than limiting it to specific SEND populations or TA roles. A general theory has more potential for application in the real world of TA practices.

### 3.6.2 Recruitment



Following GT guidelines, participants were initially recruited from one school context (Bryant & Charmaz, 2012). Attempting to integrate data from multiple school contexts into a unified theory would undermine the ability of the theory to explain the links between localised contextual conditions, meaning(s), actions, interactions and consequences (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

An opportunistic sampling method was used. Emails were sent to all the SENCOs of mainstream primary schools in the researchers' inner-London local authority, outlining the purpose and requirements of the study. Schools were then selected on a first come, first served basis. Participants were approached via the school SENCo. In stage one, three TAs were recruited.

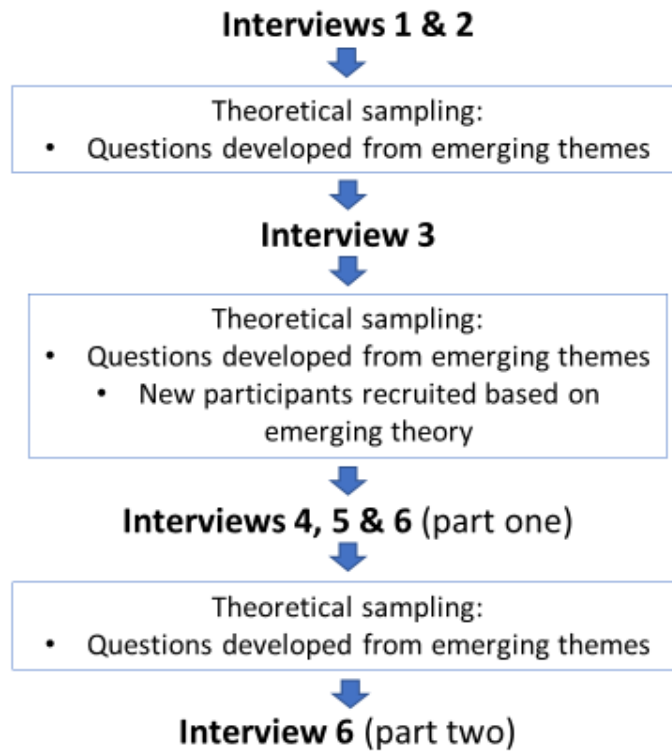
### **3.6.3 Theoretical sampling**

In line with GT methods, as the data analysis progressed, theoretical sampling was used; the sample was extended in response to the developing theory. The most pertinent and relevant codes and concepts from the first three interviews were used to inform the decision of which school and participants to select for the second round of interviews; who would provide the most information-rich source of data to extend the developing analysis? The interview questions were also shaped iteratively after each cycle of data collection and analysis (3.6.4.1). This iterative, flexible sampling process is designed to enable the development, honing and expansion of the theory (Tweed & Charmaz, 2012). For a further discussion of theoretical sampling using interview questions, see 3.6.4.

The second round of TA participants were also selected using the principles of theoretical sampling. There were no more TAs working with Years 5 and 6 in the first school, so a new setting was required. Although it was recognised that conducting the research in two school contexts would pose a challenge to the researcher's ability integrate different of contextual mechanisms into one theory, it also offered the advantage of comparing and contrasting these contextualised processes, potentially adding richness to the emerging theory.

The first three participants in school one all worked in a one-to-one role with students with SEND. The emerging codes and categories related to the nature of this one-to-one relationship, student dependency and independence. The second school was therefore selected on the basis that, of the four TAs who worked with Years 5 and 6, two of them were general TAs. This would provide the opportunity to compare these different roles. The other two TAs worked in a one-to-one role, which would provide the opportunity to compare the one-to-one role across different contexts, providing a form of negative case analysis; to see if the nascent ideas about the one-to-one role might be disconfirmed (Robson, 2011). One of the TAs in a one-to-one role in school two declined to take part, so three TAs in total were recruited in stage two.

The school SENCo in the second school had also recently run training for TAs on scaffolding and independent (academic) learning. It was thought that this may result in the TAs having further perspectives on the concepts of student independence and dependency on the TA within their peer relationships, which were emerging from the data. Figure 3.1 shows the points at which theoretical sampling took place.



*Figure 3.1 Sequence of interviews and theoretical sampling*

For a summary of relevant participant demographics, including levels of experience and training, see 7.5. For a summary of the nature of SEND of the pupils who were supported by the TA participants, see 7.6.

### 3.6.4 Interviews

Qualitative data was gathered via semi-structured, individual interviews with participants. Due to time constraints on the final interview, the final participant was interviewed in two stages, meaning a total of seven interviews with six participants were completed.

The interviews were conducted in the participants' schools, lasted for around 60 minutes and were recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Full versions of the interview transcripts can be found in 7.19.2.

Interviews are a common form of data collection in qualitative research and are often used in conjunction with GT analysis (Robson, 2011). Semi-structured interviews utilise a set of pre-determined topics or questions, but allow the interviewer the freedom to respond to participant's accounts by rephrasing questions, following interesting leads and developing ideas in more depth (Robson, 2011). They enable a balance between structure and adaptability, enabling the researcher to modify the line of enquiry and explore participant's perceptions, whilst keeping in mind the aims of the research enquiry (Joffe, 2012). Given the complexity of TA practice and its impact on the peer relationships of students, semi-structured interviews were considered appropriate for exploring the meaning TAs ascribe to this phenomena via interactions in their contexts (Robson, 2011).

#### *3.6.4.1 Interview guides and procedures*

A good interview guide fosters asking open-ended questions by the researcher and provides direction, pacing and a logical transition between topics for both researcher and participant (Charmaz, 2015). The interview guide (7.7) was developed by the researcher, outlining the broad topics and questions to be covered during the interview. This was then checked by the research supervisor to ensure all relevant topics were included. Following Robson's recommendations, the interview structure included the following:

- introductory comments;
- list of topic headings and key questions;
- prompts.

This guide was then used flexibly in order to allow participants to bring topics that they felt were of importance to them and their practice that might not be covered in the guide and to avoid imposing preconceived frameworks or ideas onto the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Following the GT method of theoretical sampling, codes from each round of interviews were used to inform the topics and questions in the subsequent interviews (Figure 3.1). This allowed the initial analysis to guide the later data collection, ensuring an iterative exploration of the emerging theoretical concepts. Several potential topics were added to those on the original guide (7.8). However, the original guide was also considered sufficient and flexible enough to elicit responses in relation to the majority of emergent themes developed from the data. As such, the changes to the guide were minimal and extra questions were rarely required. If a participant did not refer to a concept considered relevant to the emerging analysis, the researcher asked questions designed to elicit information about that concept at the end of the interview (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This was so as to not disrupt the flow of the participants' responses.

## **3.7 Grounded theory analysis**

### **3.7.1 Theoretical sensitivity**

Qualitative GT researchers do not aim for objectivity, but sensitivity when analysing data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Theoretical sensitivity refers to the ability gain insight into the data; to separate what is relevant and significant to participants and the enquiry from what is not. It involves the researcher listening carefully to and having respect for participants and the data they provide, being careful and aware of how they arrive at interpretations. As a grounded theorist becomes immersed in the data, their degree of sensitivity to analytical possibilities increases, a skill which is facilitated by the systemic nature of established GT procedures described below (Tweed & Charmaz, 2012). Sources of theoretical sensitivity include existing literature, the researcher's professional and personal knowledge and experience and the analytic process itself (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

A key tenet of theoretical sensitivity is the idea of 'theoretical agnosticism' (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2006), wherein the researcher avoids being overly tied to a particular theoretical position or set of ideas prior to analysing the data. A degree of uncertainty, scepticism and suspension of belief is essential to ensure that the theory is derived from the data. As such, researchers are advised not to be so familiar or immersed in the existing literature that it constrains or stifles their analytic process (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). In order to achieve theoretical sensitivity, the researcher must begin with as few predetermined ideas about the data and the phenomena in question as possible.

However, it is not possible nor desirable that the researcher start with a 'blank slate' (Thornberg, 2012). Theoretical sensitivity and the analytic process are reflections of a researcher's personal, professional and intellectual history; of all the theory they have read, thought and absorbed over time (Tweed & Charmaz, 2012). Researchers are the sum of all

they have experienced (Birks & Mills, 2015). Indeed, with 10 years' experience working in schools with TAs, it would be impossible and restricting for the author of this research to attempt to detach himself from prior learning. Theory cannot solely emerge from or reflect the data, since interpretation and analysis are always conducted within pre-existing conceptual frameworks used by the researcher (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2006). Familiarity with the relevant literature can enhance sensitivity, since concepts from the literature may also be present in the new data, thus demonstrating their importance (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Researchers are therefore required to strike a balance between keeping initial coding open-ended, yet acknowledging that they hold and use prior ideas and skills (Charmaz, 2006). As Dey (1993) states:

'...there is a difference between an open mind and an empty head. To analyse data researchers draw upon accumulated knowledge. They don't dispense with it. The issue is not whether to use existing knowledge, but how.' (p.63).

Researchers must be sceptical of existing theories, critically and cautiously evaluating whether or not they can pass the 'grounding' test; can their use be justified in the data? A researcher should ask, 'are these concepts truly derived from the data, or am I imposing them on the data because I am familiar with them?' (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p.50). The researcher in this study therefore aimed to critically and cautiously utilise existing theory about TAs, wider frameworks and professional and personal experience to inform the data collection and analysis, but to not impose these pre-existing ideas without methodically justified reasons.

### 3.7.2 Stages of coding

There are three, generally agreed stages of coding within Corbin & Strauss (2015) GT that were used in this study; open, axial and selective coding, each enabling increasing levels of theoretical abstraction (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). These are not necessarily sequential or distinct and are likely to overlap (Robson, 2011).

#### 3.7.2.1 *Open coding*

During open coding, the researcher looked for initial, tentative conceptual categories in the data, generally using descriptive labels and creating low-level categories (Robson, 2011; Willig, 2013). This involved the process of breaking down, labelling, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing the text (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These pieces of information were either codes that are a direct summary of the data (member categories) or more generalised theoretical ideas (researcher categories) (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2006). A range of GT analytical tools were used during the coding process to enhance the researcher's sensitivity to the data and the richness of the concepts and categories in terms of their properties and dimensions (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Examples of the analytical tools and their use are shown in 7.9 and 7.10. Key ideas and reflections were also recorded in the research diary, extracts of which can be found in 7.11.

Following Glaser's (2001) assertion, incident by incident coding was preferred to line-by-line coding, since the later was adjudged to have little have little meaning beyond page



formatting and is therefore likely to produce disconnected codes. The focus of open coding was the actions of TAs, therefore gerunds were often used as labels (Glaser, 1978).

### *3.7.2.2 Axial coding*

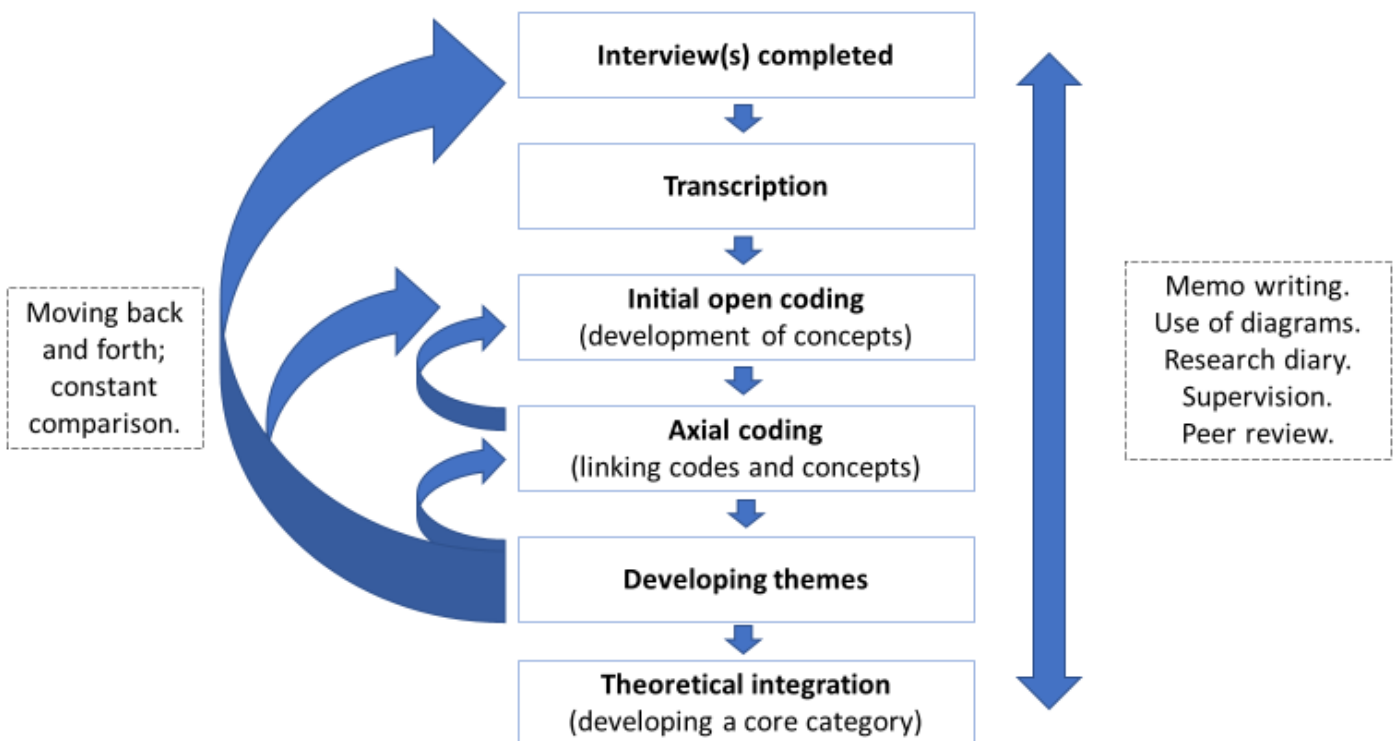
Axial coding can be defined as finding relationships or links between the initial categories; how do they interconnect? This involved assembling the data in new ways, putting it back together again after the fragmentation and deconstruction of open coding (Robson, 2011). Within each initial category, the researcher aimed to identify properties (or subcategories) and dimensions (variations and extreme possibilities within the categories) (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). A coding paradigm was used to alert the researcher to specific patterns; to ask certain questions of the data (Willig, 2013). The paradigm aimed to identify five features:

- 1) specific strategies (the actions or interactions that result from the central phenomenon);
- 2) causal conditions (the categories of conditions that influence the phenomenon);
- 3) the context and intervening conditions (the conditions that influence the strategies);
- 4) the consequences (the outcomes of the strategies) for this phenomenon;
- 5) a core category (a concept that accounts for the relationship between all categories)

(Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Robson, 2011).

### *3.7.2.3 Selective coding and theoretical integration*

The third stage of coding involved establishing a core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships and filling in categories that need further refinement and development. The core category was then used to conceptualise and account for the relationships identified during axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This identification of one, central core category, which is both at a high level of abstraction and grounded in (i.e. derived from) the data is the ultimate aim and most challenging aspect of Corbin & Strauss (2015) GT (Robson, 2011). If more than one category remains, the notion is that they should be integrated into a single one at a higher degree of abstraction. There must be a central storyline, explicated via a core conceptual category (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The stages of coding are summarised in Figure 3.2.



*Figure 3.2 The analysis process*

### 3.7.3 Theoretical saturation

Theoretical saturation can be defined as ‘the point at which gathering more data about a theoretical category reveals no new properties nor yields any further theoretical insights about the emerging grounded theory’ (Charmaz, 2006, p.611), wherein nothing new is said about the concepts via further data collection. It is seen as a precursor to selective coding and theoretical integration, since the later can only be achieved once the core and subsidiary categories are replete with data.

GT researchers also concede that saturation is always somewhat arbitrary and impossible to claim conclusively, since categories and theories can always be further modified in response to new data. Theoretical saturation is ‘rarely evident in research reports’ (Bowen, 2008, p.137) and functions as a useful, but unattainable goal, rather than a reality (Willig, 2013).

This study aimed to achieve theoretical saturation for the phenomena in question within the specific contexts of participating schools. Using Corbin & Strauss’s (2008) guidelines, it was concluded that the categories identified after six interviews offered a reasonable ‘depth and breadth of understanding’ (p.149) about TA practice and the peer relationships of pupils with SEND in Years 5 and 6, such that relationships between categories and to a core category could be explicated. It was therefore possible to determine that sufficient saturation and sampling had occurred for the modest intents of this study.

### 3.7.4 MAXQDA

A computer assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) program, MAXQDA Plus 12 (12.2.1) was used to assist with coding. CAQDAS software is useful for storing and manipulating large amounts of qualitative data, improving efficiency. MAXQDA provides a set of flexible analysis tools for organising and structuring data, allowing the researcher to try out different views or versions of coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). During open coding, MAXQDA enabled the researcher to keep track of the large number of codes, which could then be reconstructed on new ways with relative ease during axial and selective coding. MAXQDA also added to the transparency of the research, allowing potential readers to retrace the researcher's analytic coding steps taken by looking at sequential versions of the analysis. The final version of the MAXQDA file is found on the attached USB drive (7.19.1).

## **3.8 Trustworthiness**

### **3.8.1 Trustworthiness in qualitative and grounded theory research**

Several techniques were used to ensure that this study met criteria for trustworthiness, such as rigour, credibility and transparency. The concept of 'trustworthiness', defined as the extent to which the findings are believable and how closely they reflect the data, was introduced by Guba and Lincoln (1981) as a means of addressing the perceived deficiencies of qualitative research (Robson, 2011). According to a positivist critique, qualitative researchers do not have access to necessary evaluation criteria such as internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity (Angen, 2000).

GT has been similarly criticised for its lack of objective, realist or positivist evaluation processes. Most GT studies rely on taking the opinions of its participants at face value, placing faith in qualitative methods as a means to make inferences about reality (Robson, 2011). For some, GT methods represent a return to a naïve, realist forms of positivism (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Given these criticisms, many GT researchers place emphasis on the techniques they use to ensure that their studies meet criteria for trustworthiness. Several of the strategies used for ensuring critical reflection within this research project are built into the GT research process and have already been addressed in previous sections. These include theoretical sensitivity, sampling and saturation, data collection and analysis procedures (3.6; 3.7). Further techniques for ensuring trustworthiness are described below.

### **3.8.2 Transparency**

Transparency in qualitative research can be defined as ‘how well the reader can see exactly what was done, and why’ (Yardley, 2008, p.250). Through transparency of the data collection and analysis methods, the researcher aims to demonstrate trustworthiness; to present a convincing case that the analytic interpretation was developed through academically sound procedures (Shenton, 2004).

### **3.8.3 Audit trail and memo writing**

An audit trail, or chronological log of the decisions relating to the research project was kept, making the steps taken and changes clear for external scrutiny, thus aiding transparency (Robson, 2011). During analysis, memos and a research diary were used to record the

development of codes and categories; the steps through which interpretations were made were continually and assiduously charted and justified (7.10; 7.11) (Maxwell, 1996). This record facilitated the critical reflexivity of the research and researcher, enabling the researcher to reflect upon the analytic process and reduce the danger of imposing his own meaning and categories onto the data (Charmaz, 2006). Memos were used to chart the dialogue between the researcher and the data: how the two interacted to produce an explanation of what is going on (Charmaz, 2009). Memos were key to the incremental theoretical abstraction during the analysis process, with each memo aiming to develop the analytic precision, conceptual power and relational accuracy of concepts and categories.

#### **3.8.4 Audits of analysis**

Opportunities scrutiny or audits of the project by colleagues and peers offered the opportunity to challenge assumptions made by the researcher, whose closeness with the study threatened to impede his ability to gain the detachment needed to critically appraise research methods and outcomes (Shenton, 2004). Through discussions, alternative interpretations of the data were invited and discussed, which broadened the view of the researcher and enabled him to refine the developing theory. This support from colleagues is essential to ensure transparency and trustworthiness within GT, safeguarding against researcher bias (Sutcliffe, 2016).

Two forms of audit were conducted; peer review and professional research supervision. After the analysis of the second interview and the initial stages of axial coding, a fellow GT doctoral researcher was recruited to verify whether or not the codes and categories

accurately represented the data. Key sections of the interviews were selected by the researcher and then coded independently by the peer reviewer. This comparative coding highlighted different interpretations and stimulated minor modifications to some conceptual labels. For example, 'enforcing interactions' was changed to 'enabling interactions' and the concept of 'TA perception of student ability to change' was discussed, fostering a deeper understanding of the concept of 'dependency/independence'. The researcher then presented his own interpretations of selected passages for evaluation. The peer reviewer was able to corroborate this coding, adjudging it to be reasonable and coherent, thus adding a layer of validation to the analysis. This process was repeated with the same peer after interview four and with the researcher supervisor after interviews two and five, with similar corroboration of the analysis. In addition, key analytical decisions such as theoretical sampling, the modification of interview guides and whether or not theoretical saturation could be justified were discussed and agreed with the supervisor, adding a layer of credibility to the analysis. All discussions and any changes were recorded in memos.

### **3.8.5 Researcher reflexivity**

The researcher aimed to use reflexivity to ensure that the claims of the research were not based on his own assumptions; to develop a theory that did not move beyond the data. Reflexivity can be defined as an explicit consideration of the specific ways in which it is likely the study will be influenced by the researcher, such as professional experience within the topic area, prior knowledge, social identities or thoughts and feelings aroused by the research process (Yardley, 2008). It involves the researcher 'recognizing prior knowledge

and theoretical preconceptions and subjecting them to rigorous scrutiny' (Charmaz, 2008, p. 402).

Constructivist GT emphasises this reflexivity, recognising the impossibility of remaining outside of one's subject matter while conducting research; the researcher's values and lived experience cannot be divorced from the research process (Corbin, 2009; Willig, 2013).

Authors are therefore required to incorporate into their work explanations of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, turning the research focus inwards to examine how they (re)construct reality.

This study agrees with Corbin and Strauss's (2015) position, which accepts the constructivist, relativist proposition that research findings are a product of what the researcher brings to the analysis, but does not make this a focus of the research. An inward focus on the researcher's reflexive position must remain secondary to an outward focus on the external world (Willig, 2013). The researcher aimed to avoid bringing their own assumptions, experiences and interpretations (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), however, the fact that findings are constructions and reconstructions was not seen as a reason to negate their relevance nor the insights that can be gained from them (Corbin, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Throughout the research process the researcher engaged in an iterative process of critical reflection in order not to impose his own categories and meanings onto the data. This critical reflection was gained using rigorous and systematic techniques, including memo and diary writing and GT analytical tools (7.9; 7.10; 7.11), the open, the selective and axial coding



stages of GT and audits of analysis described above (3.7; 3.8). For a further discussion of issues related to trustworthiness see 5.5.2.

### **3.9 Ethical considerations**

The researcher followed the British Psychological Society's code of ethics and conduct with the aim of avoiding potential risks to psychological well-being, mental health, personal values or dignity to both participants and the researcher (BPS, 2014). Ethical approval was gained from both the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust and researcher's local authority ethics committees (7.12) and the research policies and procedures of these organisations were adhered to.

The TA participants were explained the purposes and procedures of the study, given an information sheet (7.13) and asked to sign a consent form (7.14). It was made clear that the quality of EP services offered by the borough would not be affected by their participation, or non-participation in the study. The participants were given the right to withdraw until February 2017, when it was estimated that the write up of the analysis section would begin. After the interviews, a senior member of staff at the participant schools 'checked in' with the participants to ensure that they received support, if necessary. The researcher also had the opportunity to debrief via local authority and university supervision.

All data gathered was anonymised and kept securely on the researchers' computer, which is protected by the local authority's data protection procedures. Any non-anonymised data,

including audio files will be destroyed when the research has been completed. All participants were given pseudonyms during the transcription of interviews.

### **3.10 Chapter summary**

This chapter has detailed the study's philosophical orientation, methodology and methods, including the processes of grounded theory data collection and analysis. How the study addressed issues of trustworthiness and ethics were also discussed.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 Chapter overview

This chapter presents the research findings derived from the analysis of the qualitative data from interviews with the TA participants. It outlines the grounded theory, which aims to explain how TAs influence the peer relationships of pupils with SEND and the factors which facilitate and constrain the development of positive pupil peer relationships. The theory is structured around the coding paradigm (3.7.2), which identifies five aspects of TA practice in relation to peer relationships:

- 1) The specific strategies which TAs use to influence pupil peer relationships; the actions and interactions of TAs with pupils (4.2 and 4.4);
- 2) The short-term causal conditions which lead to or influence the use of specific strategies; the social scenarios and how they are interpreted by TAs, which leads to their actions and interactions (4.2 and 4.4);
- 3) The consequences of these strategies; the outcomes for pupils with SEND, the nature of their peer relationships (4.3 and 4.5);
- 4) The long-term causal conditions, or underlying causal mechanisms, which guide TAs use of specific strategies (4.7);
- 5) The core category, social agency, which explains the properties of and relationships between the above components (all sections in this chapter).

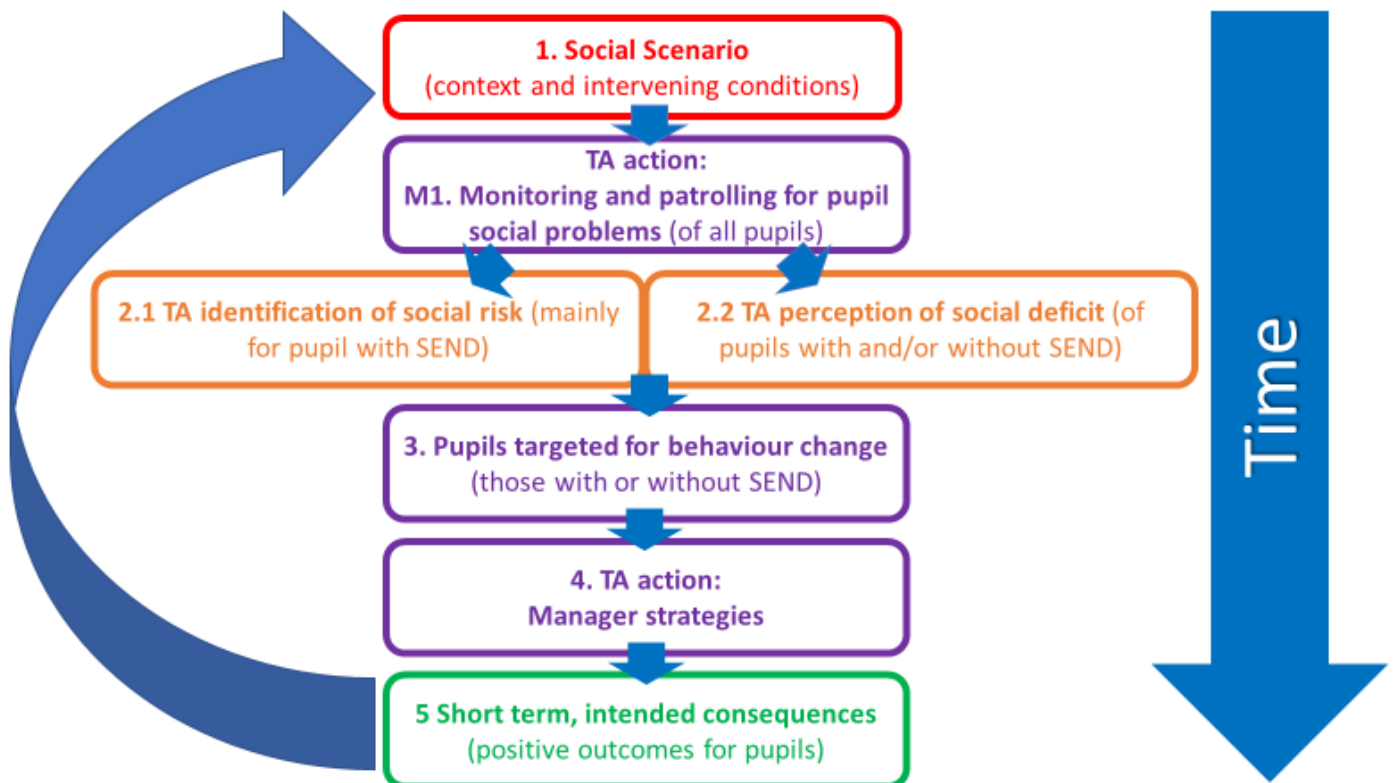
Social agency is defined in this study as the internal resources (skills, identity, belief, etc) and external, interpersonal influence (relational power, balanced relationships, etc) to shape

one's own experience in relationships with others. Social agency therefore encompasses both the individual and the social, constituting self-determinism within social relationships, rather than the locus of control being situated in others. For pupils with SEND, social agency entails influencing and developing their peer relationships, utilising their internal resources to create external social actions and interactions.

There are two primary, overarching strategies, or roles which the TA participants take up as a means of influencing the peer relationships of pupil with SEND; the manager and the coach. The properties of the manager and coach strategies are demonstrated by their constituent sub-strategies and their links to the core category (social agency). Although the sub-strategies are presented separately, TAs usually deployed multiple strategies at any one time.

#### **4.2 The TA 'manager' strategy:**

The manager role is made up of 11 sub-strategies (M1-M11), which are summarised in 7.15 and evidenced in 7.17.1. The columns in 7.15 are numbered to demonstrate the chronological process, or stages that TAs go through when deploying the manager strategy, as summarised in Figure 4.1. These stages will be described in turn.



*Figure 4.1 The stages of the manager strategy*

#### 4.2.1 Social risks and needs

In all contexts and social scenarios with pupils, TAs operating as managers monitor and patrol for pupil social problems (strategy M1); observing pupils' behaviour and watching for social difficulties or needs. The manager strategy is a problem-based approach.

**Billie, 167:** I'm generally next to whoever I'm with, and you're looking around, you're sort of the eyes on the ground as they say. Watching silly little behaviours or different problems.

**Riya, 89:** I'd be sitting there, overlooking the children, watching what they're doing. As a TA, I definitely like pick up more, in terms of problems within the class or if someone's being spiteful, horrible to one child.

These pupils' social 'problems' are interpreted by TA managers as social risks. TAs assess the severity of social risk for pupils within social scenarios. The adjudged severity of social risk then forms the basis for the decision as to whether or not, and how, to intervene in the problem. If the level of risk is deemed high, TA managers will get involved:

**Riya, 25:** Some of them do just come up to you and tell you stuff just for attention, but sometimes, if I can see that, if it's a real divide between the girls and they're being nasty to each other, you kind of have to intervene, especially if it's right in front of you.

**Billie, 67:** So, if I'm out on the playground I'll sort of watch ... Sometimes I'll just leave them because they all seem quite happy with what's happening. But if I can see that there's a big problem, ... I sort of get involved ... and help them out a little bit with solving different problems that they get.

Riya and Billie justify their decisions to 'intervene' due to the degree and impact of the observed social 'problem'. If the problems are adjudged to be 'big', 'real' or 'nasty', they 'intervene' or 'get involved'.

Although, the monitoring of and intervention in social problems are used with all pupils, TAs managers focus more on pupils with SEND, due to higher levels of perceived risk (for a further discussion of the underlying causes of this, see 4.7.1).

**Billie, 117:** You don't want it to become an argument or like a timeout issue where he's hit someone ... You're sort of watching them (the pupils with SEND) all the time ... him and other children that have got statements as well.

**Kerry, 190:** With Raihan, it's very intense. It's like 24/7, watching out for the signs, you know, to prevent things.

Each manager strategy is based on a specific social risk for pupils with SEND perceived by TAs in specific social scenarios. These risks, summarised in column 2.1 of 7.15, all constitute some form of social isolation or rejection for the pupil with SEND, such as difficulties participating or being included in social activities. The manager strategy is based on the perception that a pupil with SEND is more at risk of having negative relationships with peers. The key aim of the manager strategy is to intervene to reduce these risks.

Each manager strategy is also linked to specific pupil social needs or deficits, perceived within social scenarios. These are summarised in column 2.2 of 7.15. The decision to intervene as a manager is based on the assessment that pupils do not have the specific skills or abilities to address the problem themselves. Social 'problems' or 'risks' are seen as manifestations or enactments of pupil social difficulties within social interactions or events.

Although these perceived social needs are often located within pupils with SEND, pupils without SEND are also adjudged by managers to have corresponding deficits in their inclusion skills; their capacity to make adjustments for the needs of pupils with SEND so as

to enable their participation. In sub-strategy M7, the pupil with SEND's is adjudged to have a deficit in expressing or asserting their needs amongst peers, yet it is their peers without SEND who are targeted for behaviour change, suggesting that it is they who failed to accommodate the pupil with SEND's needs effectively.

This location of social deficits within pupils with or without SEND, or both, underpins which pupils are targeted for behaviour change by the different manager sub-strategies as summarised in column three of 7.15. Each manager sub-strategy targets specific pro-social behaviours of pupils, including specific inclusive behaviours of those without SEND.

#### 4.2.2 TAs take control

The most fundamental characteristic of the manager strategy is that TAs take control of interactions between pupils with SEND and their peers, deploying their greater adult social agency to 'manage' student behaviour and peer relationships. The nature of the TA actions as managers, as summarised in column three of 7.15 demonstrate this property. When in a manager role, TAs perform the actions of 'instructing', 'persuading', 'compelling', 'directing', 'adjudicating', 'teaching' and 'asserting' with pupils. TAs take responsibility for and intervene in pupil social problems in order to reduce social risk and safeguard pupil wellbeing.

**Riya, 13:** The girls always come up to me with their problems with each other ... and I'm the one who has to resolve their issues ... I do think it's a massive thing, so I do try and resolve



their arguments ... even if they sound really petty ... because you can see how much of an impact it has.

**Millie, 209:** I do think it's my job to ... You do develop that sort of, "Oh, I've got to make sure Finn's (pupil with SEND) alright." ... So I do feel like I'm always looking out for him ... it's my responsibility at the end of the day.

Both Riya and Millie describe their sense of 'responsibility' to 'resolve' problems as a means of ensuring pupil wellbeing, which serves as a justification for their actions, taking up a manager position. As Millie suggests, although this sense of responsibility extends to all pupils, it is more pronounced for pupils with SEND. It is also particularly enhanced by working in the one-to-one role with pupils with SEND:

**Amira, 230:** You feel for every child, especially if you're one-to-one because you're spending more time with that child ... You are spending so much time with them and you are going on a journey with them for the whole year, so they become like a family, so you feel responsible for their wellbeing, for their learning. So, you'll do everything within your power to get them to improve their learning ... and their personality ... Just to do your best to provide whatever you can do, within your power.

**Billie, 117:** I suppose when you're one-to-one you're more involved in their peer relationships, just because certain children have that difficulty with the social side of things. So, you feel like you're more involved, talking to them more about it and talking to their peers more about involving them. Whereas general TA-ing ... you don't really get involved with it until there's a problem, because the majority of the time they're capable of resolving their own little

problems ... You don't need to step in. But I think one-to-one you just feel like you have to more.

The justification for the increased use of TA 'power' to 'step in' is the sense of 'responsibility' for the 'wellbeing' of pupils with SEND, derived from the one-to-one TA role, coupled with the social needs of pupils with SEND; their difficulty 'resolving' their own 'problems'. When there is an absence or lower level of social risk, TAs often 'do not get involved'.

#### **4.2.3 The reduced social agency of pupils with SEND**

In turn, the manager role is also characterised by a reduction in pupil social agency. The TA manager explicitly encourages students to defer to adult authority to resolve social problems (sub-strategy M2). This reduction in social agency is more pronounced for pupils with SEND, since TAs use the manager sub-strategies more often with them. In addition, the tendency of the manager role to often target pupils without rather than with SEND for behaviour change, further reduces the social agency of those with SEND. By imbuing those without SEND with responsibility for the outcomes of those with SEND, TA managers locate within typically developing peers the agency to enact social change.

### **4.3 Manager outcomes:**

#### **4.3.1 Short-term reduction of social risk**

TAs deploying manager sub-strategies described short-term positive outcomes for pupils as a consequence of deploying managing sub-strategies, as summarised in column five of 7.15 and evidenced in 7.17.2. These outcomes read as a list of the aims of the manager role.

According to the accounts of TAs using the manager sub-strategies, the social problems and risks for pupils with SEND that are targeted are resolved or reduced, enabling better participation and inclusion and reduced social isolation. Pupils with SEND have increased interactions with peers, reduced conflict and more pro-social interactions, whilst pupils without SEND show more inclusive behaviours.

#### **4.3.2 Positive change not sustained**

However, these positive short-term changes are often not sustained past the immediate social scenario in which they are deployed, as evidenced in 7.17.2:

**Kerry, 110:** Because adults are normally there as well, in between. Raihan would never hit another child in front of an adult. But he will do the odd playing and talking. I might've been from before, working with one-to-one, years before, he might have done that and he's been controlled. So, if he wasn't controlled, then I guess we would have that until now... All the incidents that have happened, the biting, hitting, they've been outside, and not amongst adults.

**Millie, 119:** They do listen and they repeat, they do say, "Yeah I suppose it's true, we wouldn't like it if that happened to us." But sometimes they don't always put it into practice, so you're constantly reminding them.

Kerry describes how Raihan's emotional reaction to peer conflict and a social risk of violence is 'controlled' by the presence of an adult (strategy M6), yet he is unable to regulate his emotions in her absence. Millie describes the lack of change in peers' behaviour, when trying to elicit empathy on behalf of the pupil with SEND (strategy M10).

Although this lack of maintained progress is apparent for all pupils, TAs often suggested that it is more pronounced for pupils with SEND. This was principally attributed these pupils' difficulty with understanding or remembering:

**Riya, 93:** But it's just, with him (Abbas), it's like it goes in one ear and out the other, he'll do it again.

**Billie, 17:** You have to sit and try and explain it to them (pupils with SEND) and some of them just can't get it... I was trying to explain to Neil, to say, "Can you understand how that person might feel because you've just said that?... For ages couldn't understand it... It was just so confusing for him..."

**Millie:** If a child does something to him (Finn), rather than going to an adult, which I've told him to do so many times, he ends up getting in trouble. He'll really go and hit them; really hurt them. And then he ends up getting into trouble because doesn't realise... I'll say, "What did Sally (SENCo) say to you to do? Put your hands in front of them and say, "No", and you just walk off." But I think maybe it's retaining information; remembering what to do... It mainly happens at playtime and lunchtime.

Riya, Billie and Millie describe how the pupils with SEND do not often enact the behaviour change targeted by managing sub-strategies.

### 4.3.3 Reduced social agency of pupils with SEND

#### 4.3.3.1 *Constrained development of social skills and dependency*

The key negative outcome of the manager strategy identified by some TAs is a long-term reduction in social agency for pupils with SEND; a reduction in their internal resources and interpersonal influence amongst their peers. A TA manager's short-term intervention to solve pupil social problems inadvertently fosters their longer-term dependency on TAs by reducing pupils' opportunities to develop independent social skills.

**Susan, 43:** I think that as adults we've gone a little bit too far with trying to fairly solve every child's problem and every child's issue and I think a lot of children rely too much on adults... I think the adult then can spend a lot of time trying to be very reasonable and sort things out to everybody's satisfaction, when in fact we're taking that away from the child's need to sort it out themselves.

Susan asserts that the tendency of the manager TA strategy to 'solve' pupil 'problems' can make them 'reliant' on TAs, reducing their ability to 'sort it out themselves'. The short-term reduction in social risk and moderation of social deficits is offset by a longer-term *increase* in social risk, due to a reduction in social learning opportunities:

**Susan, 49:** It's perfectly normal and natural for children to row, to argue, to disagree, to be a bit mean to each other, because that's how they're going to learn and how they're going to work it out. And I think if we stop them doing that, at this age, when it's quite safe and natural for them to do it, that's when I think they have difficulties later on, in relationships and with colleagues and with peers or, you know, because they don't have, they don't know really know how to sort things out because someone's always done it for them.

Susan suggests that allowing pupils to take smaller, short-term pupil risks, such as having 'arguments' or 'being mean' should be 'normalised', since they provide opportunities to learn in a 'safe' and 'natural' environment.

Susan also links this short-sightedness within the manager role with an assumption made by the TAs that pupils with SEND have high levels of social deficit; TA have low expectations for the pupils' ability to learn social skills:

**Susan, 89:** They (pupils with SEND) haven't learned the skills with other children often. So, they can be quite dependent. They don't have those skills yet. And they need to learn social skills, just like everyone else, as far as possible. I think if they are too mollycoddled, they don't learn to do things on their own. I think some people make the mistake of assuming that because a child has SEN, they can't learn to socialise.

Susan also noted that the manager role can be detrimental to the social identity of pupils with SEND; how they perceive themselves and are perceived by peers. Having support from a TA can lead to social stigma by highlighting deficits:

**Susan, 2, 152:** If the TA is one-to-one (too much) with a child with SEN, it's often not good for how the other children see them, and on how they see you, or how they see themselves... It's much better if they just see you as a general 'I help all children'. I think (if you work one-to-one) it's quite negative because you then become, even to the other children, you become so and so's helper, you're there for them. And then that, it makes them even more different.

Susan asserts that if a TA provides too much support for pupils with SEND to develop positive peer relationships this can mark them out as 'different' amongst their peers.

#### *4.3.3.2 Managed pupils' imagined futures: inability to cope*

Many TAs who primarily deployed the manager role worried about the students with SEND's ability to 'cope' with peer relationships independently in the future. The pupils' future, imagined by the TAs, is often one of ongoing dependency on TA support due to an inability of the pupil to enact sufficient change; to learn the social skills that would develop their social agency.

**Millie, 147:** The parent was talking about that with the secondary school and we believe that maybe... We don't think that he'll (Finn) be able to cope there. Mum was talking about a special needs school. She (the SENCo) said, "Not now, because we're working with him and he's really getting on really well, but maybe secondary school would be the time." Because I know what secondary schools are like; he would be left behind ... Not like here in primary ... they get resources and they get people in to help.

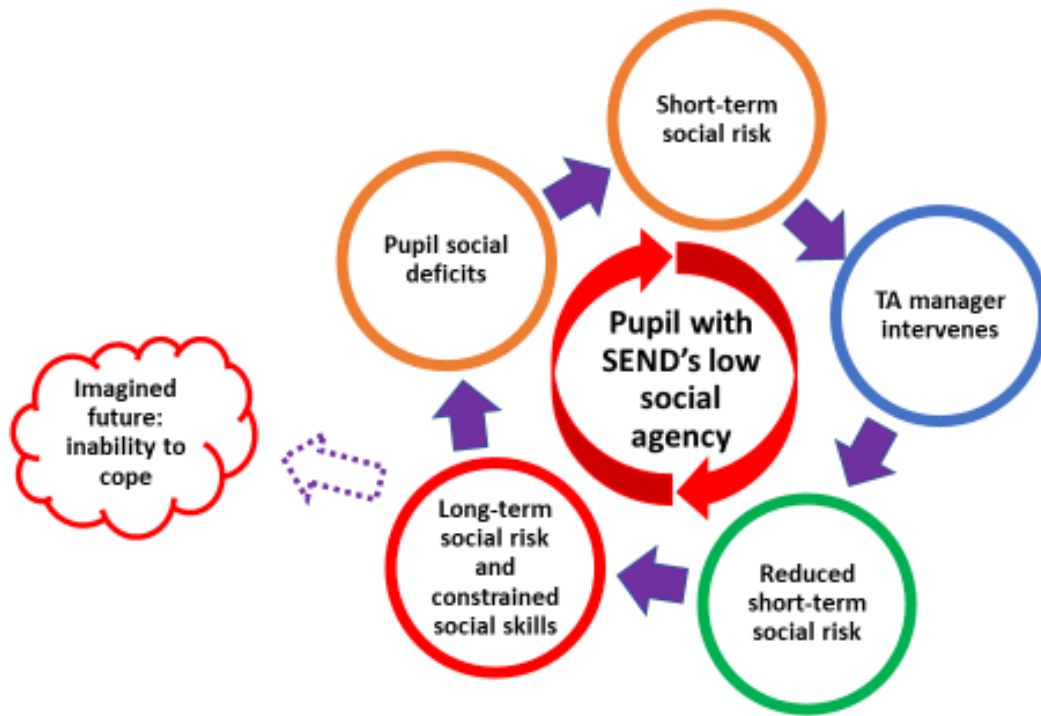
**Kerry, 150:** I don't think he (Raihan) will go to a normal secondary school... because of the issues with him ... So, he will always need a one-to-one, he will need somebody there to help him ... he's got a few (social skills), but it's not enough for him to go to secondary school and be on his own and interact.

The fact that Millie and Kerry both often feel the need to deploy manager sub-strategies with Finn and Raihan suggests that these pupils will not be able to 'cope' on their 'own' and will 'always' need adults 'to help', perhaps even in a permanent 'one-to-one' role.

As such, the manager role is characterised by a conceptualisation of pupil with SEND's inability to change, to learn new social skills. The manager role lacks a model of long-term pupil change. It is characterised by a lack of understanding or conceptualisation of pupils with SEND's social development over time. However, the concepts of 'imagined future' and 'inability to cope' also were relatively poorly defined by TAs, lacking detail. It appears that the 'imagined future' of ongoing dependency remained a distant, abstract concept.

The stages of the manager strategy, leading to outcomes are summarised in Figure 4.2.

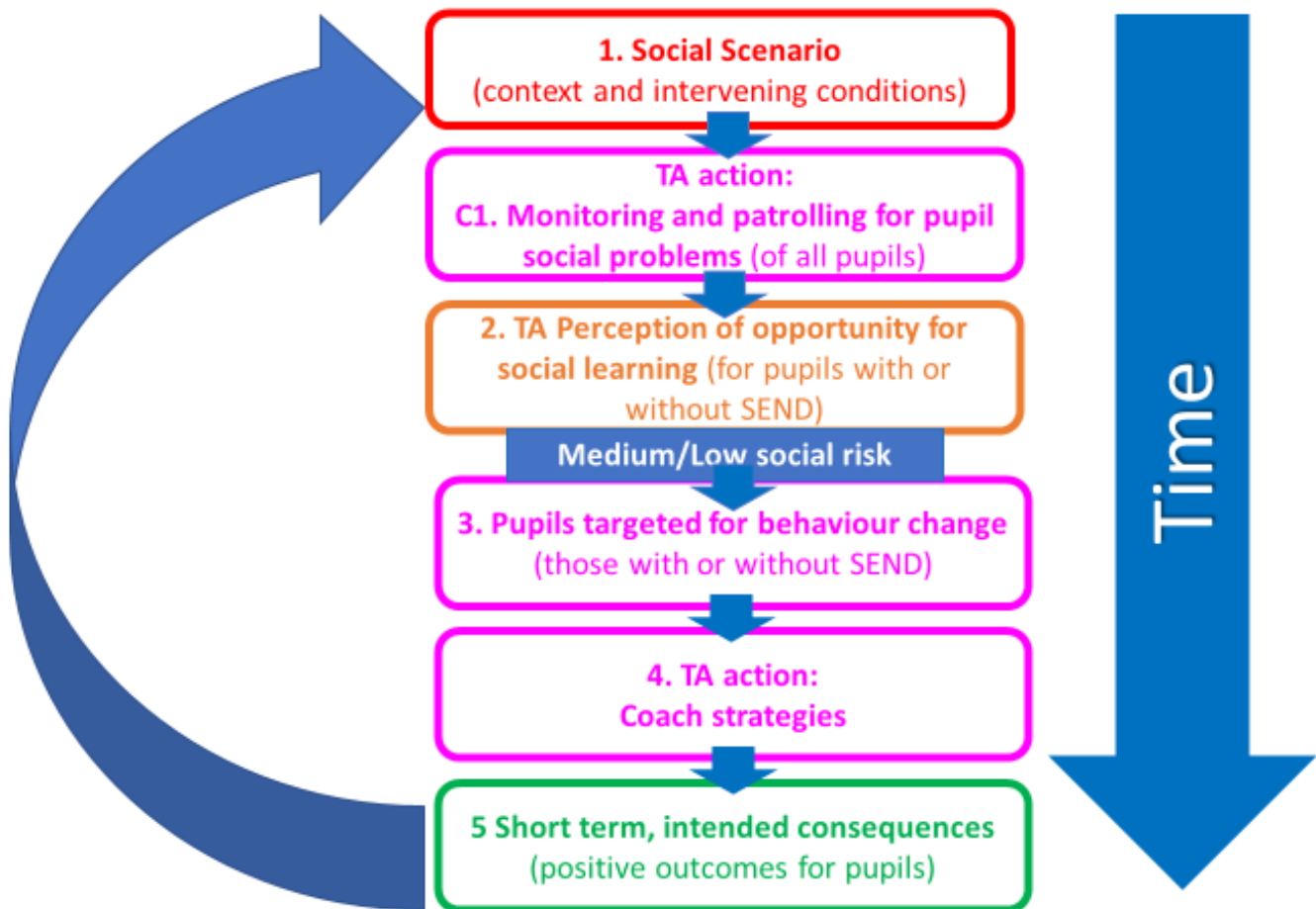




*Figure 4.2 The stages and outcomes of the manager strategy*

#### 4.4 The TA 'coach' strategy

The second overarching strategy, the coach, consists of five sub-strategies (C1-5), which are summarised in 7.16 and evidenced in 7.17.3. The chronological stages of TA's deployment of the coach role are summarised in Figure 4.3.



*Figure 4.3 The stages of the coach strategy*

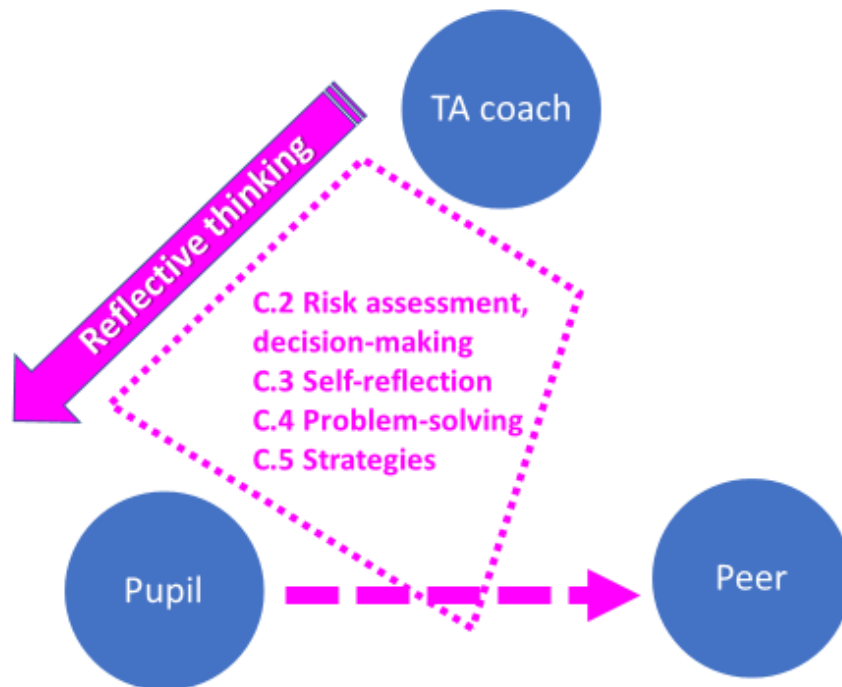
#### 4.4.1 Risk as opportunity

The initial stage of the coach strategy, sub-strategy C1, is the same as that of the manager, sub-strategy M1. The coach observes pupil interactions, checking for social problems. Like the manager, the coach is a problem-based strategy, aiming to address pupil social difficulties.

In contrast to the manager, the coach strategy is characterised by TA's identifying, within social scenarios, opportunities for pupils to learn social skills; to develop their ability to resolve social problems independently:

**Susan, 45:** I'd rather send them off to try and resolve it themselves... I just think we need to maybe give them a little bit more responsibly with their peers... Give them the tools to work out their own relationships ... because that's how they're going to learn and how they're going to work it out ... Maybe they might be able to handle it themselves.

Column 2 in 7.16 is a summary of the opportunities or skills that each coach sub-strategy aims to develop, including the ability to assess social scenarios for risk as a basis for making decisions (C2), self-reflect on their mistakes (C3), use their own creative problem-solving skills (C4) and implement solutions independently (C5). These skills all entail some form of reflective thinking function, cultivating pupils' ability to consider their thoughts and actions, as shown in Figure 4.4.



*Figure 4.4 The coach facilitates reflective thinking*

The opportunities to development these reflective thinking skills are linked to small social risks taken by pupils. The TA actions as a coach, summarised in column four of 7.16, constitute challenges to pupils to take small, pre-planned social risks; to make their own risk assessments (C2), admit their mistakes (C3) and devise and implement new problem-solving strategies (C4 and C5). The coach conceptualises a link between social risk and opportunities for learning:

**Susan, 1, 49:** It's perfectly normal and natural for children to row, to argue, to disagree, to be a bit mean to each other, because that's how they're going to learn ... And I think if we stop them doing that, at this age, when it's quite safe and natural for them to do it, that's when I think they have difficulties later on.

Enabling pupils to practice and 'learn' new social skills requires pupils to take some degree of 'responsibility' for risk. Susan suggests that TAs should accept, 'normalise' and allow some level of social difficulty and risk amongst students. If pupils are 'stopped' from taking small, immediate risks in the 'safe' school environment, then the risk becomes longer-term social difficulties 'later on'.

By encouraging students to take controlled, short-term risks, TA coaches are also taking some degree of risk. The coach aims to navigate the boundaries of adult responsibility for pupil wellbeing; allowing pupils to take just enough social risk for learning to occur. These short-term increased risks are justified by anticipated long-term reduced risk and developmental gains; less pupil social isolation and dependency on adults due to the enhanced development of social skills.

#### **4.4.2 Pupil empowerment; the increased social agency of pupils with SEND**

In contrast to the manager, the principle aim of the coach sub-strategies (C2-5) is to leave the balance of social agency or locus of control with the pupils rather than adults, as far as possible. The coach is characterised by TAs decreasing their use of their social agency with the aim of increasing the level of pupil social agency; encouraging pupils resolve their own social problems with minimal adult input. Pupils are explicitly discouraged from deferring to adults to resolve problems unless they are 'serious'; posing a significant social or physical risk, such as being 'bullied' or getting 'injured' (sub-strategy C2). The coach develops the internal resources of pupils as a means to increase their interpersonal influence; their ability to affect their relationships with peers. By encouraging a reflective thinking function in

pupils, TA coaches encourage those with and without SEND to develop self-determinism within social relationships, utilising their internal resources to create external social actions. The coach role is based on a pupil-led model of change; social learning occurs best when it is enacted by pupils themselves.

#### 4.4.3 The flexibility of the coach

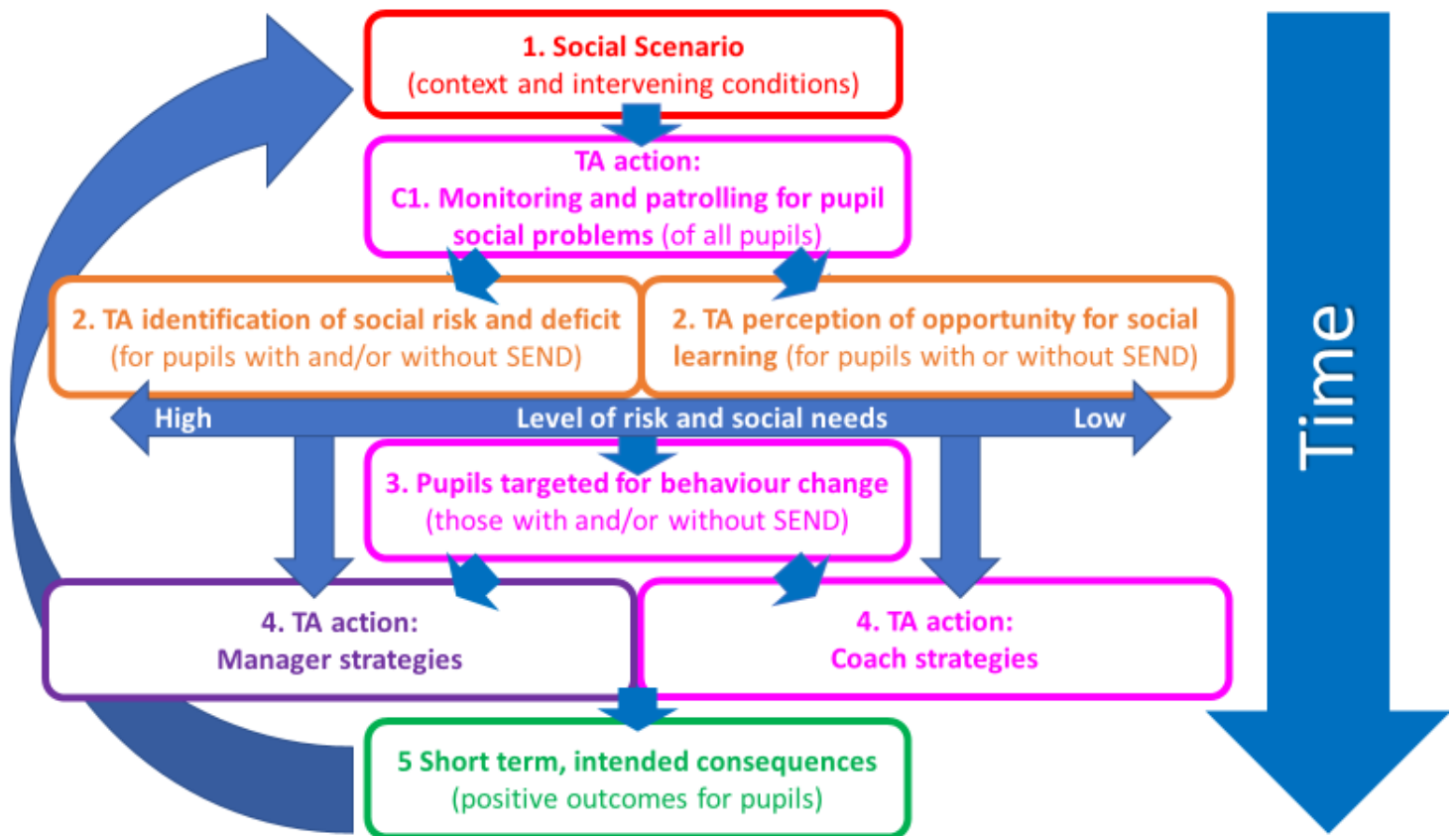
TAs who took up the coach role also retained the ability to transition back to the manager position. The coach sometimes intervenes as a manager in order to reduce short-term social risks. If an immediate risk is perceived to be great enough, a TA coach will revert to operating as a manager, using their adult social agency to take control and reduce the risk.

**Susan, 1, 57:** I will check whether it needs to be dealt with ... The difference (as to whether I intervene or not) is that this isn't just him falling out with a friend ... this is him constantly injuring other children ... that has to be dealt with ... And, I'm really strict with him.

**Billie, 41:** He grabbed the little girl and I would have just been like, "Be careful, you can pretend to hold her like a policeman, but you don't need to shake her" ... But I was just sitting there ... trying to not step in. And then ... he shouted in someone's face ... Then I did step in.

The developmental opportunities identified by a coach are weighed up against the perceived level of short-term social risk. It is only if the opportunity to learn new independent skills outweighs any risk, then the coach role can be adopted. This decision-making model is summarised in

Figure 4.5.



The coach role conceptualises a complex balance between risk and opportunity and between TA and pupil social agency. Social problems are perceived as potential risks which need to be reduced by TAs, but also opportunities for students to learn to resolve their own problems. Above, Billie describes this delicate equilibrium, ‘trying not to step in’ as a directive manager in order to allow the pupil with SEND and his peer an opportunity to resolve the ‘grabbing’ problem without her. The ‘grabbing’ was assessed as being within the realms of acceptable risk, posing little risk of physical injury or social-emotional damage. However, the ‘shouting in someone’s face’ was adjudged to be sufficiently risky, with the

*Figure 4.5 The flexible coach model*

potential to significantly upset others, so as to tip the balance towards the need for adult-led intervention.

Coaches respond flexibly to the social needs of the pupils they support, aiming to provide 'enough support' for them to achieve positive interactions with peers.

**Susan, 117-126:** Just encourage those skills. Stand back a bit and then if they're not quite getting it right, then I might encourage them to try something new, to think of what they need to do ... Sometimes they just need a little guidance, not too much.

The coach aims to use just enough of their social agency to facilitate the pupils use of their own social agency; to provide the least possible support to enable pupil progress; 'just a little guidance'. They aim to afford pupils, particularly those with SEND, an appropriate level of challenge for them to develop specific social skills, addressing specific social needs or deficits, responding sensitively and proportionately to the developmental needs of their pupils:

**Kerry, 80:** (Raihan's) not independent yet ... But there are little things that you can get him to do and then try to pull yourself away, but you have to know how to ... giving him the opportunity to take things on for himself ... With his classmates, I try to leave him to interact with them on his own. But he needs reminding just to get involved. So, I try to just say something positive to him to motivate him to talk, like, "Come on Raihan, you have good ideas, speak up."



Raihan's social needs, and thus the level of risk within social scenarios, are perceived by Kerry as relatively high. He is dependent ('not independent') on her to intervene as a manager to facilitate his social relationships. She uses manager sub-strategies to help him to initiate interactions ('get involved') (strategy M3) and regulate his emotions ('motivate him') (strategy M6). But she also uses coach sub-strategies, trying to 'pull herself away' and do 'little things' to foster 'opportunities' for him to 'take things on for himself'; to use his own social agency.

Kerry described how her approach has shifted towards the coach role as Raihan has made progress:

**Kerry, 32:** And at first, I used to take him there and put him to sit there. Now, I sit there and wait and see what he's going to do. Sometimes he'll come in and sit there straight away and sometimes he sits by himself and I'll have to bring him there and say, "Remember what you've got to do?"

Initially, Kerry intervenes as a manager, directing Raihan to sit with his peers (strategy M3). Once Raihan is able to 'sometimes' initiate sitting with peers independently, she acts as a coach, 'waiting' to see if a problem arises (strategy C1) and only prompting him to sit with peers if he does not do so himself (strategy C5).

Billie has a similar interaction with Neil:

**Billie, 77:** I say to my one-to-one, "Why don't you go and play with your brother?" And then he'll go, "OK." And then go in. He won't necessarily say anything, but he'll just stand next to

his brother as if to say, I'm here. But he won't actually verbalise that he's there. Or I sort of give a hint to the girls and say, "How about you include Neil?" And then they'll, they're brilliant, they'll just go, "Come on Neil. Let's go and play"... In group work in class, he tends to just sit there in his own world. So, I have to really encourage him to get involved, but I also try and step back as well, because I don't want to be too... I want him to do it independently as well. Sometimes I feel like I'm just, like a puppeteer trying to... But then when he's actually getting involved, I try to take a step back and just observe, and if I feel he's creeping back out again, I'll go back in and try to figure out what he needs to do to be involved.

Like Raihan, Neil struggles to initiate interactions with his peers, leading Billie to step in as a manager to initiate interactions (strategy M3), targeting both Neil and his peers. She recognises the potential danger this strategy poses to him and his peers ability to initiate interactions 'independently', likening her actions to that of a 'puppeteer'; controlling their interactions using her adult social agency. Thus, she tries to adopt a coach role; to 'step back' and 'figure out what *he* needs to do' (part of sub-strategy C5); how he could use *his* social agency to get 'involved'.

The coaches' ability switch back to adult-led, manager interventions, as demonstrated in Kerry and Billie's responses to Raihan and Neil, is based on in-depth knowledge of and flexible response to their specific social needs, within specific contexts. It entails a recognition that a degree of dependency on adults is sometimes developmentally appropriate. The coach has a complex, nuanced conceptualisation of pupils' developmental needs and trajectory, which enables them to strike a delicate balance between adult and pupil social agency.

## **4.5 Coach outcomes**

### **4.5.1 Short-term increased use of reflective thinking skills to resolve social problems**

TAs described short-term positive outcomes for pupils as a consequence deploying coach sub-strategies, as summarised in column five of 7.16 and 7.17.4. These are essentially the aims of the coach sub-strategies; the behaviour change or skills that TAs hope to enable. The outcomes correspond to the opportunities for social learning perceived by TAs within social scenarios. These positive outcomes link to the overall positive change identified by TA coaches; that pupils are more likely to use reflective thinking skills to independently resolve social problems.

### **4.5.2 Resistance to reflective thinking**

TAs described how pupils sometimes initially resisted the coach's efforts for them to use their reflective thinking skills or to resolve problems more independently. For example, in response to coach effort to get pupils to reflect on their mistakes or role in conflict (strategy C3), pupils often denied having any responsibility. In the examples provided by participants, this resistance was usually overcome via the use of additional coach sub-strategies, with the pupil eventually reflecting on what they could do differently.

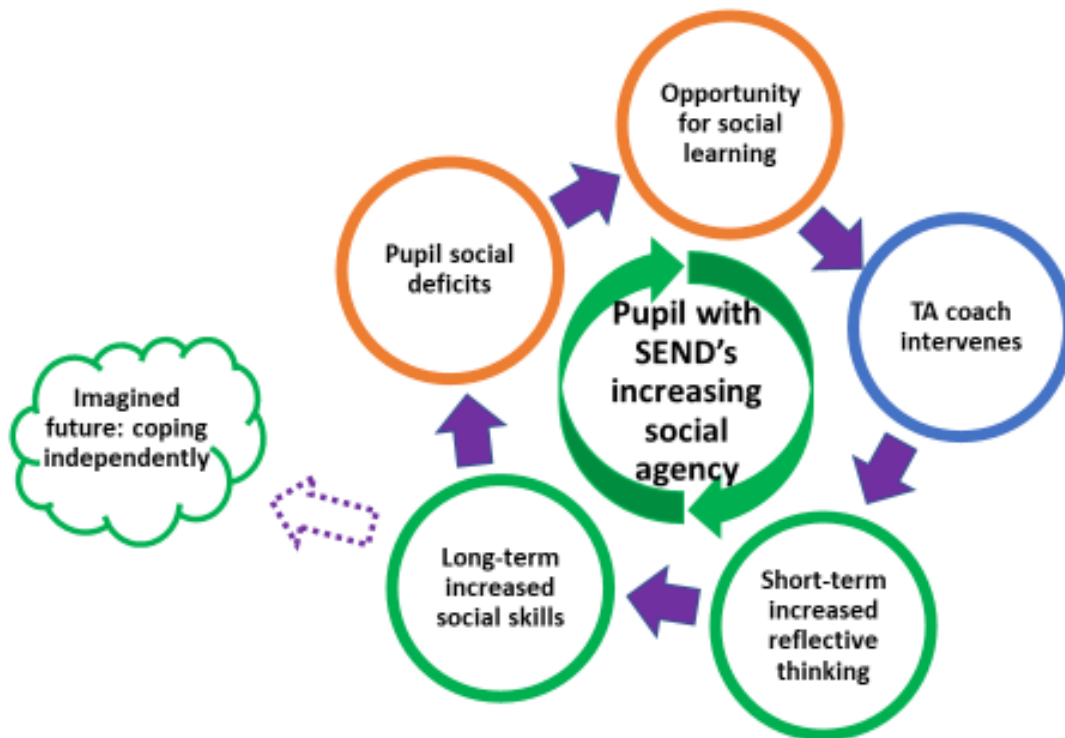
### **4.5.3 Coached pupils' imagined futures: coping independently**

For coaches, these short-term positive outcomes lead to the longer-term pupil acquisition of social skills and an increased ability to cope independently with peer relationships. This can be summarised as an increase in pupil social agency. The TA coach conceptualises a positive imagined future for pupil with SEND, a positive developmental trajectory based on their ability to learn and change.

**Susan, 83:** (Billie's) done miracles, he's (Neil's) actually become really independent and is socialising. If you had seen him a few years back... I'm sure there were people thinking at the time, *No he needs to be in a special school. This is not going to work out.* And now ... If you said to a stranger who walked into this room, 'One of these children has got special needs', that's not who you'd pick out.

**Kerry, 132:** I'm trying to get him to learn and have that relationship in that group; little things, tiny things like that. Because when he goes into the work world, he'll have to learn to speak to somebody else, to do that for himself.

Susan describes how staff previously doubted that Neil would manage in a mainstream secondary school. She implies that Billie's conceptualisation of the pupil's ability to change has helped her to work 'miracles' for his ability to 'socialise' 'independently' of TA support, such that his SEND status is now largely imperceptible. Similarly, Kerry describes an imagined future for Raihan wherein he can navigate the social requirements of 'the work world', via the 'small' steps he makes towards learning to have 'relationships' in his 'group'. The stages of the coach that lead to this positive conceptualisation of the future are summarised in Figure 4.6.



*Figure 4.6 The stages and outcomes of the coach strategy*

#### 4.6 Comparing the manager and coach

The key properties of and differences between the manager and coach strategies are summarised in Table 4.1. It is worth reiterating that the coach retains the ability to act as a manager. All the properties of the manager are also utilised selectively by TA coaches.

*Table 4.1: Comparing the key properties of the manager and coach strategies.*

Properties of the manager and coach strategies	TA strategy	
	Manager	Coach
TA Perception of social scenario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short-term social risks for pupil with SEND; social isolation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short-term risks as opportunities for social learning for pupils with and without SEND.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social deficits of pupils with and without SEND:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pupils with SEND: lack of social skills.</li> <li>- Pupils without SEND: lack of inclusion skills.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-term risks for pupils with and without SEND; lack of social skills and independence.</li> </ul>
Pupils targeted for behaviour change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils with and without SEND equally often targeted for change.</li> <li>- Pupils with SEND: specific pro-social behaviours.</li> <li>- Pupils without SEND: specific inclusion behaviours.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils with and without SEND equally often targeted for change.</li> <li>- Pupils with and without SEND: reflective thinking skills.</li> </ul>
TA actions (social agency)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More TA social agency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More pupil social agency.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TAs take more control of pupil interactions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TAs facilitate more pupil control of pupil interactions.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More TA responsibility to intervene.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More pupil responsibility to influence peer relationships.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils encouraged to defer to adult authority: 'tell and adult' about social problems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils discouraged from deferring to adult authority unless social problem is 'serious'.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes for pupils</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced social agency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased social agency.</li> </ul>
Short-term positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction of social risk.</li> <li>• Moderation of pupil deficits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased use of reflective thinking skills.</li> <li>• Increased ability to resolve social problems.</li> </ul>
Short-term negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive change not sustained.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resistance to reflective thinking.</li> </ul>
Long-term negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constrained development of social skills.</li> <li>• Dependency on adults.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None identified.</li> </ul>
Pupils' imagined futures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to cope socially.</li> <li>• Ongoing dependency on adults.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to cope socially.</li> <li>• Developing independence from adults.</li> </ul>
Pupils' ability to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change for pupils with SEND unlikely (social deficits).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change for pupils with and without SEND likely (social skills).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change for pupils without SEND more likely (inclusion skills).</li> </ul>	
<b>Models of change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem-based strategy (problems as targets for change).</li> <li>• Adult-led change.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem-based strategy (problems as targets for change).</li> <li>• Pupil-led, adult facilitated change.</li> </ul>
Flexibility of TA to pupils' developmental needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively static: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Manager strategy only.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Manager and/or coach strategy.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



## 4.7 Causes of the manager and coach strategies

This section aims to explain the underlying long-term causal conditions or social mechanisms, which influence TAs to adopt the manager or coach strategies. Three long-term causes have been identified; those internal to the pupil, those internal to the TA and those within the wider school context:

- 1) the level of social need of pupils with SEND (4.7.1);
- 2) the values, knowledge, skills and experience of TAs (4.7.2);
- 3) and the school context (4.7.3).

The power of all these causes to influence the actions of TAs can be explained via their links to the central code, social agency. These three factors affect the level of social agency of pupils or TAs, making the use of manager or coach roles more or less likely.

### 4.7.1 The level of social need of pupils with SEND

The level of social need of pupils with SEND influences the TAs decisions to take up the manager or coach strategies. If a pupil has higher social needs, TAs are more likely to intervene as managers. If a pupil has lower social needs, TAs are more likely to take up a coach position. Kerry describes how the different level of social needs of two pupils determines the nature of her intervention:

**Kerry, 196:** With the child I worked with last year (Finn), I had more involvement... with a group, not just supporting him by himself, because he could've been left on his own... This

year (with Raihan) I think, it's too intense... because Finn was the same level as the group I was working with... With Raihan, because he's very difficult getting him into a group... Finn is more sociable... his behaviour wasn't *that* bad and it gave me the opportunity... to work one-to-one and at the same time work with a group. So, it was much more involvement with the group, rather than with Raihan now, the involvement with the group is less. With Raihan, you have to be watching if it's the right time to introduce him to the group, *Would it be OK?* Or you have to speak to him and make sure it's OK with him before you do it. With Finn... he would interact with the group more independently... I'm here working with the most difficult child in the school.

Finn is adjudged to be socially at 'the same level' as his peers, enabling him 'interact' with them 'independently'. Raihan's high social needs lead Kerry and other staff to describe him as 'the most difficult child in the school'. These more acute social needs necessitate Kerry to be more involved as a manager, to use her adult agency to 'introduce him to the group' (sub-strategy M3).

Social needs as a long-term causal mechanism is closely linked to the short-term causal condition of TA perception of pupil social needs within social scenarios, as described in 4.2.1. The TA perception of pupil social needs described in section 4.2.1 constitutes an 'in the moment' interpretation that TAs make; the meaning they give to an interaction between pupils. The level of social needs referred to in this section constitutes a more lasting status of pupil needs, which exist independently of pupils' immediate social condition. The long-term needs of pupils acts as an underlying causal mechanism, impacting upon TA perceptions of those needs within the short-term; in the immediate contexts and intervening conditions.

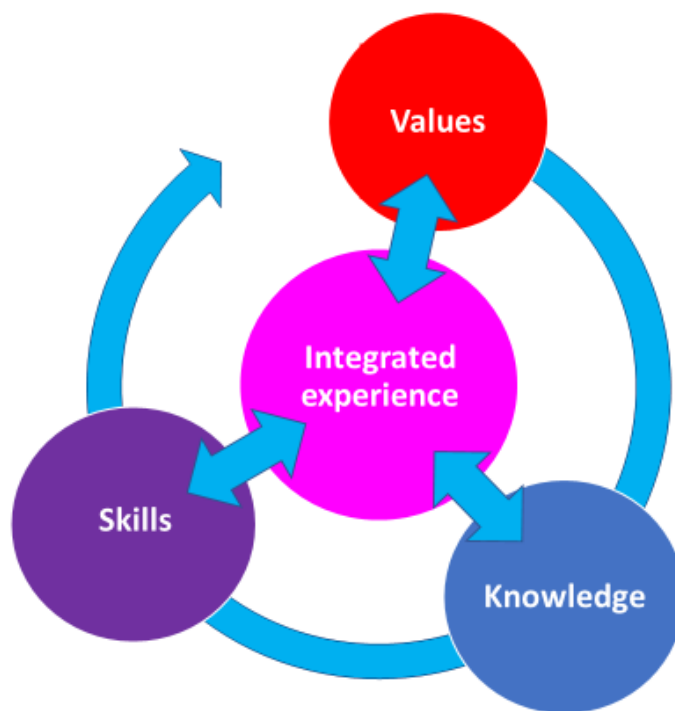
There were exceptions to pupils with a high level of need causing TAs to act as managers. Some TAs demonstrated that it was possible, if more challenging, to act as a coach when working with pupils with high social needs. For example, Billie and Kerry managed to find opportunities to act as a coach whilst working with Neil and Raihan, respectively, both of whom have ASD and relatively high levels of social need (4.4.3).

#### *4.7.1.1 Pupil need as social agency*

The social needs or deficits of pupils can be understood through the lens of social agency. High pupil social needs could be described as a low level of internal resources (skills, identity, belief, etc), with which pupils can influence their external, interpersonal relationships. If a pupil has low social agency, a TA is more likely to ‘manage’ their peer relationships.

#### **4.7.2 TAs’ values, knowledge, skills and integrated experience**

A second set of underlying reasons that TAs take up the manager or coach roles is the nature and level of TAs’ knowledge, skills, values and experience, both personal and professional. This relationship between these three aspects is illustrated in Figure 4.7.



*Figure 4.7 TA values, knowledge, skills and integrated experience*

#### *4.7.2.1 Personal values*

TAs described personal values as a key determinant of why and how they aimed to intervene in pupil relationships. Kerry describes how her prioritisation of the development of the peer relationships of pupil with SEND, as opposed to academic outcomes, is derived from her personal beliefs:

**Kerry, 98:** Because it would be like isolating (for the pupil), if you're in a group and you're sat to the side all the time. So... And I'm the type of person, I like group, group is great. So, I try to make Raihan feel that; it's not that bad to be with a group. So, because of my own belief, I do try to get him in.

**Researcher:** So, you would say that the... (aim to get him into) groups is partly because of your belief?

**Kerry:** Yeah, I pull that into place.

**Researcher:** So that's more of a personal thing to you?

**Kerry:** It is. I think that children should be in a group really.

Amira outlines a similar process:

**Researcher:** So, do you think teaching assistants have more responsibility for peer relationships?

**Amira, 158:** Yeah... To help them to develop the right personality, to have the right values about things... So, you (I) discuss with them what is the right thing to do, what is wrong... the honesty, the truthfulness, and all that. It's important to have that, apart from the curriculum...

**Researcher:** And where do you think the values you teach them come from?

**Amira:** Obviously my upbringing and my beliefs. I think... I'm a Muslim and the things we've been taught, as a Muslim; to be honest, to be kind, to be nice, to be sharing and helpful, all those things are important to build a strong society.

Amira identifies her 'upbringing' and 'beliefs' as a cause of her prioritisation of peer relationships. These beliefs also justify her use of manager strategy M9, explaining and teaching pro-social behaviours, in which she aims to didactically teach her values.

Susan also links her use of the coach role, encouraging pupil independence, to her upbringing and beliefs:

**Interviewer:** And where do you think that understanding that you've got came from; in terms of how to encourage pupils to be independent, in that way?

**Susan, 93:** My mum had a disability. So, I don't know if it came from... Actually, I never saw her as any different and I don't think I realised that she did... I don't think it was even about her disability. I think I would want that... I've got three children and it's the same thing for all of them. I really wanted them to be as independent as possible. I think it's just one of your beliefs, isn't it? Whether you go, *Right my child will go to university*, or, *My child will tell the truth*, or, *My child will obey me*... Whatever your beliefs are.

Susan describes a cyclical interaction between values and experience as key to shaping her professional practice, her knowledge and skills, with regards pupil relationships. Her experience of being parented and parenting her own children have influenced her beliefs, which in turn influences her approach to working with pupils.

#### 4.7.2.2 *Integrated experience*

Participant TAs with more relevant professional experience, professional training and a greater diversity of experience of one-to-one or general TA roles, namely Kerry, Billie and Susan, were more likely to be able to take up a coach role. Those with lower levels and less diversity of professional experience and training, namely Millie, Amira and Riya, were less likely to use the coach sub-strategies. This is demonstrated in 7.5 and 7.18, which show the levels and nature of professional experience and training of the TA participants and the number of incidences of descriptions of the coach and manager sub-strategies in the interview data. It should be emphasised that the statistical data used to measure TAs use of sub-strategies is very crude, having not been collected in a pre-planned or systematic

manner. It is based on the frequency with which TAs described the use of strategies in the interview data. However, it would seem logical that TAs with more experience, training, knowledge and skills would be more likely to take up the more complex and flexible coach strategy.

It was not simply that more professional experience led to more developed practice and more use of the coach strategy. Some TAs with relatively large amounts of experience, such as Amira, did not describe using the coach role. TAs who described using the coach role also described a process of integrating new experiences into existing experience, knowledge and skills; of learning to adapt to new conditions and contexts.

Below, Susan explains how her years of experience as a TA have led to her reluctance to use the manager strategy:

**Researcher:** What has enabled you or perhaps others to take a step back then and...?

**Susan, 124:** I don't know, just watching it maybe, over the years... and seeing what works better. I think I've taken the stance of, "Oh well, you shouldn't have said that to him and then he shouldn't have said that." And you're speaking all nicely, "Because that was really unkind." And, "How did that make you feel?" And so on. But you can go too far with that and I think it doesn't mean anything to the children. They just think, *You're an adult doing your job.*

Susan describes how she used to use manager sub-strategies M8, adjudicating in conflict ('you shouldn't have said that to him') and M10, explaining and eliciting empathy ('how did that make you feel?'). Seeing 'what works' 'over the years' has led her to be sceptical of the

impact of these strategies on outcomes for pupils ('it doesn't mean anything to the children'). Susan's ability to create new meaning from her experience, to integrate or assimilate her experience into new knowledge and skills, have improved her practice.

Kerry describes how her work with CYP in non-educational contexts influences her work in schools:

**Kerry, 244:** (It's) only since I came here that I've done one-to-one (with pupils with SEND). So different experience. I've been around, so I know different things really, whether it be teenagers or young people, I do have experience with them. It's just that you have to find the time, if you don't find the time and spend with them, you won't get that information. You can't get an answer just by asking me, because you yourself might work with Raihan and find something completely different; a different way of doing it or a different answer. So, it's about the new experience really, as well as the old... you have to have it for yourself to know exactly how to deal with it.

Kerry emphasises the need to take time to make sense of 'new experiences'; to integrate her 'old' experiences with the 'new'. Like Susan, it is via this process of amalgamation of the existing with the novel that she is able to synthesise new knowledge and skills to 'know how to deal with' pupils' social relationships. This ability to integrate knowledge, skills and experiences could help to explain why someone like Billie is more able to take up the coach role than someone with more TA experience, such as Amira.

#### *4.7.2.3 TA social agency*



These factors combine to affect the level of social agency of TAs in the school context and in their interactions with students, which in turn influences their tendency to take up the manager or coach role. Higher levels of knowledge, skill and experience increase the levels of social agency of TAs within the context of the school system, whereas lower levels of knowledge skills and experience would limit their social agency. TAs with more social agency are more likely to be able to utilise the coach position, whereas those with less social agency are more likely to act as a manager. Social agency enables TAs to conceptualise and take the small, calculated social risks that are required to allow pupils more opportunities to learn to resolve their own social problems (4.4.2).

### 4.7.3 The school context

#### 4.7.3.1 *TAs take responsibility for pupil peer relationships*

All participants asserted that as TAs they had more responsibility for pupil peer relationships than other staff in the school, namely teachers.

**Amira, 53:** They (teachers) are caring. But... because they're looking after 30 children and they have so many other things to fulfil; their criteria, deadlines, paperwork, marking and planning lessons... I think it's important to have a teaching assistant; a person who hasn't got that many responsibilities, they can oversee pupil relationships; the little things that the teacher might not notice sometimes. If the child is unhappy, or quiet, or hasn't got any friends... So, I think teaching assistants, they've got a different role.

**Billie, 148:** I would say (that the TA role is different) because I think we're closer to the children... The teachers are so busy trying to teach them, and get their work marked and they're the authoritarian as well, as we are as well, but we have more fun with them... I think we're more of the caring side as well... If a child is ill they'll come to the TA, rather than the teacher... you just have that, more of a friend, but not a friend at the same time.

**Susan, 2, 187:** TAs are probably more important for peer relationships, simply because poor teachers have got so much other stuff to do, they really haven't got a lot of time to sit down and really talk to pupils... the teacher is teaching... But I think as a TA you can really spot those subtle little things... I think some children just feel they can talk to you more, as well... Maybe it's that some of us are quite local. So, they see you as part of the community.

Teachers' are 'busy' with the task of teaching, prioritising academic outcomes, whilst TAs take up the more 'caring', nurturing roles, including prioritising 'pupil relationships'. The TAs suggested that this division of tasks between teachers and TAs is based on the hierarchical power structures within the schools. The TA role has less 'responsibilities' and is 'closer to the children', more like 'a friend', 'part of the local community' and less 'authoritarian' than the role of teachers. Those higher up in the school hierarchy, teachers, are primarily left with the more prioritised task of pupils' academic learning, whereas TAs, with less power, take on more responsibility for social outcomes, the less valued 'little things'. Within these two participant schools, these designated roles appear to be informal, with no official recognition of these roles within the school.

TAs did not appear to absorb the organisational prioritisation of academic over social outcomes, with most participants stating that peer relationships were at least as, if not more important:

**Susan, 198:** I'd say, probably (peer relationships are) more important (than academic progress)... Personally, I think social skills are, I don't want to say more important, obviously I think academic skills are important, but I think you can survive with social skills without really brilliant academic skills. Social skills will get you through life, but academic skills without social skills will not really get you through life, not easily.

**Riya, 73:** I think (supporting peer relationships) is quite a big role because when you're in school, it's like friends are everything to you, to children, it's more important than education. Like if this person says they don't like you, it's a major thing, and it could really influence their day and how they are the rest of the day. If they got something wrong in like, maths, they would be a bit embarrassed, but they wouldn't care that much... I think peer relationships, especially in the later stages of primary school, are everything to them. So that's why I do try to sort out and help as much as I can... because you can see how much of an impact it has.

Several TAs noted an interdependent link between social and academic outcomes:

**Millie, 173:** I do think it's important that the children are able to engage as well as do the academic work, because without that engagement, the child wouldn't be able to perform properly. If you're not socialising and learning from each other, then how can you do well?... We learn all these skills in school through our peers; how to solve problem, get along, make decisions.

TAs therefore appeared to invert or reconceptualise the established hierarchy of teacher over TA, and academic over social prioritisation, seeing their 'social' roles and responsibilities as at least as important as those of teachers.

#### 4.7.3.2 *The one-to-one versus general TA roles*

According to participants, TAs deployed in a one-to-one role with pupils with SEND, as opposed to a 'general' TA role are more likely to intervene as a manager than a coach:

**Billie, 117:** When you're one-to-one you're more involved in their peer relationships, just because certain children have that difficulty with the social side of things. So, you feel like you're more involved, talking to them more about it and talking to their peers more about involving them. Whereas general TA-ing is more sorting out problems and you don't really get involved with it until there's a problem, because they're capable of, the majority of the time, resolving their own little problems.... I think one-to-one you're just more conscious of it... When it's general TA-ing you think, *Oh they can do it themselves*. You don't need to step in... But I think one-to-one you just feel like you have to more... When I'm one-to-one, I'm constantly watching that one-to-one more.

The participants who only had experience of a one-to-one, rather than 'general' TA role, Millie, Amira and Riya, did not describe using the coach role in interviews (see appendices 2 and 3). It may be that experience of the 'general' TA role may help to develop TAs ability to intervene in more diverse ways than the manager alone.

Several TAs described how working one-to-one can foster between TAs and pupils with SEND more emotional attachment, a closer relationship and a greater sense of duty of care, which can lead to a greater tendency for TAs to intervene on pupils' behalf.

**Susan, 81:** I think it's very easy for TAs to just think that's their charge, their role, to do things for them (pupils with SEND). Do too much for them. And even, I think you can get so attached, that it's almost like mothers are with their children. So, then you're almost being unfair to other kids, so it's like, "Don't you speak to them like that." Or, "Don't you..." I've seen it happen.

Millie noted how her sense of attachment to Finn, derived from her one-to-one role, leads her to feel obliged to 'make sure he is alright' with his 'peers':

**Millie, 209:** I feel like he's my little boy (laughs). I do think it's my job to ... You do have a little soft touch for them, because you feel sorry for them. You do develop that, 'Oh, I've got to make sure he's alright.' With his peers too... Because you want them to feel happy and you want them to feel that you care. Because if they feel like you don't care, you won't have that sort of relationship... it's my responsibility at the end of the day.

The one-to-one role appears to make TAs feel 'responsible' for pupils' social wellbeing, such that they feel compelled to take action to ensure pupils' 'happiness'.

#### *4.7.3.3 'Managing' the pressure to intervene*

TAs described pressure from colleagues to intervene in pupil social relationships using manager sub-strategies. Colleagues, namely teachers sometimes expect TAs to 'manage' the relationships of pupils with SEND, leading to a fear of negative judgement from colleagues if they did not fulfil this task:

**Researcher:** Do you think there are any challenges for staff, for TAs to take up the role of encouraging independence, in that way (i.e. using the coach role)? What do you think stops some from being able to do it?

**Susan, 2, 129-150:** I think we're really good at the moment, but maybe in the past, most teachers would rather the TA just took... It's a lot easier for them to get on with their teaching, if that child is just taken with you... The teacher would want the TA to intervene in any problems... If you're doing a job,... that's what you need to do to feel valued. You're looking after that child. And you don't see standing back while the child may be struggling slightly as part of your job. You think, *Do people think I'm just stood here while...?* They want to be seen to be doing their job. So, it's like, *Yeah, I'm looking after them. Yes I am. I'm doing this. I'm their TA and I'm cutting that up for them and I'm making sure they're alright and keeping them calm...* If everyone is aware that, *Oh, actually Ms Fowler is not just doing nothing. She knows what she's doing. She is watching that child, and if necessary guiding that child.*

Susan suggests that some teachers' expectations of the TA 'job', to 'intervene in any problems' and 'look after' the pupil with SEND, creates a pressure on TAs to use manager sub-strategies in order to 'feel valued'; 'to be seen to be doing their job' and not 'doing nothing'. Using the coach sub-strategies might involve 'standing back' and allowing the pupil to 'struggle slightly'; taking a controlled amount of social risk in order to foster independent social skills.

Millie describes this sense of pressure to 'deal with' pupil 'problems' and the potential judgement she fears from other staff if she is not able to do this effectively:

**Millie, 27:** Sometimes, when you (I) can't do something with a child because they don't want to do it, or there is some other problem, sometimes you want to ask people (other staff) and you go to find help, sometimes it's not there because they're not around. So, then you have to deal with it and even if they are around, sometimes you feel like, *Should I have gone and asked them?* Because you think, *Oh no, perhaps they think that I'm not very good at what I'm doing?... Perhaps she (the SENCo) doesn't think I'm good at my job...* Because she's got other things to do.

As Millie describes above, a function of the one-to-one role, wherein TAs are responsible for the outcomes of an individual pupil, is pressure on the TA if that one pupil is not successful. The potential evaluative judgement of colleagues higher up in the school hierarchy means a TA is more likely to intervene as a manager to resolve social problems.

Kerry described how the teacher she works with expects her to manage the impact of Raihan's challenging behaviours, including those derived from his interactions with peers, so that he does not distract from the teachers' primary task of teaching.

**Kerry 208:** I'm handling it (working with Raihan) and it's good when the teacher notices that I'm doing a good job with him and says, "Kerry, that's really good, that is absolutely good."

**Researcher:** What's the teacher particularly pleased about?

**Kerry:** If I get him to literally sit quietly and not disturb the lesson... For him (the Teacher) to have peace is like heaven. Because he (Raihan) can be very difficult. I can tell he (the teacher) finds it very difficult, if Raihan is screaming... So, it's like a 'hallelujah' when he's OK in the class.

The teacher wants Kerry to manage and reduce the risk that Raihan's screaming often presents to the academic learning of his peers. Raihan's high social needs, of which the screaming is a manifestation, are perceived in the school system as needing a high level of 'manager' intervention. In her interview, Kerry describes using mainly managing sub-strategy M6, 'managing emotional regulation', to achieve this.

#### *4.7.3.4 TA social agency in the school system*

The tendency of TAs to adopt the coach or manager strategies is influenced by the level of social agency afforded to TAs within the school system. TAs with lower levels of social agency, limited by the one-to-one role and the expectations of colleagues, are more likely to adopt the manager role. The collective understanding of the TA role as responsible for controlling social risk for pupils with SEND can compel TAs to intervene as a manager in pupils' peer relationships. The ability of TAs to act as a coach, to take small social risks in order to provide social learning opportunities for pupils with SEND is limited by the potential negative judgement of colleagues if TAs fail to manage pupil with SEND's social problems.

TAs who are provided higher levels of social agency within the school system, including opportunities to work in a general TA role and professional development opportunities,

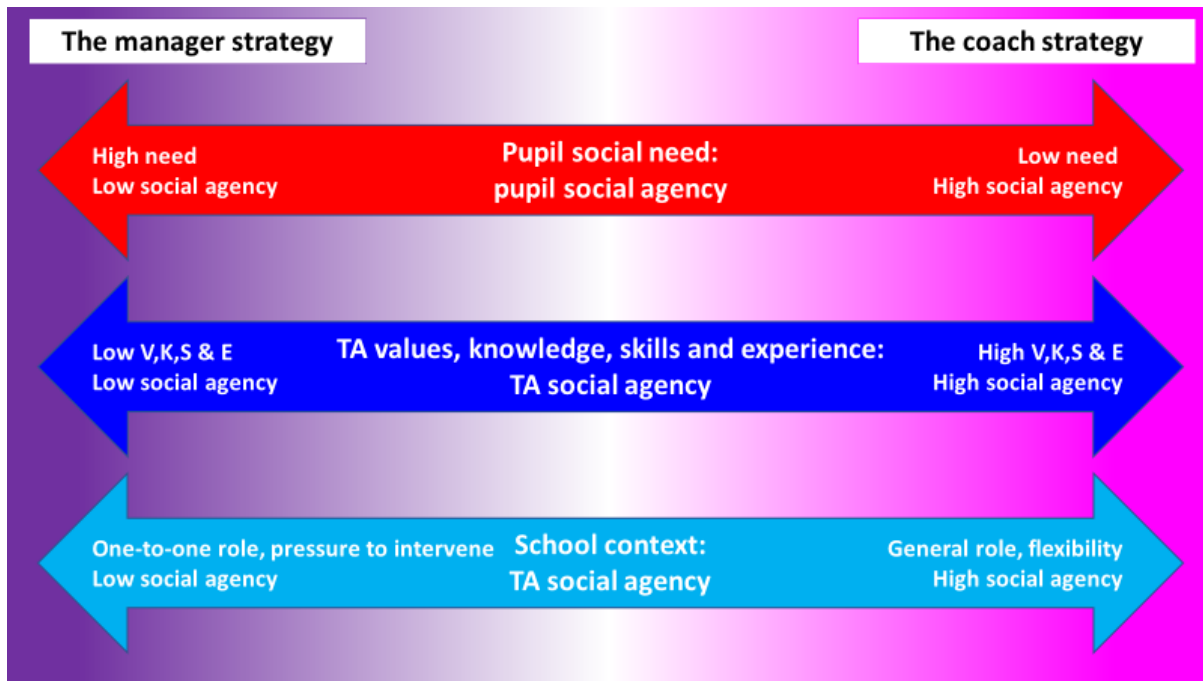


would appear to be more likely to be able to adopt a coach role. This idea is supported by 7.5, which show that participants with experience of the 'general' TA role and higher levels of professional training are those who adopt the coach strategy. It may be that the diffusion of responsibility for pupil outcomes within the general TA role, with TAs partly responsible for all pupils' progress, allows TAs the freedom to take small social risks and respond more flexibly to the needs of the pupils they support.

TAs' levels of social agency, their power to use their internal resources to affect the nature of their interactions with students is shaped by the conceptualisation of the TA role within the school system. Being 'lower down' the school hierarchy, TAs' ability to define the nature of their role and relationship with students is limited; the locus of control to determine which strategies are used is often situated in colleagues rather than TAs themselves. For TAs to facilitate pupils' social agency, they must be afforded social agency themselves.

#### **4.7.4 Summary of causes**

The underlying, long-term causal mechanisms work to influence TAs tendency to utilise the manager or coach strategies. The three factors combine to influence the social agency of pupils with SEND and TAs, which shape TAs' decisions, actions and interactions with pupils. This process is summarised in Figure 4.8 below.



**Figure 4.8** *The long-term causal mechanisms for the manager and coach strategies*

Factors that decrease pupil and TA social agency and increase the likelihood of TAs using the manager strategy include high levels of pupil social need, low levels of TA knowledge, skills and experience and pressure on TAs from colleagues to intervene in pupil relationships, particularly in the one-to-one role. Factors that increase TA and pupil social agency and increase the likelihood of TAs using the coach strategy include low levels of pupil social need, high levels of TA knowledge, skills and experience and flexibility within the TA role, particularly in the general TA role. It should be emphasised that Figure 4.8 represents the general causal trends identified in the data to which there were exceptions, as described above. For example, TAs demonstrated that it was possible, if more challenging, to act as a coach when working with pupils with high social needs and in a one-to-one role (4.4.3; 4.7.1).

## 4.8 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the grounded theory derived from the interview data, which describes how TA practices may facilitate or constrain the peer relationships of pupils with SEND. The manager and coach TA roles were identified as key overarching strategies deployed by TAs to influence the peer relationships of the pupils they support. These strategies were discussed in relation to both short and long-term outcomes for pupils in the form of their peer relationships. Three underlying causal mechanisms for why TAs may take up these positions were identified; the level of social need of pupils with SEND, TAs' values, knowledge, skills and integrated experience and the influence of the school context. The concept of social agency, applied to both TAs and pupils, provides one way of understanding the dynamic relationship between these strategies, outcomes and mechanisms.

## 5 DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Chapter overview

This chapter will review and discuss the findings of this study into the influence of TAs on the peer relationships of pupils with SEND, relating the grounded theory (GT) of this study to the research questions and aims. Links and comparisons will be made between the findings of this study and the existing literature and theories, including those discussed in chapter 2. The strengths and limitations of the study will be outlined, followed by the potential implications for CYP and families, educational professionals and EPs. Possible directions for further research will be put forward and the proposals for the dissemination of the findings described.

### 5.2 Research questions and aims

The aim of this study was to explore the views of TAs in order to understand how they influence the peer relationships of pupils with SEND, including the contexts and mechanisms which may facilitate or constrain the development of positive peer relationships for pupils.

The study posed two research questions:

Primary research question:

- How do teaching assistants influence the peer relationships of pupils with SEND?

Secondary research question:

- What are the contexts and mechanisms underpinning TA practices that facilitate or constrain the development of positive peer relationships for pupils with SEND?

The study has both exploratory and explanatory aims, seeking to describe and document the practices of TAs and the peer relationship of pupils as well as identify underlying causal factors and mechanisms which produce specific outcomes.

Using a GT analysis method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), a theory of TA influence on the peer relationships of pupils with SEND was developed. The theory describes and explains how TAs use two overarching strategies or roles, the 'manager' and the 'coach', to affect the peer relationships of pupils. The theory is comprised of five interlinked categories;

- the TA strategies of the 'manager' and the 'coach', made up of several sub-strategies (4.2 and 4.4);
- the short-term causal conditions or social scenarios which cause TAs to use these strategies (4.2 and 4.4);
- the consequences of these strategies for the peer relationships of pupils with SEND (4.3 and 4.5);
- the long-term causal conditions which cause TAs to use the strategies (4.7);
- and the core category, 'social agency', which explains the properties of, and relationships between the above categories (chapter 4)

These categories will be explored in turn in the following discussion to give further meaning to the results. For a discussion of how these research questions were answered by the study see 5.4.

## 5.3 Discussion of results

### 5.3.1 The manager strategy

The 'manager' strategy is characterised by TAs taking control of interactions between peers, using their own 'social agency' to resolve or 'manage' perceived social 'problems' for pupils with SEND. This property of the 'manager' has some similarities with TA roles identified in four other qualitative studies which analyse the practice of TAs and the peer relationships of pupil with SEND; those by Broer et al. (2005), Dolva et al. (2011), Hemmingson et al. (2003) and Whitburn (2013). These studies identify roles or strategies used by TAs which are characterised by a high degree of proximity, involvement and intervention in the social worlds of the pupils they support. These roles suggest a tendency for TAs to impose themselves on pupil relationships, to 'take control' in a similar way to the 'manager'.

For Whitburn (2013), 'heavy' TA support was characterised by constant close proximity and an 'authoritarian' approach by TAs. Similarly, for Hemmingson et al. (2003), the 'TA as a stand-in for the pupil' was in close proximity, provided help without being asked to by the pupil and often perform tasks that the pupil was supposed to do themselves. For Broer et al. (2005), the roles of 'mother', 'friend', 'protector', and 'primary teacher'; are characterised by primacy or exclusivity of relationship between TAs and pupils. In particular, the TA as 'protector from bullying' has some similarities to the manager sub-strategies 'M2, instructing pupils to 'tell an adult' about problems', 'M7, advocating in conflict', 'M8, adjudicating in conflict' and 'M9, explaining and teaching pro-social behaviours'. As

'protectors', TAs served to temporarily shield pupils, from mistreatment by peers by acting as a buffer, advocating for the pupils amongst other staff or directly challenging the students who enacted the bullying.

The 'supported ego' role identified by Dolva et al. (2011) has particular similarities with the role of the 'manager'. TAs aimed to enable peer interactions by providing the social understanding 'lacking' in the pupils with SEND, thus compensating for their social difficulties. TAs performed this role by helping pupils with SEND to understand, initiate and respond to social interactions with peers. These TA actions have parallels with the 'manager' sub-strategies 'M1, monitoring and patrolling for pupil social problems', 'M3, initiating interactions and proximity with peers' and 'M9, explaining and teaching pro-social behaviours'.

However, the 'manager' strategy also has several conceptual differences with TA roles identified in the existing literature. With the exception of the 'supported ego' role (Dolva et al., 2011), the roles identified in the studies above relate to academic, rather than social TA support. The 'heavy' and 'light' TA support (Whitburn, 2013), 'mother', 'friend', 'protector', and 'primary teacher' roles (Broer et al., 2005) and 'stand-in', 'help-teacher' and 'back-up' roles Hemmingson et al. (2003) all refer primarily to academic TA roles, although inadvertent social consequences for pupils' peer relationships are also described. The 'manager' role is differentiated by the fact that they exclusively aim to influence the peer relationships of pupils with SEND. In relation to social impact, the TA roles in the existing literature are somewhat thin, lacking depth and detail. The manager role therefore provides a more thorough and focussed explanation of the influence of TAs on *peer relationships*.

While this study and the resulting theory has focussed on social, as opposed to academic outcomes, these two areas are in fact inextricably linked (Black-Hawkins, 2010; Saddler, 2014). Social and academic outcomes are often described as bidirectional, with improvements or declines on social measures usually leading to similar effects on attainment, and vice-a-versa (Public Health England, 2014). Pupils' peer relationships and interactions are significant predictors of attainment and social and emotional competencies have been found to be a more significant determinant of pupils' attainment than IQ (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Flook, Repetti & Ullman, 2005). Likewise, academic has a strong impact on children's social and emotional wellbeing (Chanfreau et al., 2013; DfE, 2011).

As such, the role of TAs in the social inclusion and peer relationships of pupils with SEND cannot be separated from their pedagogical teaching role. Much previous research has neglected to explore the influence of TAs on social outcomes, primarily focussing on academic attainment (Saddler, 2014). However, it is important for studies seeking to explore social rather than academic outcomes, such as the current project, to recognise the complex interplay between the learner and their sociocultural context, rather than adding to the separation of the two into a false dichotomy.

### **5.3.2 Outcomes of the manager**

This study identified concerns that the 'manager' role may constrain the peer relationships of pupils with SEND. This corroborates with concerns identified in the wider literature that



one-to-one TA support reduces the number of peer interactions for pupils with SEND. The tendency of the 'manager' to 'intervene' or interfere in pupil relationships, inadvertently reducing pupils' 'social agency' amongst their peers, may partially explain the negative effect of proximal TA support found in other studies.

The idea that TAs acting as 'managers' may reduce the 'social agency' of pupils with SEND also has some conceptual similarities with the negative impact of one-to-one TA support roles identified in other qualitative studies. Whitburn (2013) found that 'heavy' support often imposed 'dependency' and 'reduced autonomy' (pp.154-6). Dolva et al. (2011) identified a concern that the 'supported ego' role may deprive pupils of 'autonomy' and 'self-determination' (p.208). Giangreco et al. (1997) found that one-to-one support caused a loss of 'personal control' and 'dependency in adults' for pupil with SEND (pp.12-14). Broer et al. (2005) found that the mother', 'friend', 'protector', and 'primary teacher' TA roles damaged the 'pupils' sense of self' (pp.425-6). As in this study, Broer et al. (2005) also differentiated somewhat between the short and long-term social impact of close TA support. While the 'protector' role may reduce bullying in the short-term, it was suggested that it may serve to exacerbate bullying in the longer-term by reducing opportunities for pupils with SEND to learn the skills to confront bullies. This is similar to the consequences of the 'manager' strategy, which was found to simultaneously reduce pupils' short-term social problems, but damage their longer-term opportunities to develop independent social skills.

Several qualitative studies also shared concerns identified in this study about the potential 'social stigma' amongst peers caused by pupils with SEND receiving high levels of TA support. For Whitburn (2013), the reduced level of 'autonomy' was accompanied by pupils

feeling that their 'social differences' were accentuated amongst other pupils, making them feel 'embarrassed' and 'humiliated' (pp.154-6). For Broer et al. (2005), the TA roles that provided high levels of support were potentially 'socially stigmatising', 'reinforcing negative stereotypes' of pupils with SEND, contributing to 'negative feelings of difference' and 'low expectations' (pp.425-6). Giangreco et al. (2001) found that close TA support was 'stigmatising' with some pupils being made to feel 'embarrassed' or 'different' (pp.83-4).

There are also several differences between the consequences of the 'manager' role and those of close TA support from the wider literature. Firstly, the concept of 'social agency' is far more developed, defined and detailed than the somewhat cursory references to 'autonomy', 'self-determination' 'personal control' and 'sense of self' in the existing qualitative literature. As described earlier, the impact of the roles is also conceptualised more in relation to academic than social outcomes. These studies lack a detailed exploration of these concepts, and particularly what they may mean for pupil relationships.

With the exception of the Dolva et al. study (2011), the existing research, including qualitative, quantitative and mixed method research focuses very strongly on the negative social impact of TAs, with very minimal discussion of any potential positive impact. The qualitative studies relating to TA roles described above are based on interviews with staff, including TAs themselves, yet they do not describe the perceived social benefits of TA support. This suggests that either TAs and staff do not see any benefits, that there are none to be found, or that they exist, but were not captured effectively by the researchers. In contrast, the theory developed by Dolva et al. (2011) is problematic for the opposite reason,

containing very little about the potential negative impact of TA support on pupil peer relationships.

Although this study identified more concerns than benefits associated with the 'manager' role, the strategy was found to produce both positive and negative outcomes for pupils' peer relationships. The 'manager' therefore offers a more balanced, nuanced description of the impact of 'close' and 'involved' TA support on the peer relationships of pupils than the existing studies. Within the 'manager' role, the short-term social problems and risks for pupils with SEND that are targeted are resolved or reduced by TA 'managers', temporarily enabling better participation and inclusion and reduced social isolation. Pupils with SEND have increased interactions with peers, reduced conflict and more pro-social interactions, whilst pupils without SEND show more inclusive behaviours. The use of GT methods of analysis to 'ground' the theory in the accounts provided by TA participants may partially account for this more positive perspective than those in the existing literature.

### 5.3.3 The coach strategy

In contrast to the TA 'manager', the 'coach' strategy is characterised TAs aiming for *pupils* to resolve social problems of difficulties independently of adult support; to leave the balance of 'social agency' with the pupils rather than TAs, as far as possible. In order to achieve this, the 'coach' is able to flexibly switch between the 'manager' and 'coach' strategies as a means to provide an appropriate level of support for the developmental needs of pupils; the least possible support to maximise pupils' opportunities for social learning.

The 'coach's' ability to fade or withdraw support in response to the developmental needs of pupils is somewhat reflected in the existing literature. The studies by Dolva et al. (2011), Hemmingson et al. (2003) and Whitburn (2013) referred to the impact of TA closeness versus distance, concluding that TAs who are able to withdraw their support at appropriate moments are able to provide more effective academic support, without damaging pupils peer relationships (2.4.2). For Hemmingson et al. (2003), this 'withdrawal' approach enabled pupils retain their 'initiative' and to 'manage for themselves' (p.91-92). Whitburn (2013) characterised effective TA support as 'light'; 'discreet', 'subtle' and 'unobtrusive', with TAs providing just enough academic support so as not to interfere with pupils' social relationships (pp.153-4). In the 'supported ego' role outlined by Dolva et al. (2011), TAs were encouraged to find a balance between proximity and distance to the pupil, to provide close social support whilst maintaining the pupils' 'autonomy' and to reflect on the danger of depriving the pupil of 'self-determination' and necessary social 'challenges' (p.208-9). The process and aims of 'withdrawing' support in these studies have some similarities with those of the 'coach' role, encouraging pupil 'independence', 'responsibility' and 'social agency'.

There are considerable similarities between the flexible nature of the 'coach' strategy with some research into effective ways for TAs to provide *academic* support. Some recent studies have suggested that TAs should develop pupils' 'independent learning skills' as a means to avoid the negative academic impacts of one-to-one TA support, such as those found by the DISS research project (Blatchford et al., 2009). Scaffolding has been identified as a key theoretical framework which can be used to conceptualise the role of TAs in fostering 'independent learning skills'; using 'metacognitive' skills, which entails pupils taking control

of and evaluating their own learning and behaviour (Omrod, 2007; Radford, Bosanquet, Webster & Blatchford, 2015). TAs are encouraged to use reflective questioning techniques when pupils make mistakes, rather than emphasising task completion, using heavy prompting or supplying answers (Radford, Blatchford & Webster, 2011). TAs should avoid direct correction in favour of strategies such as cueing (McHoul, 1990), prompting, hinting and supplying a model (Radford, 2010), thus encouraging the student to think for themselves, retain ownership of their learning and avoid dependency on adult support (Radford et al., 2015).

These concepts have similarities with the functions performed by the TA 'coach'; to encourage pupils to use independent reflective thinking skills to resolve social problems, to take responsibility for their own peer relationships and reduce the level of adult responsibility and pupil dependency. In 'coach' sub-strategy C3, TAs prompt and challenge pupils to self-reflect on their mistakes, in C4, TAs ask solution-focussed questions and in C5, they suggesting problem-solving strategies for pupils to implement more independently.

Yet, there are also key differences between the 'coach' strategy and concepts identified in the existing literature. Firstly, the flexibility property of the 'coach' role is somewhat distinct from the roles in the existing literature about TAs and pupil relationships, which emphasise the ability of TAs to withdraw support. The ability for TAs to withdraw highlighted in the existing literature is two dimensional or binary, with TAs either being in close proximity, providing high levels of support, or at a distance, providing no support, for short periods of time. Within the flexible or faded approach conceptualised by the 'coach', TAs remain active within their relationships with pupils as support is reduced, rather than intermittently

removing support altogether. By using 'coaching' techniques that encourage reflective thinking, TAs continue to provide graduated levels of support, with the aim of fostering pupil independence. The coach therefore offers a more dynamic means for TAs to find a balance between the need of pupils to receive support, but retain independence and opportunities for social learning.

Secondly, as with the 'manager' role, the 'coach' focussed exclusively on supporting peer relationships, rather than academic outcomes. Only the 'supported ego' role identified by Dolva et al. (2011) also centres on this social role. Yet this role is conceptually very different to the 'coach', bearing more similarities to that of the 'manager' (5.3.1). The concept of the 'coach' therefore appears to have some degree of originality in relation to the identified phenomena. However, it should again be recognised that the separation of social and academic TA roles and pupil outcomes for the purposes of this study does not reflect the complex interplay between social and emotional wellbeing and attainment (5.3.1).

#### **5.3.4 Outcomes of the coach**

The positive outcomes associated with the 'coach' strategy offer a mean by which TAs can facilitate rather than constrain the peer relationships of pupils. As a result of the 'coach', pupils developed reflective thinking and social skills, which reduced their social isolation and increased their independence from adults. The coach suggests that TAs can have a positive impact, even when working in the one-to-one role. As described above, this positive perspective is largely missing from the existing body of research.

Moreover, the assertion by some TAs of the need to move flexibly between high levels of 'manager' support and graduated 'coach' support, suggests that a 'manager'-type role is sometimes appropriate for the developmental needs of pupils. It could be necessary for pupils with high levels of social need to be temporarily be dependent on TA support, provided that TAs are able to adjust their approach as and when pupils' needs change. With the inclusion of both positive and negative, long and short-term outcomes, the theory relating to the concept of the 'coach' provides a more positive, balanced description of TAs' influence on pupil relationships.

Overall, 'the manager' and 'coach' strategies have several key differences to the existing literature, including an exclusive focus on pupil peer relationships, a more in-depth exploration of 'social agency' and a more balanced look at both positive and negative outcomes. As such, as far as this researcher is aware, the 'manager' and 'coach' theory offers a more in-depth and detailed exploration of the impact of TAs on the peer relationships of pupils with SEND than those available in the research to date.

### **5.3.5 Causes of the manager and coach**

Based on a critical realist and grounded theory understanding of causation (1.3.1; 3.1.1; 3.3.1; 3.5.1 and 3.5.4), the theory generated in this study identified three underlying long-term causes or social mechanisms that made TA's use of the 'manager' or 'coach' strategies more likely:

- the level of social need of pupils with SEND (4.7.1);
- the values, knowledge, skills and experience of TAs (4.7.2);

- and the school context (4.7.3).

The three factors combined to influence the level of ‘social agency’ of pupils with SEND and TAs, which in turn shaped TAs’ capacity and decisions to adopt each role.

#### *5.3.5.1 The level of social need of pupils with SEND*

Pupils who were perceived by TAs to have higher levels of social need, with more social problems, were more likely to cause TAs to adopt the ‘manager’ strategy. Pupils who were perceived to have lower levels of social need were more likely to elicit the ‘coach’ role from TAs (from those who were able to adopt it).

There is very little discussion about the impact of different levels of pupil need in the existing literature into TAs the peer relationships of pupil with SEND. Several studies identified level or type of SEND as a potential confounding variable or factor in discussions, however none had this as a focus of their findings. Other than the process of ‘withdrawing’ when pupils were able to manage academic tasks independently (Hemmingson et al., 2003; Whitburn, 2013), how TAs might adjust their practice to suit differing needs was not discussed. However, there are several studies in the literature into the academic impact of TAs which suggest strategies by which TAs can differentiate their response to the diverse needs of pupils, such as the scaffolding framework (5.3.1). Moreover, the findings in this study related to level of pupil need as a causal factor for differing TA practices do not constitute particularly original results. It is taken for granted that pupil with higher levels of



need are likely to elicit higher levels of support from adults. Indeed, this is the very basis for decisions by schools to deploy TAs in one-to-one roles with pupils with SEND.

#### *5.3.5.2 TAs' values, knowledge, skills and integrated experience*

Factors internal to the TAs were also found to influence their uptake of the 'manager' and 'coach' roles. Firstly, the nature and level of TA's knowledge, skills, values and professional experience were contributory. TAs with more relevant professional experience, training and a greater diversity of experience in relation to one-to-one or general TA roles were more likely to be able to adopt a 'coach' role. It can be taken for granted that increased levels of knowledge, skills and experience will lead to improved TA practices and outcomes for pupils, such as those purportedly generated by the 'coach' strategy. Many, if not the majority of articles about the practice of TAs have called for increased levels of training and professionalisation for TAs. The lack of professional training for TAs has been proposed as a cause for the differential impact of TAs and teachers on the level of peer interaction (Carter et al., 2008). Several studies have highlighted the incongruity of the tendency within schools to designate the staff with the lowest levels of professional knowledge, skills and training to work with the pupils with the highest levels of need (Blatchford et al., 2012).

This study also proposes that TA's who are able to integrate new experiences into existing values, knowledge, skills and experience have a greater capacity to adopt the more flexible, complex 'coach' role. TA who described using the 'coach' role also described this process of integration; making meaning of and learning to adapt to new scenarios, conditions and contexts. To this authors knowledge, this process is not described in the relevant literature

into TAs, although as a process of learning or professional development, it does not constitute a particularly original finding.

TAs in this study also described their personal values as a basis for why and how they influenced pupil relationships. The suggestion that TAs perceive their own professional values as central to their practice in relation to pupil peer relationships may be significant in relation to the prioritisation of social and academic outcomes in the wider context of participant schools. The fact that the peer relationships of pupils are left to TAs to prioritise as a result of their own values may be indicative of the fact that other members of the school system do not prioritise pupil peer relationships; they do not attempt to guide or direct TAs about how to influence peer relationships.

#### *5.3.5.3 The school context*

The systemic school context also influenced whether or not TAs adopted 'manager' or 'coach' positions. The TA participants claimed that they took more responsibility than teachers or other staff for pupil peer relationships. Most TAs also saw this relational role as at least as important as academic teaching, which was seen more as the responsibility of teachers. This idea that TAs take up a more 'caring', 'nurturing' role within schools, akin to taking responsibility for peer relationships, is evident in the wider literature. Some studies have identified a 'discourse of care' around teaching assistants based on perception of TAs in quasi-mothering roles (Dunne, Goddard & Woodhouse, 2008, p.246). It has also consistently been found that TAs free up teachers to focus time and energy on the core functions of teaching, although this is not usually related to TAs taking more responsibility

for pupil relationships (Blatchford et al., 2012). It would also appear that the designation of tasks within the hierarchy of participant schools may reflect the prioritisation of educational tasks within wider social discourses and practice, such as those of the 'standards agenda'. The designation of teachers to 'academic' and TA's to 'social' roles would appear to reflect the wider prioritisation of academic over social outcomes within the wider educational discourses and practices, such as those of the 'standards agenda' (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2006). In the absence of effective systemic planning by school leaders, TAs, lower down in the hierarchy are, informally expected to take responsibility for the 'lesser' task of fostering pupil peer relationships.

Some studies have suggested that TAs often prioritise academic over social outcomes, in contrast to most of the TAs in this study (Hemmingson et al., 2003; O'Rourke & Houghton, 2008). Others have proposed that the designation of TAs to a nurturing role is problematic, since it increases the chances of pupils developing dependency on adults (Giangreco et al., 1997; Wilson, Schlapp & Davidson, 2003). The findings from this study share some of these concerns about the impact of 'nurturing' TA support, but also suggest that this support can have a positive impact on pupil peer relationships (4.3; 4.5; 5.3.2; 5.3.4)

This study also identified systemic, organisational factors within participant schools as central to TAs' capacities to adopt the 'manager' and 'coach' strategies. These findings reinforce suggestions from the existing literature that TAs often have little control over decisions that determine their effectiveness; decisions by teachers and school leaders are largely responsible for determining the outcomes produced by TAs (Webster et al., 2011). In this study, TAs who were asked to work one-to-one with pupils with SEND more likely to use

the 'manager' strategy, whilst those with experience of a 'general' TA role were more likely to use the 'coach'. TAs described how potential negative judgements from colleagues led to a 'pressure' on them to intervene as 'managers' to resolve pupils' relational problems, particularly when working in a one-to-one capacity. The power of these factors to influence TAs was understood through the concept of TAs 'social agency'. TAs who were afforded limited 'social agency' in the school context were limited in their capacity to act as a 'coach'.

### 5.3.6 Social agency

The properties of and relationships between the above components are understood via the core category 'social agency'. 'Social agency' is defined in this study as the internal resources (skills, identity, belief, etc) and external, interpersonal influence (relational power, balanced relationships, etc) to shape one's own experience in relationships with others.

The concept of 'self-determination' found in the wider existing literature has several similarities with that of 'social agency'. Self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2002; 2006) is a theory of human motivation, built on three basic drives:

- autonomy; the experience of directing one's own behaviour, when actions are endorsed by the self;
- relatedness; the feeling of security and connection to others;
- competence; the sense of being able to cope with the challenges we face, similar to the idea of self-efficacy.

SDT proposes that intrinsic motivation is enhanced or reduced by the satisfaction of these three basic psychological needs. These concepts have parallels with the notions of interpersonal influence, internal resources and independence outlined in this study's conceptualisation of 'social agency'<sup>3</sup>.

Understandings within SDT research of how social determination skills can be facilitated or inhibited also have some similarities with the 'manager' and 'coach' roles identified in this study. Educational studies into SDT have focussed on the social contextual conditions or environmental factors that facilitate or hinder self-determination, motivation and well-being, via their influence on the three basic needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Evidence suggests that adults' support of students' autonomy, competence and relatedness facilitates a wide range of positive outcomes for students due their enhanced capacity for self-determination (Niemic & Ryan, 2009). The similarities and differences between the three SDT concepts of autonomy, competence and relatedness and the findings of this study will now be looked at in turn.

Autonomy has been defined in SDT research as opportunities to take action based on self-selected choices (i.e. volition) (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007). In the context of education, school staff can be 'autonomy supportive' by providing choices, acknowledging feelings and allowing student interests to guide learning, student autonomy is increased (Reeve, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2006). However, school staff can also interfere with students' autonomy by

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<sup>3</sup> The author was not aware of self-determination theory prior to the data analysis process of this study.

introducing external controls, such as close supervision and monitoring, evaluations, rigid instructional agendas or rewards and punishments. These over-controlling approaches reduce student's initiative by creating an external locus of causality, thus alienating students from their inner motivational resources and initiative (Niemic & Ryan, 2009; Reeve, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2006). This conceptualisation of 'controlling' versus 'autonomy supportive' educator roles, as inhibitive or supportive of self-determination, is similar to the 'manager' and 'coach' roles, which inhibit or support 'social agency'.

SDT research also posits that a sense competence within students can be facilitated by educators. 'Competence supportive' interventions in education include providing effective differentiation (tasks that the students are ready to master), clear rationales for activities and positive feedback related to students' own efforts or learning strategies. These are likely to make students value and feel efficacious in relation to learning activities (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007; Ryan & Deci, 2000). This support for students' competence has similarities with the functioning of the concept of 'internal resources' (skills, identity, belief, etc.) within this study, which acts as a contributor to students' 'social agency'. The coach facilitates the development of the 'internal resources' of pupils, whilst the 'manager' reduces them by limiting their opportunities to develop independent social skills.

The third factor in SDT, relatedness is the ability to form secure attachments to other people (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007). Although motivation can be displayed by individuals in isolation, SDT proposes that over the course of an individual's lifespan, intrinsic motivation is more likely to flourish in contexts that are characterised by a sense of relatedness and security. Several studies have found that the primary reason for students to perform tasks or

behaviours that are extrinsically motivated, those that are not typically interesting or inspiring, is because those behaviours have been prompted, modelled or valued by someone to whom they feel attached or related (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This evidence suggests that the TA 'coach' could have an important supportive role in providing a secure relational base from which to enhance students' self-determination or 'social agency'. However, in contrast to SDT, the theory developed in this study conceptualises pupils' peer relationships (or 'relatedness') as primarily an outcome of pupils' increased levels of 'social agency' (or self-determination), rather than as a causal factor of motivation.

Some studies have outlined the utility of self-determination theory for conceptualising the education of pupils with SEND. Several have highlighted the importance of providing pupils with SEND opportunities to develop skills, attitudes, and behaviours that increase their self-determination (Carter, Lane, Pierson, & Glaeser, 2006; Landmark, Ju, & Zhang, 2010). Others have demonstrated that self-determination skills can be effectively taught to pupils with SEND, with a wide range of benefits (Andrus, 2011; Karvonen, Test, Wood, Browder & Algozzine, 2004; Field, Sarver & Shaw, 2003). One study by Lane, Carter and Sisco (2012) found positive effects for TAs use of specialised training programmes to increase the self-determination skills of pupils with SEND. Despite the apparent importance self-determination for pupils with SEND, there appears to be relatively little research into the relationship between outcomes for these pupils and the deployment and practices of TAs.

As discussed earlier (6.3.2), some studies have briefly mentioned concerns about the potential negative impact of TA support on concepts *similar* to that of self-determination (as distinct from self-determination theory), although these are not often related to peer

relationships. There are concerns that one-to-one TA support and TA roles similar to that of the 'manager' can hinder, rather than advance pupils' autonomy. Barron (1995) proposed that TAs can be an obstacle to the autonomy of pupils with SEND, identifying the close relationship between TAs and pupils as often limiting pupils' opportunities to direct the nature of the support. Skär and Tamm (2001) found that pupils often perceived their relationship with their TA to be unequal. Yet there appears to be little, if any research linking TAs, pupil peer relationships and self-determination (or 'social agency'), as in the current study.

This study also noted the importance of TAs' being afforded 'social agency' with the school context to ensuring positive outcomes for pupils. Several studies have highlighted the importance of raising the institutional and professional status of the TAs as a means of improving outcomes (Blatchford et al., 2012; Mansaray, 2012). One study by Hardré (2013), identified SDT as a potentially useful theoretical framework for improving both the practice and professional development of TAs, as well as addressing the systemic, organisational challenges facing TAs in their school contexts. The central proposition is that TAs who are facilitated to have more self-determination within schools are more likely to be able to facilitate self-determination in students. This effect has been noted in a number of studies in relation to teachers (Ryan & Brown, 2005; Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon & Kaplan, 2007; Pelletier, Séguin-Lévesque & Legault, 2002).

Overall, the body of SDT literature offers some theoretical substantiation to the findings within this study. There extensive research which supports the validity and generalisability of SDT in educational contexts (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Given the



similarities between the central concepts of SDT with those in this study, the impact of the 'manager' and 'coach' roles on the 'social agency' of pupils may have some theoretical generalisability (see 5.5.3 for a further discussion of this). However, while the similarities with SDT have been outlined here, the conceptualisation of 'social agency' within this study, as constituting, shaping and linking both the practice and deployment of TAs *and* outcomes for pupils with SEND, appears to add a different perspective on existing themes within the research literature.

#### 5.4 Answering the research questions

*Question one: How do teaching assistants influence the peer relationships of pupils with SEND?*

The theory derived from this study proposes that TAs 'influence' pupil peer relationships via the 'manager' and 'coach' strategies. These strategies are defined by the actions and interactions between TAs and students, which are made up of 11 and five sub-strategies for the 'manager' and 'coach', respectively. The properties of, relationships between and consequences of these strategies are understood through their links to a core concept, 'social agency'.

The 'manager' strategy is defined by TAs taking control of interactions between pupils, using their own 'social agency' to resolve or 'manage' perceived social 'problems' for pupils with SEND (4.1). The 'manager' 'takes responsibility' and intervenes in pupil peer relationships in order to reduce social risks, which constitute some form of social isolation or rejection for

the pupil with SEND. These 'risks', and each manager sub-strategy, are linked to specific social needs or deficits of pupils with SEND, which are manifested in specific contexts and conditions (social scenarios).

In contrast to the TA 'manager' strategy, the 'coach' is characterised by TA's aiming to enable pupils to take responsibility for and resolve social problems or difficulties independently of TA support; to leave the balance of 'social agency' with the pupils rather than adults, as far as possible. As 'coaches', TAs look for opportunities to encourage pupils with SEND's reflective thinking skills. These learning opportunities are often conceptualised as small social risks, which are seen as necessary to the social learning process.

The coach also 'influenced' pupils' peer relationships by responding flexibly to the changing needs of pupils within different contexts and conditions. The 'coach' retains the capacity to switch back to the 'manager' role if a social risk is perceived as 'severe'. The 'coach' aims to afford pupils with SEND an appropriate level of opportunity and challenge for them to develop their social skills, whilst simultaneously 'managing' social risk. They aim strike a balance between risk and opportunity and between TA and pupil 'social agency'.

The theory also identifies the 'influence' of TAs in terms of specific outcomes of the 'manager' and 'coach' strategies for the peer relationships of pupils with SEND. For the 'manager', in the short-term TA's identified positive outcomes for pupils with SEND; social problems and risks are resolved or reduced, enabling better participation and inclusion and reduced social isolation. Pupils with SEND have increased interactions with peers, reduced conflict and more pro-social interactions, whilst pupils without SEND show more inclusive

behaviours. However, these positive changes are not sustained past the immediate social scenario in which the manager sub-strategies are deployed and in the longer-term the 'manager' inadvertently influences pupil peer relationships in negative ways, increasing social risks for pupil with SEND. The 'social agency' of pupils is reduced, with increased dependency on adults and constrained development of social skills due to a reduction in social learning opportunities.

The 'coach' role was predominantly found to 'influence' the peer relationships of pupils with SEND in positive ways. The short-term increased levels of risk described above are justified by long-term developmental gains for pupils; increased social skills and reduced social isolation and dependency on adults. According to TAs, although some pupils resisted the 'coaches'' encouragement for them to use reflective thinking skills, in most instances, the 'coach' role was more likely to facilitate positive change.

The 'how' aspect of research question one is also answered by the explanation of the underlying causes of the 'manager' and 'coach' strategies; 'how' specific contexts and conditions are linked with specific TA practices, and the outcomes these engender for pupil relationships. However, these ideas more specifically relate to the second research question, so will be outlined below.

Overall, the 'manager' and the 'coach' strategies, associated specific outcomes, provide a 'theoretically grounded', field-based, 'decision-making model' for 'how' TAs may 'influence' the peer relationships of pupils with SEND in mainstream classrooms (Giangreco, 2009, p.4). It offers to account for the moment-by-moment decisions made by TA in response to

specific social contexts and conditions of their everyday practice. It documents TA practices ‘on the ground’; the experiences and perspectives of those who provide support (Mackenzie, 2011). Being linked to specific outcomes, the theory developed offers a ‘what works’ perspective, documenting which TA strategies or actions work well, or less well (Baines et al., 2015).

*Question two: What are the contexts and mechanisms underpinning TA practices that facilitate or constrain the development of positive peer relationships for pupils with SEND?*

The theory developed also offers to identify the underlying ‘contexts and mechanisms’ that ‘facilitate’ and ‘constrain’ the development of pupils with SEND’s positive peer relationships. Firstly, as outlined above, the theory broadly endorses TA’s use of the ‘coach’ over the ‘manager’ strategy as a means to positively influence pupils’ social outcomes. Although the ‘manager’ role is deemed as sometimes appropriate to reduce levels of social risk, the ‘coach’s’ capacity to flexibly, dynamically respond to diverse pupil needs was found to be more effective for longer-term pupil outcomes. The ‘coach’ was found to facilitate pupils’ ‘social agency’ and peer relationships, whereas the ‘manager’, when applied more indiscriminately, without the ‘coach’, was found to largely constrain peer relationships

The theory also identifies the long-term causal conditions, which ‘facilitate’ and ‘constrain’ TAs’ capacity to use the specific ‘manager’ and ‘coach’ strategies, which therefore facilitate and constrain pupils’ peer relationships. The three causes identified were:

- the level of social need of pupils with SEND (4.7.1);

- the values, knowledge, skills and experience of TAs (4.7.2);
- and the school context (4.7.3).

Conditions or contexts that made TAs use of the 'manager' role more likely were those that contributed to lower levels of pupil and TA 'social agency'. These included:

- high levels of pupil SEND;
- low levels of TA knowledge, experience and skills;
- TAs being deployed in a one-to-one TA role and the associated 'pressure' from colleagues to 'intervene' in pupil peer relationships.

Conditions and contexts that made the 'coach' role more likely were those which increased the levels of 'social agency' of TAs and pupils and were the opposite of those above, which engendered the 'manager'. These included:

- low levels of pupil SEND;
- high levels of TA knowledge, experience and skills and the ability to integrate new experiences in these;
- TAs being deployed in, or having experiences of the 'general' TA role.

By influencing TAs' levels of 'social agency', these longer-term factors were also found to influence how the TAs perceived pupils' peer relationship and pupils' 'social agency' within a wide range of contexts and conditions. 'Mangers' were more likely to interpret social interactions between pupils as constituting social risks, derived from the deficits of pupils with SEND (low pupil social agency). 'Coaches' were more able to balance these concerns with perceived opportunities to develop pupils' social skills; reflective thinking skills to

enable increasing independence (increased social agency). These contexts and conditions therefore underpin and explain the TA decision-making model.

The theory offers to answer the critical realist and grounded theory questions, 'what works for whom in what circumstances and with what outcomes?' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Tweed & Charmaz, 2012). It offers one perspective on the reasons for TAs actions, via the social structures operating within their school contexts (social mechanisms) in conjunction with their decisions as individuals to enact certain behaviours (psychological mechanisms). The theory can potentially explain how TA as individuals are simultaneously influenced by, and influence the social structures within which they operate; it has a dual focus on TAs as individual agents as well as the wider contexts in which they operate.

## **5.5 Strengths and limitations**

### **5.5.1 Research design and sampling**

#### *5.5.1.1 Qualitative and grounded theory methods*

This study sought to explore and explain the influence of TAs on the peer relationships of pupils with SEND, through the perspective of TAs. Using qualitative methods to investigate the views and experience of TAs allowed the research to gain more in-depth, rich and detailed insights which a quantitative approach would not have allowed. The use of a GT methodology provided an explanatory theory about TAs and pupil peer relationships, which further added to the richness of the research. This study implemented the GT methods as

faithfully as possible, adhering to the guidelines and criteria outlined by Corbin and Strauss (2015). It drew upon the existing GT research paradigm to support the quality and rigour of the emergent theory, adding credibility to the qualitative enquiry by explicating the identified phenomena as 'grounded' in social contexts (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2006).

In particular, theoretical sampling enabled the researcher to seek further data based on emerging concepts related to TAs' influence on peer relationships. Codes derived from each interview were used to inform the topics and questions used in subsequent interviews and the themes from the first three interviews were used to inform the decision of which school to select for the second round of interviews, ensuring an iterative exploration of the emerging theoretical concepts (7.7; 7.8).

A key weakness of this study is the small size and opportunistic, purposive nature of the sample. The participant school were recruited on a first come, first serve basis, using broad sampling parameters. Using broad sampling parameters are important within GT for minimising the chances the of researcher prejudging the data (Bryant & Charmaz, 2012). However, it also means that there were a large number of other TAs in the LA who were eligible to take part in the study and data collection with these different participants may have yielded better or different findings.

The capacity of this study to claim theoretical saturation is also limited by the small sample size. Theoretical saturation has been defined by Bryant and Charmaz (2007) as 'the point at which gathering more data about a theoretical category reveals no new properties nor yields any further theoretical insights about the emerging grounded theory' (p.611).

Theoretical saturation would have been better achieved with more than seven interviews with six participants. A larger sample size, second round of interviews (member checking) and/or negative case analysis would have enabled the study to achieve greater depth and breadth to the properties and dimensions of the emerging categories, increasing the power of the findings.

However, theory can always be refined by further investigations of data and for most grounded theorists, saturation functions as a useful, but unattainable goal, rather than a reality (Willig, 2013). The aims of this study were also to explore the phenomena in question within the local contexts of participating schools, rather than to achieve traditional notions of generalisability. Sufficient saturation was achieved to explain the relationships between categories as linked to a core category. The fact that this theory requires further investigation and scrutiny before stronger claims can be made about its applicability should not detract from the robustness of the research process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). A much larger sample would also have been beyond the limited resources of this study.

It must also be acknowledged that TAs only offer one viewpoint on the phenomena in question. Firstly, they are only one part of a three-part dynamic between TAs, pupils with SEND and their peers. The views and experiences of the pupils themselves, including those of peers without SEND, could have provided valuable insight into how TAs influence pupil relationships. The perspectives of teachers and SENCos would also have been useful, particularly in relation to the organisational factors that underlie TA roles and strategies, as identified by the TA participants. These alternative viewpoints would have offered to triangulate, corroborate and/or challenge the emergent theory.



However, eliciting the views of pupils with SEND about the support they receive from TAs is challenging, particularly as their views on the topic are likely to be implicit or intuitive; they may not be fully conscious of what they know, and are likely to be unfamiliar with the process of critical reflection that is involved in sharing their opinions (Clark, Flewitt, Hammersley & Robb, 2014). Gaining pupils' perspectives in addition to that of TAs was therefore deemed beyond the limited resources of this study. The TAs were also deemed an appropriate sample and perspective due to their close, direct experiences of supporting pupils in contexts that necessitated pupils with SEND to interact with their peers. As professionals, it could be expected that they would be able to reflect, somewhat on their role in relation to pupil peer relationships.

The 'grounded' nature of this study's theory, rooted in the accounts of the TAs, is both a strength and a weakness of the study. The theory developed largely takes the opinions of the participants at face value, placing faith in the TAs' capacity to adequately identify and describe their internal processes, or processes external to them that may affect how they behave. For some, the tendency of GT studies to use of qualitative accounts to identify external realities represents a naïve, realist form of positivism, failing to take account of participant subjectivity, bias and fallibility (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). This criticism is particularly relevant in relation to the causal mechanisms identified in the grounded theory of this study, which underpin the TAs use of the manager and coach roles (4.7 and 5.3.5), since the explanatory power relies on the TAs and researcher's ability to accurately identify and describe these causes.

Similarly, the GT methods of this study could be criticised for deliberately minimising the use of existing theories in the literature to inform the research design and analysis process, by doing the formal literature review after the completion of the analysis. Indeed, this strategy runs counter to the critical realist philosophy of the study, which would suggest a critical engagement with existing theories before and during all phases of the research (Fletcher, 2016).

Yet these weaknesses, the 'grounded naivety' of the study, are offset and justified by the strength of the GT methods to generate new theory, avoid preconceptions and base findings in the actions, interactions and processes of the TAs involved in the phenomena (Willig, 2013). The well-established, systematic GT techniques used by this study offered robust means to create an inductive, explanatory theory in this relatively new area of research. To return to a critical realist stance, the qualitative, GT tools used offer an imperfect, yet valuable lens through which to observe and approximate the social reality of TA practices.

### **5.5.2 Trustworthiness and researcher reflexivity**

The trustworthiness of this research, the extent to which the findings are credible, dependable and reflective of the data, was threatened by several factors (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). These were mitigated against through the application of research techniques designed to ensure appropriate checks on the processes of data collection and analysis.

For some, the greatest threat to the all qualitative methods is the potential for researcher bias, wherein the author imposes a meaning or framework on the data, rather than it

emerging via the process of analysis (Robson, 2011). GT studies, with their emphasis on forms of 'theoretical agnosticism', are particularly vulnerable to this criticism (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2006). The study accepts the central role played by the researcher's own subjective interpretations in the creation of the theory. The researcher was aware that he had significant existing knowledge, preconceptions and personal experiences of the phenomena under investigation, particularly the practice of TAs, which threatened to bias the interpretations made of the data.

However, it is not possible nor desirable to disregard all existing knowledge about the topic under investigation, since a 'blank slate' would also hamper the process of analysis (Thornberg, 2012). Rather, in line with Corbin and Strauss's (2015) approach, the author of this study aimed to draw upon previously accumulated knowledge cautiously, critically and reflexively, to enhance researcher sensitivity to the data. The statement by Dey (1993) about the 'difference between an open mind and an empty head' (p.63) was used as a basis for this approach; maintaining a balance between using existing knowledge, yet remaining aware of the need for concepts to be justified in the data.

A number of further steps were taken to enable critical reflection and alleviate the risks of the researcher imposing meaning on the data. In accordance with most GT methods, the literature review was conducted after the analysis was completed. The systematic GT analysis tools, such as the constant comparison of data, memo and diary writing and the open, the selective and axial stages of coding helped to 'ground' my interpretations in the data (7.90; 7.10; 7.11). Repeated efforts were made to identify potential biases or codes which contradicted or challenged the researcher's assumptions. These were recorded in

memos and the research diary. Contentious or ambiguous excerpts of data were selected for independent analysis via the audits of analysis made by a peer researcher and the project supervisor at multiple stages in the analysis process (3.8.4). Efforts were made to ensure the transparency of the data collection and analysis procedures, with examples of the data files and steps taken presented for independent verification in the appendices (7).

Care was taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the data collection procedures, ensuring as far as possible that the researcher's own biases and assumptions would not shape the interview process. Tentative, open-ended and balanced questions were asked and participants were given opportunities to give negative, positive or neutral descriptions of their experiences. The researcher reflected on the relationship between the researcher and participant, particularly any perceived power differentials and the risk of participants demonstrating demand characteristics; saying what they thought the researcher wanted to hear. An initial conversation was conducted with participants before the interview that emphasised to the participants that there were no right or wrong answers and that honest accounts on which to base the analysis would be the most useful (7.7; 7.8).

Despite all these precautions, it is recognised that the impact of the researchers' interpretations limits the trustworthiness and strength of the findings.

In addition to not focussing on the subjective, interpretative lens of the researcher, this study also does not analyse in depth the roles of the TA participants and of the readers of the study in generating meaning. The knowledge generated from this study is the product of a triple hermeneutic, with the TA participants interpreting the experiences of the students,

the researcher in turn interpreting the accounts of the TAs and the reader of the study interpreting the researcher's theory. Each of these layers of interpretation is likely to add different meanings based on the cultural, political, social and historical (etc.) assumptions of those doing the interpreting (Robson, 2011).

While accepting the role of interpretations in the generation of theory, this study has focussed on the theory itself, what can be understood about the phenomena in question, rather than how that understanding is achieved through hermeneutical processes. A focus on the interpretative position of those involved in the research has remained secondary to the focus on the explanatory power of the theory (Willig, 2013). The fact that the theory produced is a product of interpretative constructions and reconstructions was not seen as a reason to negate their relevance nor the insights that can be gained from them (Corbin, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

### **5.5.3 Transferability**

With its small sample and interpretative methods, this study has limited generalisability. It will not be directly predictive of the future experiences that other TAs or pupils may have; the analysis will not necessarily yield a generalisation that can be mapped onto other TAs in different contexts. In line with the critical realist and grounded theory approach, the findings of this study are seen as rooted to the unique geographical, cultural, political and historical (etc) contexts in which the study was conducted; the two participant schools within one LA. The purpose of the research was to increase the understanding of the selected phenomena within these given settings.

However, this does not preclude some form of 'transferability' beyond the specific contexts studied. Transferability refers to how the readers of a study may find it to have some relevance or applicability to their own contexts, thus allowing the authors of research to propose a degree of 'theoretical generalisability' of the findings (Robson, 2011). It is cautiously suggested here that the results of this study have the potential to help TAs in other schools to conceptualise their work with pupils. The strengths of the current study in terms of the richness, depth and detail of the theory, 'grounded' in the perspectives of TAs, may allow for the theory's critical application to other contexts by TAs working in similar situations. This transferability will be tested during the dissemination phase of the research, wherein the response of TAs and other professionals to the theory will give some indication as to whether or not the results have any relevance beyond the scope of this study (5.5.3).

## **5.6 Implications**

The following section will describe the implications of the current study, from those for CYP to those of significance at national level. As a GT study, it is hoped that the findings from this project will be useable and practical, offering to develop rationales for professional decisions by identifying 'what works' (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

### **5.6.1 Children and young people**

Adding to concerns from the wider literature, the findings of this study suggest that outcomes of TA support for pupils with SEND in terms of their peer relationships are not

always positive and that TA support can sometimes inadvertently reduce the 'social agency' of pupils amongst their peers. This study therefore corroborates with calls from previous authors for CYP with SEND to be more actively involved in contributing to decisions about the nature of their educational support (Broer et al., 2005; Hemmingson et al., 2003). The 'social agency' and voice of pupils SEND should be actively increased using models, frameworks and legislation designed for this purpose (5.6.5).

### **5.6.2 Teaching assistants**

The result suggest that TAs should be aware of the potential unintended detrimental impact of 'manager-like' strategies. This may enable practitioners to replace them with those which maximise opportunities for pupils to develop social skills, enabling them to engage in positive interactions with peers. The findings derived from the 'coach' role suggest that TAs should adopt ways of working that foster pupils' 'social agency'; their social independence and autonomy. In particular, this will involve being 'flexible', adapting the level and nature of their support to match pupils' level of social need; balancing social risks with opportunities for learning.

It would also benefit TAs to understand the causal factors which may facilitate and constrain their use of specific strategies, including pupil level of need, aspect of their own professional capacities and the influence of the school context and colleagues. The findings highlight specific challenges and opportunities that may exist within schools to shape TAs' capacity to adopt certain roles. Increased awareness of these underlying conditions for TAs may help

inform the actions of TAs in the participant schools and similar settings, helping them to manage potential challenges and maximise opportunities.

### 5.6.3 Teachers and school leaders

The results of this study, in relation to the outcomes engendered by the manager and coach roles, support the findings of other studies about the risks of deploying TAs in a one-to-one support role for pupils with SEND. School staff should consider alternatives to this, namely the employment and deployment of TAs in 'general' TA roles, which may enable more dynamic, interactive TAs roles and positive student outcomes. The 'informal' nature of the participants in this study's decisions to take responsibility for pupils' peer relationships, based on personal 'values' rather than guidance from school leaders, would also suggest a need for schools to establish clearly defined role and tasks for TAs, demarcated from teachers. These changes may provide means for schools to alleviate the perceived 'pressure' on TAs from colleagues to act in ways that are that not beneficial to pupil outcomes.

The more complex and skilled nature of the 'coach' strategy, wherein TAs respond dynamically to the developmental needs of pupils, suggests the need for schools to provide ongoing professional development for TAs. This study therefore adds the chorus of authors calling for increased training, supervision, management, support, feedback and monitoring opportunities for TAs (Blatchford et al., 2012; Radford et al., 2015). In particular, in order to provide support that responds to the diverse needs of individual pupils and to 'integrate' new experiences into existing knowledge and skills, TAs are likely to need ongoing, designated time, space and structures to support their ongoing reflective practice.



#### 5.6.4 Local context

It is expected that the theory derived from this study will enable professionals in the participant schools to better understand and take action to improve their practice (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). It is also anticipated these changes may produce structures and methods that will help other local practitioners and schools to more effectively support the pupils they work with. This process will be supported via the dissemination of the findings (5.8).

#### 5.6.5 National context

The findings about how, and how not to support the peer relationships and ‘social agency’ of pupils with SEND have some relevance to the recent legislative changes in the UK. The new SEND Code of Practice (CoP) (DfE, 2015) has recognised the rights of CYP with SEND and their families to be involved in ‘all aspects of planning and decision-making’ that may affect them (p.147-8). The CoP also highlights that educational settings have a duty to, ‘promote positive outcomes in the wider areas of *personal and social development*’, support students to ‘participate in society, including having *friends and supportive relationships*’ and to be proactive to ‘prevent discrimination, *promote equal opportunity and foster good relations*’ (p.93, emphasis added). The findings in this and others studies about the potential impact of school ‘decisions’ about the deployment and practice of TAs reiterate the importance for pupils and families to be included in the decision-making process. This would increase pupils’ level of ‘social agency’.

### 5.6.6 Educational Psychology

It is also hoped that the findings from this study can inform the practice of EPs by adding to the evidence base about how TA and educational settings can develop positive peer relationships for pupils with SEND. EPs are well placed to facilitate all of the aforementioned implications for practice, applying their psychological knowledge and skills to shape educational practices and policies relating to TAs. Firstly, EPs could work directly with TAs, delivering training, supervision and support, raising awareness of the factors which help or hinder the development of positive pupil peer relationships. Secondly, at a more systemic level, EPs could play a role in advising schools or LAs about the deployment of TAs, critically drawing on the evidence base to inform strategic plans and rigorously monitor and evaluate outcomes. The need to make the underlying psychology explicit would seem particularly a particularly important role for EPs in this respect. The links between TAs, peer relationships and concepts such as 'social agency' that are highlighted in this study may not be obvious for all school staff and EPs may have to work hard to justify resources being used for these purposes. In addition, EPs have a duty to uphold the 'person-centred agenda' promoted by the CoP, supporting school to empower pupils and their families (DfE, 2015). Finally, amongst local EPs, it is hoped the researcher's EP team will help to disseminate the findings and support schools to adopt effective practices (5.8).

## 5.7 Future research

A key aim of this GT study was to generate questions and hypotheses for future research based on the newly developed theory. Some of these proposals will be outlined here.

The first stage of future research for this study would be to seek verification of the theory developed through cross-referencing it with data from multiple sources, seeking triangulation, further empirical evidence or modification of the theoretical abstractions. This could be achieved by seeking the views of other TAs working in different settings, exploring their views of the theory to verify whether it is reflective of their experiences. The validity of the categories and concepts within the theory could be tested using qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews or focus groups, or quantitative measures, such as questionnaires. Conducting these investigations in settings with different pupil populations to those in this study, such as older or younger pupils, those with particular types of SEND or those attending specialist SEND provisions, would be useful. This could serve as a form of negative case analysis; the search for instances or cases that do not fit the theoretical categories, enabling the theory to be amended or refined.

A second means to extend the current study would be to explore the influence of TAs on pupil peer relationships from the perspectives of CYP. Several studies have used qualitative data from individual interviews with pupils who receive (or have previously received) TA support to investigate this phenomena (Broer et al., 2005; Hemmingson et al., 2003; Whitburn, 2013). A further qualitative study would allow the comparison between the views of pupils with the TAs in this study, highlighting similarities and differences within their experiences and adding a level of richness. It could also be enlightening to gain the views of pupils *without* SEND, since they play a key role in the three-part dynamic between TAs and pupils with and without SEND.

One existing study, by O'Rourke and Houghton (2008) used quantitative questionnaires to ascertain pupils' views. A further quantitative study could use various questionnaires derived from the self-determination theory literature, including the Perceived Autonomy Support Scale and Perceived Competence Scale (Ryan & Deci, 2006), to investigate how different types of TA support may influence concepts similar to that of 'social agency', as developed in this study. The study could have an evaluative purpose, asking, 'Does one-to-one TA support increase or reduce the self-determination of pupil with SEND?' Results from such a study may enable a degree of generalisability to be claimed.

Further studies could also seek to explore the perspectives of other professionals within school systems, focussing on the strategies and factors that may facilitate or constrain the peer relationships of pupils. These studies might seek to ascertain whether the views of teachers, SENCos and headteachers corroborate or challenge those of TAs and may potentially unearth factors not identified in this study. In particular, it would appear worthwhile to identify the views of teachers about their use of strategies in relation to pupils' peer relationships and how this may compare to those used by the TAs in this study.

Observational methods such as those used by many of the studies included in the literature review (2.4) could also be used to assess the validity of the 'manager' and 'coach' strategies, offering potential 'methodological triangulation' (Denzin, 1978). Qualitative observational methods could be used to further develop the theoretical categories, analysing the nature of interactions between TAs and pupils compared to the sub-strategies of the 'manager' and 'coach'. Quantitative observational schedules could be developed, based on the

categorisation of TAs' actions and interactions in this study, which could then be used to measure the frequency with which TAs use the 'manager' and 'coach' strategies.

Finally, given the widespread concerns identified in this and other studies, there is a need for further investigations into alternatives to the deployment of TAs in a one-to-one role.

The findings of this study suggest that the 'general' TA role may be more effective, yet there appears to be a lack of studies investigating its characteristics and effectiveness. Studies with a similarly naturalistic design to the current study, aiming to identify best practices and 'what works' for TAs working in a 'general' role, would be valuable for the critical development of current practices.

## **5.8 Dissemination strategy**

As agreed prior to the interviews, the findings of this study will be shared with the TA participants and then other staff in their school contexts via a presentation and a written summary of the findings. The presentation will also involve a discussion, which it is hoped will serve as a form of 'member checking' for the theory. Participants will be invited to evaluate the concepts and categories as a means to verify or challenge the researcher's understanding and interpretations (Willig, 2013).

The findings will be shared with the researcher's EPS via a presentation and discussion with all staff and a written summary of the findings. The discussion will focus particularly on the implications for the practice of the EPs and it is hoped that further opportunities to utilise the research within the EPS will be found, such as offering more training about TA practices

to schools. Opportunities to share the findings with other established local community groups and leaders will also be sought, including forums of headteachers, SENCo, TAs and parents, in the hope that the results may have some 'transferability' to their contexts.

Finally, the author will aim to publish of the findings of this study in professional journals, including those for Educational Psychology and Special Education. Opportunities to present the findings at conferences and workshops will be sought. Participant anonymity will be respected at all stages of the dissemination process.

## **5.9 Summary and conclusion**

This chapter linked the findings of the study to the initial research questions and the existing research literature about the influence of TAs on the peer relationships of pupils with SEND. The study adds to a relatively limited body of knowledge about the actions and interactions of TAs, which produce specific consequences for pupils' peer relationships, and the underlying causal mechanisms which may facilitate or constrain TA's capacity to engender positive outcomes.

The distinctive contribution of the study is the conceptualisation of the 'manager' and 'coach' strategies, linked to the core concept of 'social agency', which offers to explain how and why TAs can work to support or impede the development of positive peer relationships for pupils with SEND. The 'manager' and 'coach' model provides a professional decision-making model for the practice of TAs within the context of their naturalistic, day-to-day interactions with pupils. By linking the individual decisions made by TAs to the wider social

contexts and conditions that influence them, the theory offers to answer the grounded theory and critical realist questions, 'what works, for whom, in what contexts and with what outcomes?' Finally, it is cautiously proposed that these findings may have a degree of theoretical transferability to similar contexts as well as offering a base upon which future research can build.

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## 7 Appendices

### 7.1 Search terms for literature review

Key term	Variations
<b>Teaching assistant<sup>1</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Paraprofessional</li> <li>-Learning support assistant</li> <li>-Classroom assistant</li> <li>-Paraeducator</li> <li>-Teacher assistant</li> </ul>
<b>Peer relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Peer</li> <li>-Friend*</li> <li>-Inclusion</li> <li>-Relation*</li> <li>-Interaction</li> <li>-Mainstream</li> <li>-Social*</li> </ul>
<b>Special education*</b>	None

<sup>1</sup>The terms 'teacher aide', 'auxiliaries' and 'helper' were excluded as they were deemed outdated and not reflective of recent or current TA practice.



## 7.2 Search terms and results

Key term	Full search terms	Number of results
Teaching assistant	Special education* AND Teaching assistant AND Peer	29
	Special education* AND Teaching assistant AND Relation*	135
	Special education* AND Teaching assistant AND Friend*	7
	Special education* AND Teaching assistant AND Inclusion	160
	Special education* AND Teaching assistant AND Interaction	38
	Special education* AND Teaching assistant AND Mainstream	96
	Special education* AND Teaching assistant AND Social	118
	<b>Total for 'teaching assistant'</b>	<b>583</b>
Paraprofessional	Special education* AND Paraprofessional AND Peer NOT teaching assistant	122
	Special education* AND Paraprofessional AND Relation* NOT teaching assistant	374
	Special education* AND Paraprofessional AND Friend* NOT teaching assistant	20
	Special education* AND Paraprofessional AND Inclusion NOT teaching assistant	229
	Special education* AND Paraprofessional AND Interaction NOT teaching assistant	115
	Special education* AND Paraprofessional AND Mainstream NOT teaching assistant	30
	Special education* AND Paraprofessional AND Social NOT teaching assistant	321
	<b>Total for 'paraprofessional'</b>	<b>1,211</b>
Learning support assistant	Special education* AND Learning support assistant AND Peer NOT teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional	1
	Special education* AND Learning support assistant AND Relation* NOT teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional	5
	Special education* AND Learning support assistant AND Friend* NOT teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional	0
	Special education* AND Learning support assistant AND Inclusion NOT teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional	20
	Special education* AND Learning support assistant AND Interaction NOT teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional	0
	Special education* AND Learning support assistant AND Mainstream NOT teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional	23

	Special education* AND Learning support assistant AND Social NOT teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional	8
	<b>Total for 'learning support assistant'</b>	<b>57</b>
Classroom assistant	Special education* AND Classroom assistant AND Peer NOT teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant	1
	Special education* AND Classroom assistant AND Relationship NOT teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant	4
	Special education* AND Classroom assistant AND Friend* NOT teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant	0
	Special education* AND Classroom assistant AND Inclusion NOT teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant	3
	Special education* AND Classroom assistant AND Interaction NOT teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant	2
	Special education* AND Classroom assistant AND Mainstream NOT teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant	3
	Special education* AND Classroom assistant AND Social NOT teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant	6
	<b>Total for 'classroom assistant'</b>	<b>19</b>
Paraeducator	Special education* AND Paraeducator AND Peer NOT Teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant NOT Classroom assistant	11
	Special education* AND Paraeducator AND Relationship NOT Teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant NOT Classroom assistant	19
	Special education* AND Paraeducator AND Friend* NOT Teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant NOT Classroom assistant	1
	Special education* AND Paraeducator AND Inclusion NOT Teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant NOT Classroom assistant	12
	Special education* AND Paraeducator AND Interaction NOT Teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant NOT Classroom assistant	12

	Special education* AND Paraeducator AND Mainstream NOT Teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant NOT Classroom assistant	1
	Special education* AND Paraeducator AND Social NOT Teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant NOT Classroom assistant	29
	<b>Total for 'paraeducator'</b>	<b>85</b>
Teacher assistant	Special education* AND Teacher assistant AND Peer NOT Teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant NOT Classroom assistant NOT paraeducator	14
	Special education* AND Teacher assistant AND Relationship NOT Teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant NOT Classroom assistant NOT paraeducator	18
	Special education* AND Teacher assistant AND Friend* NOT Teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant NOT Classroom assistant NOT paraeducator	2
	Special education* AND Teacher assistant AND Inclusion NOT Teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant NOT Classroom assistant NOT paraeducator	26
	Special education* AND Teacher assistant AND Interaction NOT Teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant NOT Classroom assistant NOT paraeducator	11
	Special education* AND Teacher assistant AND Mainstream NOT Teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant NOT Classroom assistant NOT paraeducator	4
	Special education* AND Teacher assistant AND Social NOT Teaching assistant NOT paraprofessional NOT Learning support assistant NOT Classroom assistant NOT paraeducator	25
	<b>Total for 'teacher assistant'</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>TOTAL FOR ALL KEY TERMS</b>		<b>2,055</b>

### 7.3 Studies excluded from literature review

Reason for exclusion	Number of studies
Not relevant	906
Not a research design: Opinion article	41
Practice	32
Not a research design: Book or book review	22
Entails a specific intervention	20
Unpublished	19
Not in English	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1042<sup>1</sup></b>

<sup>1</sup>1,002 studies were excluded by the search engine or the researcher as duplicates.

## 7.4 Table of included studies for literature review

Note: Where possible, terms from the original studies have been changed to facilitate comparison between studies conducted in different countries. For example, the common US terms ‘paraprofessional’ and ‘general education’ were changed to the common UK terms ‘TA’ and ‘mainstream’ respectively.

Study			Aims	Participant(s)/sample, including age and type of SEND of pupils supported by TAs.	Design, methodology and analysis method
Author(s) and year	Title	Country			
Broer, Doyle & Giangreco (2005)	Perspectives of students with intellectual disabilities about their experiences with paraprofessional support.	USA	To explore students with disabilities’ experiences of attending mainstream classes with TA support.	16 adults (aged 19-29) with mild/moderate intellectual disabilities (learning difficulties) who had previously been supported by TAs during mainstream secondary education. Pupils were aged 11-18 when supported by TAs.	Exploratory, qualitative.  Individual interviews with pupils.  Categorical coding.
Carter, Sisco, Brown, Brickham	Peer interactions and academic engagement of youth with	USA	To explore what types of peer interaction occur among students with and without SEND	23 pupils aged 12-18 years with intellectual disabilities (learning difficulties), 16 of	Exploratory, explanatory, quantitative.

& Al-Khabbaz (2008)	developmental disabilities in inclusive middle and high school classrooms.		<p>in inclusive secondary classrooms?</p> <p>To determine what extent are students with SEND engaged academically in these classrooms?</p> <p>To identify to what extent are instructional formats and adult proximity associated with differing levels of peer interaction and academic engagement in these classrooms?</p>	<p>whom had additional difficulties, including speech and language impairments (n=15), visual impairments (n=1), emotional/behavioural disabilities (n=2), orthopaedic impairments (n=1), other health impairments (n =1), or hearing impairments (n=1).</p>	<p>Systematic observations.</p> <p>Descriptive statistics and paired samples <i>t</i> tests.</p>
Dolva, Gustavsson, Borell & Hemmingsson (2011)	Facilitating peer interaction – support to children with Down syndrome in mainstream schools.	Norway	<p>To explore and describe peer interaction in school activities as experienced by teachers and TAs.</p> <p>To identify and explore how teachers and teachers' assistants facilitate interaction between pupils with Down syndrome and peers.</p>	<p>Six pupils aged 10 years with Down syndrome (observations) and their teachers and TAs (interviews).</p>	<p>Exploratory, descriptive, qualitative.</p> <p>Field observations and individual interviews.</p> <p>General qualitative coding (no specific qualitative technique stated).</p>
Giangreco, Broer, Edelman & MacFarland (2001)	Teacher engagement with students with disabilities: differences between paraprofessional service delivery models.	USA	<p>To explore and describe how TAs are utilised to support students with SEND in mainstream classrooms.</p>	<p>103 school staff (some interviewed only, some observed only, some both interviewed and observed), including mainstream teachers (n=41), TAs (n=38), SEND</p>	<p>Exploratory and descriptive, qualitative.</p> <p>Field observations and individual interviews.</p>

				<p>teachers (n=12), speech and language therapists (n=2) and school administrators (n=10).</p> <p>Pupils supported aged 4-18 years with a range of needs including autistic spectrum disorders, multiple disabilities and severe/moderate intellectual disabilities (learning difficulties).</p>	<p>General qualitative coding (no specific qualitative technique stated).</p>
<p>Giangreco, Edelman &amp; Luiselli (1997)</p>	<p>Helping or hovering? Effects of instructional assistant proximity on students with disabilities.</p>	<p>USA</p>	<p>To explore the effects of the proximity of TAs on students with SEND who are placed in mainstream classrooms.</p>	<p>11 pupils aged 4-20 years who are deaf-blind with some residual hearing and or vision, significant cognitive delays and some additional disabilities (e.g. orthopaedic, health and behavioural impairments) and the school staff who support them (observations) and various school staff (interviews), including related services providers (n = 14), special educators (n = 9), parents (n = 8), classroom teachers (n = 4), instructional assistants (n = 3), and administrators (n = 2).</p>	<p>Exploratory, qualitative.</p> <p>Field observations and individual interviews.</p> <p>Categorical coding and general qualitative coding (no specific qualitative technique stated).</p>

Harris (2011)	Effects of the proximity of paraeducators on the interactions of braille readers in inclusive settings.	USA	To examine the effects of the proximity of a one-to-one TA on students who are braille readers in an inclusive mainstream education setting on the student's interactions with peers and teachers.	Four TA-student dyads, with pupils aged 7-13 years with visual impairment, some with additional needs, including specific learning disabilities, health impairments or a speech and language difficulties.	Exploratory, mixed methods.  Multiple case study.  Field (qualitative) and systematic (quantitative) observations.  Within-case (phase one) and cross-case (phase two) analysis. Qualitative analysis of categories (variables) and quantitative analysis of variables (chi-square) at both phases.
Hemmingson, Gustavsson & Borell (2003)	Participation in school: School assistants creating opportunities and obstacles for pupils with disabilities.	Sweden	To explore how assistance is provided in school to pupils with physical disabilities and how the TAs influence pupils' participation.	7 pupils aged 7-15 years with physical disabilities in special (n=2) and mainstream (n=5) educational settings.	Exploratory, qualitative.  Field observations, informal and formal semi-structured interviews.  Constant comparative technique and general qualitative coding (no specific qualitative technique stated).



Malmgren & Causton-Theoharis (2006)	Boy in the bubble: Effects of paraprofessional proximity and other pedagogical decisions on the interactions of a student with behavioral disorders.	USA	To examine the pedagogical factors that facilitate or inhibit the social interactions between a student with Emotional and behavioural disorders (EBD) and his peers. To understand how specific classroom structures and pedagogical decisions affect the interactions experienced by a student with EBD in an inclusive classroom with the support of a TA.	1 pupil aged 7 years with EBD (observations and individual interview) and the teachers (n=3), TA, student's mother and student (individual interviews).	Explanatory, qualitative, case study.  Structured field observations and interviews.  General qualitative coding (no specific qualitative technique stated).
O'Rourke & Houghton (2008)	Perceptions of secondary school students with mild disabilities to the academic and social support mechanisms implemented in regular classrooms.	Australia	To determine the perceptions of secondary school students with mild disabilities to the academic and social outcomes of support mechanisms implemented in their mainstream classrooms.	60 students aged 13-18 diagnosed with 'mild disabilities' (specific learning disabilities, speech and language impairments, intellectual disabilities and serious emotional disturbance)	Exploratory, explanatory, evaluative, quantitative.  Questionnaire.  Q values.
Symes & Humphrey (2012)	Including pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) in the classroom: The role of teaching assistants.	UK	To identify the extent to which pupils with ASD are effectively included within the classroom, as compared with their peers with other or control pupils. To examine how the presence of TAs contributes to the	Quantitative phase: 120 pupils (mean age 13 years 9 months) (40 each in the ASD, dyslexia and control groups) drawn from 12 mainstream secondary schools in the north-west of England.	Exploratory, explanatory, mixed methods, quasi-experimental design.  Systematic (quantitative) and field (qualitative) observations.

			inclusion/exclusion of pupils with ASD in the classroom	Qualitative phase: 21 pupils with ASD drawn from four of the original schools.	Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) (quantitative) and thematic analysis (qualitative).
Webster (2015)	The classroom experiences of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream primary schools—1976 to 2012. What do data from systematic observation studies reveal about pupils' educational experiences over time?	UK	To use data collected via systematic observation to show how the experiences of pupils with SEN in English mainstream primary schools has changed over time, relative to pupils without SEN. To consider to what extent the increase in TAs has affected how pupils with and without SEN experience the classroom	From the six studies, a total of 1,792 pupils aged 7–11 attending mainstream schools, including pupils with SEND (various) and 'average' control pupils.	Exploratory, explanatory, descriptive quantitative.  Systematic observations.  Descriptive statistics.
Webster & Blatchford (2013)	The educational experiences of pupils with a Statement for special educational needs in mainstream primary schools: results from a systematic observation study.	UK	To obtain systematic data on the composition of the everyday educational experiences of primary-aged pupils with Statements, relative to pupils without SEN. To identify what proportions of the school week pupils with Statements spend interacting with teachers, TAs and peers, and to identify in which	48 pupils aged 9-10 with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) or behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (BESD), 5 of whom had additional needs and 151 control pupils, drawn from 45 schools in six local authorities.	Exploratory, descriptive quantitative.  Systematic observations.  Descriptive statistics.

			<p>locations and social contexts interactions take place.</p> <p>To describe to what extent tasks for pupils with Statements are differentiated from, or different to, tasks for pupils without SEND.</p>		
Whitburn (2013)	The dissection of paraprofessional support in inclusive education: 'You're in mainstream with a chaperone'.	Australia	To explore the perspectives of young people with SEND (visual impairment) about the TA support they receive in school.	5 pupils aged 13-17 with visual impairment years who are supported by TAs in a mainstream secondary school.	<p>Exploratory.</p> <p>Qualitative.</p> <p>Focus groups (x3) and individual interviews (x28).</p> <p>Grounded theory.</p>

## 7.5 TA participants' professional experience

TA pseudonym	No. of years in current school	No. of years in previous school(s)	No. of years of previous relevant work experience	Total no. of years of TA and relevant work experience	Range of experience of TA role (one-to-one / general)	Amount of TA training received <sup>1</sup> (scale of 1-5)
<b>Millie</b>	1	2	0	<b>3</b>	3/0	1
<b>Kerry</b>	2	3	10	<b>15</b>	2/3	2
<b>Amira</b>	10	0	0	<b>10</b>	10/0	1
<b>Billie</b>	3	0	3	<b>6</b>	2/1	3
<b>Riya</b>	0.1	0	0	<b>0.1</b>	0.1/0.1	0
<b>Susan</b>	30	0	0	<b>30</b>	20/10	5

## 7.6 The nature of SEND of the pupils supported in a 'one-to-one' role by TA participants

Note: These were the needs of pupils in Years 5 and 6 currently being supported by the TAs in a one-to-one role. These pupils were often referred to during the interviews. TAs also sometimes referred to students who were supported previously, who are not recorded here.

TA (pseudonym)	Pupil(s) supported by TA (pseudonym)	Nature of pupil SEND
Millie	Finn	Moderate learning difficulties (MLD)
Kerry	Raihan	Autism spectrum condition (ASC)
Amira	Naeem	Moderate learning difficulties (MLD)
Billie	Neil	Autism spectrum condition (ASC)
Riya	Omar	Moderate learning difficulties (MLD)
Susan	N/A <sup>4</sup>	N/A <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Susan was not currently deployed in a one-to-one role with any specific pupils with SEND.

## 7.7 Interview guide

### Introduction

- Intro to me.
- Confidentiality.
- No vested interests in the school.
- There are no right or wrong answers – openness and honesty valued.

### General

- How do you find the TA role?
- Contextual information – how long have you been a TA? Which CYP have you worked with? What has been your role(s) in class?
- Positives – what do you enjoy about the role?
- Where do you see yourself as having the biggest impact? What do you gain the most satisfaction from in your TA role? Why? The least?

### Themes and questions

TA influence on peer relationships:

- Do you think that TAs have an influence on peer relationships? If so, how? Positive, negative or neutral impact?

TAs facilitating peer relationships:

- What challenges do students face in relation to peer relationships? How do you help?
- What do you do that is helpful to building pupil peer relationships?
- How does what you do help to build positive peer relationships?
  - What impact does it have?
  - How do you know it has this impact?
  - What are the processes by which this occurs?
  - How does the child respond?
  - What would happen if you did not do this?
- Can you provide examples?

Barriers to TAs fostering peer relationships:

- What do you see as the barriers to supporting positive peer relationships? What are the biggest barriers?
- How do these barriers function / have an effect? What are the processes via which these barriers have an impact? How do they impact on the student?
- Do you think that receiving TA support creates any challenges for students and their peer relationships?
  - Are there any scenarios where you worry that you may have a negative impact on peer relationships?
  - Do you ever have concerns that your presence may have some negative social outcomes for the child / children?
  - How do you best avoid those?
- Can you describe some examples?

Importance of peer relationships for TA practice:

- How far do you see supporting peer relationships as part of your role as a TA? How much importance do you give to peer relationships in relation to your practice as a TA? Why? How often do you think about it when you are in the classroom?
- What is the potential of the TA role in supporting positive peer relationships? How far do you view your current role as fulfilling that potential?
- What are the limitations of the TA role in fostering positive peer relationships? What are the factors that limit TA's positive impact on peer relationships?

Defining peer relationships:

- How would you define or describe positive peer relationships?
- How would you define or describe negative peer relationships?
- Can you give me some examples?

Other Factors:

- What other factors, other than TAs, do you see that influence peer relationships in the classroom?

Understanding students' experiences of TA support:

- How do you think students with SEN feel about receiving support from TAs in the classroom?
- What are some of the reasons that students might want support from TAs?
- Do you think some students might sometimes not want support from TAs? Why?
- How do you think students without SEN perceive / respond to students with SEN?
- How do you think students without SEN perceive / respond to TA support for students with SEN?

## 7.8 Additional interview topics

The following topics were developed in response to the emerging theory.

### TA role:

- What are the pros and cons of the 1-1 role for your personally?
- Role – what is your role in relation to social relationships?
- How do you (TAs) make the decisions to support / intervene in peer relationships?

### TAs able to take a back step?

- Able to observe, able to intervene differently?
- TAs more important for peer relationships?

### Other professionals' roles:

- Does anyone else in the school help you to plan for peer relationships? Do you have any discussions about supporting peer relationships with other staff / parents? How do you pass on info about students between staff?
- What is teachers' role in supporting peer relationships? How is this different/similar to TA role?

### Student needs

- Student needs – the role of student needs in the nature of support – decisions.
- How student needs impact on peer relationships (and how to respond)?
- Pupil conflict?

### Change

- Change – How do you (TAs) conceptualise change – in the CYP / peers? Within-CYP vs peers?
- What kind of change are you aiming for when you...?
- How do peers respond to your actions? What are you aiming for? Does it always work? When does it work best, when not so well? Give examples.
- Empathy?

### Early stage – building a relationship – when 1-1

- What is the process?
- What are the feelings at this stage?

### 1-1 vs general TA role

- What are differences when working with groups / as general TA role?

### Student independence with peer rels

### Long and short-term outcomes

### Feelings elicited by pupils



## 7.9 Grounded theory analytical tool prompt sheet

The following is based on Corbin & Strauss (2015).

### Questions to ask of the data

- Who, what, when, where, how.
- What is being said by the participant?
- What does this mean to the participant?
- What is being done (actions described)? Why? (use gerunds – ‘ing’)
- So what?
- What is the issue or concern?

### Making comparisons.

- Is this similar or different to other codes / categories? How/why?
- **Flip Flopping** - What would the opposite of this code be?

### Things to look out for:

- **Biases- participants and mine** – waving the red flag. (‘always’ / ‘never’).
- **Language – what are the key terms used? Meaning? Ambiguous?**
- **Emotions**
- **Metaphors / similies**
- **Time – does this refer to contexts and conditions?** – ‘When’, ‘after’, ‘since’, ‘before’, ‘in case’ and ‘if’.
- **Negative cases / exceptions – do they disprove / contrast with other codes, concepts or perspectives?**
- **Narrative structures**

**Property** = ‘characteristics that define and describe concepts’.

**Dimension** = boundaries, ‘variations within properties’

### 7.10 Examples of the use of analytical tools, open coding and memos.

Quote from the data	Memo	Analytical tools used	Open code(s) used
<p><b>Billie, 167:</b> When the pupils are on the carpet and the teacher's at the front doing the teaching, then they're so concerned with the teaching side of it. It's not their fault because they have to do it, but we get to sit at the back of the class, or I'm generally next to whoever I'm with, and you sort of, you're looking around, you're sort of the eyes on the ground as they say.</p>	<p>What is Billie doing here (actions – gerunds - ing)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observing? Monitoring? patrolling? Stepping back ('at the back')?</li> </ul> <p>What does 'eyes on the ground' mean to her?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a military term. Is it like war?! Is this about controlling pupils?</li> <li>• Does it also designate her position in school hierarchy?</li> </ul> <p>How is Billie differentiating her role to that of teachers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic vs social roles? Taking more responsibility for peer relationships / social problems?</li> <li>• What else could be going on here? Power and hierarchy? The 'standards agenda' for teachers vs TAs?</li> </ul>	<p>Asking questions of the data</p>	<p>Monitoring – checking for pupil problems.</p> <p>TAs as observer of peer relationships.</p> <p>TAs bigger role with peer relationships.</p>
<p><b>Millie, 27:</b> Sally (SENCo), she's very good. But you just feel... You just automatically think... <i>Perhaps she doesn't think I'm good at my job?</i> She's never said that to me, but you just feel that.</p>	<p>What is Millie 'feeling' here?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shame, inadequacy, guilt, inferiority, anxiety?</li> </ul> <p>What makes her feel this?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential judgement from the SENCo? Pressure?</li> <li>• Hierarchy? Systemic responsibility for pupils' social wellbeing – one-to-one role?</li> <li>• Herself? Internal anxiety? Why is this thought 'automatic'?</li> </ul>	<p>Noticing emotions and the meaning they give to the text.</p> <p>Asking questions of the data.</p>	<p>The risk of judgement.</p> <p>Anxiety of the 1-1 role.</p> <p>Role of senior management.</p>

	<p>What are the consequences of this feeling?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less likely to ask for support? More likely to 'deal with' social problems herself?</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Susan, 49:</b> I also think it's perfectly normal and natural, and it's like we almost don't like it... It's perfectly normal for children to row, to argue, to disagree, to be a bit mean to each other.</p>	<p>What is the opposite of this opinion?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That it is NOT OK/normal for pupils to 'be a bit mean' and 'disagree'? Why does Susan not agree with this?</li> </ul> <p>Is Susan suggesting that she, in some ways, does 'like' pupils to disagree and be mean?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What value does she place on this? What does she mean by 'we don't like it'? Is she suggesting this is an adult, not a child problem?</li> <li>• What if it was child problem but she did not perceive it that way? What if some of the pupils 'didn't like it' too and wanted adult intervention?</li> </ul> <p>What is the opposite strategy (action and interaction) of this?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To stop them disagreeing. Is this the opposite of the 'manager' role?</li> <li>• Are they opposites or is it more complex than that? Binary concepts?</li> </ul>	<p>Flip-flopping</p> <p>Asking questions of the data.</p>	<p>TAs feel pressure to intervene / resolve problems.</p> <p>Adult power/ authority/ responsibility over CYP.</p>

## 7.11 Extracts from the research diary

The following research diary extracts demonstrate the development of analytical thinking underpinning the 'manager' category or concept.

**03/02/2017**

### **'Managing' code – brainstorming the concept**

Managing – Thesaurus:

- Handling
- Dealing with
- supervising
- running
- Organising
- Controlling
- Overseeing
- Administering
- Coping with
- Governing
- Being in charge
- Controlling
- Bossing
- Disciplining
- Dominating

- These words seem to fit. These aspects of managing seem to fit what the TAs are doing (some more than others).

### **Is it mainly about power/control?**

- How to give institutional power invested in the TA back to the student? This is part of the paradox of the 1-1 role. How to do this is their challenge.
- The idea of a TA as a manager – manager denotes some kind of hierarchy?

### **Managing – definitions:**

- Having executive control or authority
- to take charge or care of
- to dominate or influence (a person) by tact, flattery, or artifice:
- to handle, direct, govern, or control in action or use:
- to handle or train (a horse) in the exercises of the manège.
- To bring about or succeed in accomplishing, sometimes despite difficulty or hardship?
  - Is the achievement 'managing' to achieve inclusion, integration, despite SEND that impacts on peer rels? This would be a double meaning of the word 'managing'. 'Managing' to include, despite social difficulties.
  - These definitions all seem somewhat relevant – the main theme of management seems to be about control/power

**04.02.2017**

### **The 'Explaining' category / concept**

#### **'Managing conflict' code – is this actually 'explaining'?**

- What are the TAs actually doing?
- Kerry, 72 onwards:
- Talking through conflict w FCYP
- Explaining

#### **How does the 'Explaining/teaching' code fit or compare with the concept of 'managing'?**

- At the moment 'explaining' is integrated into the manager concept – but it could be a category of its own.
- Because 'explaining' transcends within-FCYP vs peer vs both boundaries – it could be seen as a whole approach / strategy on its own.
- Explaining / didactic teaching

#### **Targets for change (pupils) – could use this as a sub-categories for 'explaining'?**

- Could denote 'explaining' as its own concept, then use the 'target for change' as smaller sub codes. E.g.:
  - Targeting pupils w SEND
  - Targeting peers
  - Targeting both
- There are certain aspects which are obviously within-pupils w SEND (e.g. Managing emotional regulation), but there are others that transcend the within-FCYP-peer distinction – e.g. explaining.

#### **Explaining / teaching – properties and dimensions:**

- Is teaching / explaining / didactic
- Adult led – power – uses adult power
- Moralising
- Value-led – social norms of behaviour.
- Is close to behaviour management? – Aims to control / change behaviour via enforcing social rules.

### **How to organise the 'managing' concept:**

#### **Does explaining/teaching need to be at the centre of 'managing'? Is it the main concept/process?**

- Explaining – process = didactic teaching
- Explaining strategy for social skills – fits with other codes - walking away, emotional regulation strategy, support with emotional regulation, etc.

#### **Do I need to separate management into different aims?:**

- Interactions / proximity w peers
- Conflict resolution
- Emotional regulation of FCYP

#### **Should I separate them in terms of the process that TAs are doing or the targets for change?**

- Explaining/teaching – strategies, social norms
  - Pupil w SEND            -Peers            -Both
- Rewards and sanctions
  - Pupil w SEND            -Peers            -Both
  
- I need to do some tables of these to experiment with them.
  
- Experiment with different ways of organising 'management':
  - 1) By target pupil (as now) – SEND vs peers vs both
  - 2) By TA process
  - 3) By TA aim
- Which of these concepts is the most important organising factor?
- Are these three concepts above part of my key properties and dimensions for 'managing'?!?
- Could do a Venn diagram for these three concepts – Also need to look at other types of diagrams to explain these relationships.

## 7.12 Confirmation of ethical approval

The Tavistock and Portman   
NHS Foundation Trust

Quality Assurance & Enhancement  
Directorate of Education & Training  
Tavistock Centre  
120 Belsize Lane  
London  
NW3 5BA

Tel: 020 8938 2699

[www.tavi-port.org](http://www.tavi-port.org)

Sean Highton

**By Email**

June 2016

**Re: Research Ethics Application**

***Title: How do teaching assistants influence the peer relationships of pupils with special educational needs (SEN)?***

I am pleased to inform you that subject to formal ratification by the Trust Research Ethics Committee your research ethics application has been approved. This means you can proceed with your research.

If you have any further questions or require any clarification do not hesitate to contact me.

I am copying this communication to your supervisor.

May I take this opportunity of wishing you every success with your research.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a horizontal line extending to the left.

**Paru Jeram**

Secretary to the Trust Research Degrees Subcommittee

T: 020 938 2699

E: [pjeram@tavi-Port.nhs.uk](mailto:pjeram@tavi-Port.nhs.uk)

cc. Brian Davis, Course Lead



## 7.13 Participant information sheet

Sean Highton

XXXX (Name) Educational Psychology Service

XXXX (Address)

Telephone: XXXX

E-mail: [sean.highton@xxxx.gov.uk](mailto:sean.highton@xxxx.gov.uk)

Date: 04.07.2016

Dear Sir or Madam,

In the next few weeks, I am hoping to undertake a research project in your school. The project aims to find out how teaching assistants (TAs) influence students with special educational needs peer relationships. It is hoped that the research will be beneficial for TAs and children as it will give both the opportunity to express their views, and the findings will contribute to supporting other TAs and children who may find themselves in a similar situation. This letter is to ask for your agreement to take part in the research.

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist, working for (Name) Local Authority, and I am conducting this research as part of my doctorate at The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. I will be coming into the school to work with a number of TAs and pupils, who will be invited to take part in a confidential conversation with me about their experiences of delivering or receiving support in class. It is acknowledged that this may be a sensitive issue and your safety, comfort and confidentiality will be respected at all times.

If you choose for to participate, the interview will take place at school and will last approximately 50-60 minutes. It will be like having an informal chat with me and you will have the right to not answer any question(s) and will be able to stop the interview at any time without any consequence to yourself.

The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed into written format. While you are being asked to provide your name for the purposes of consent, your identity will be protected. The recording will only be heard by the researcher who will also transcribe the interview. Extracts from the transcript of your interview will also be seen by the study's supervisor and its examiner(s). Any material taken from your interview in the writing up the study will be anonymous and you or anyone you may talk about will not be identifiable. All names and places mentioned will be changed. Once the research study has come to an end, the recording of the interview will be deleted.


If you have any questions about the research or this letter, please contact me on (researchers and schools email address / phone). If you have any concerns about the conduct of the researcher or any other aspect of this project, please contact Louis Taussig, the Trust Quality Assurance Officer [ltaussig@tavi-port.nhs.uk](mailto:ltaussig@tavi-port.nhs.uk). The project has received formal approval from the Tavistock's ethics board.

If you agree to participate, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or consequence. You are not obliged to take part in the study.

If you are happy to take part, please sign the form attached to this letter and return in to me or (Name) at the school. Please retain this letter for your reference.

Thank you in anticipation of your participation in the study.

Yours Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sean Highton', written in a cursive style.

Sean Highton (Educational Psychologist in training)

## 7.14 Participant consent form

### Adult / Teaching Assistant participant consent form

**Project title:** How do teaching assistants influence the peer relationships of pupils with special educational needs (SEN)?

**Name of Researcher:** Sean Highton

**Supervisor:** Dr Rachael Green

I have read the information sheet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. An interview with me will be recorded and all written data will be anonymized. Only the researcher(s) involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent for to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent, I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself or and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should I withdraw, the researcher reserves the right to use my anonymous data in the write-up of the study and in any further analysis that may be conducted by the researcher.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant's Signature

.....

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Researcher's Signature

.....

Date: .....

### 7.15 The sub-strategies for the TA manager strategy

TA manager sub-strategy	Short-term context and conditions (why, when, how come)			Properties (characteristics, description)		5. Short-term, intended consequences (positive outcomes for pupils) <sup>1</sup>
	1. Social scenario	2. TA perception of social scenario		3. Pupils targeted for behaviour change	4. TA actions	
		2.1 Identification of social risk for pupil with SEND	2.2 Perception of pupil social needs (deficits)			
<b>M1. Monitoring and patrolling for pupil social problems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range: very wide.</li> <li>• Strategy used in all contexts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All risks monitored.</li> <li>• Increased social problems, particularly conflict.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All needs monitored.</li> <li>• Inability to resolve a range of social problems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both pupils with and without SEND simultaneously (most often).</li> <li>• Pupils with SEND individually (often).</li> <li>• Pupils without SEND individually (less often).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe pupils' behaviour.</li> <li>• Monitor and patrol for pupil social problems.</li> <li>• Make social risk and social difficulty (deficit) assessments as a means to determine intervention.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TAs can intervene to resolve pupil problems.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range: moderate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unresolved conflict.</li> </ul>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils defer to adult authority.</li> </ul>

<p><b>M2. Instructing pupils to ‘tell an adult’ about problems.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any pupil conflict.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both pupils with and without SEND: resolving conflict.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils with SEND individually (often).</li> <li>Pupils without SEND individually (less often).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instruct pupils to defer to adult authority to resolve pupil social problems.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>M3. Initiating interactions and proximity with peers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Range: wide.</li> <li>Playtime and paired or group activities in class.</li> <li>Pupil with SEND isolated or not involved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interactions with peers not initiated.</li> <li>Lack of proximity with peers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils with SEND: initiating interactions, participation and gaining proximity to peers.</li> <li>Pupils without SEND: including pupils with SEND by initiating interactions, participation and gaining proximity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils with SEND individually (most often).</li> <li>Both pupils with and without SEND simultaneously (sometimes).</li> <li>Pupils without SEND individually (less often).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instruct pupils with and without SEND to interact (e.g. sit, talk, play and work together).</li> <li>Move pupils to be in close proximity with each other.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased opportunities for interaction, participation and proximity with peers for pupils with SEND.</li> </ul>
<p><b>M4. Arranging friendships</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Range: moderate.</li> <li>Playtime (most often) and paired or group activities in class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of friends.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils without SEND: making friends with and including pupils with SEND.</li> <li>Pupils with SEND: making friends.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils without SEND individually.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Persuade or compel peers to include pupils with SEND in group work or play.</li> <li>Suitable peers are identified</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased inclusive behaviours of selected peers (more play, work, etc., together).</li> <li>Improved emotional wellbeing of pupil with SEND.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupil with SEND isolated or not involved.</li> </ul>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peers asked directly or persuaded to include using a variety of other TA strategies (e.g. M9, M10, M11)</li> </ul>	
<b>M5. Providing structure for interactions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Range: low.</li> <li>Joint tasks in class (paired or group activities).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Failure to structure interactions effectively to complete tasks.</li> <li>Not included in discussions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both pupils with and without SEND: structuring interactions effectively to complete tasks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both pupils with and without SEND simultaneously (most often).</li> <li>Pupils with SEND individually (sometimes).</li> <li>Pupils without SEND individually (less often).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instruct students what to do during joint tasks.</li> <li>Impart frameworks or outlines to structure interactions or joint tasks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Join task completed.</li> <li>Increased involvement / inclusion of pupil with SEND.</li> </ul>
<b>M6. Managing emotional regulation</b>  Secondary sub-strategies: - M6.1 Physically touching pupil.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Range: very wide.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overwhelmed by negative emotions and cannot cope with peer interactions (e.g. tantrums, physical violence, withdrawal).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupil with SEND: self-regulating negative emotions (e.g. anger or anxiety) to cope with peer interactions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils with SEND individually.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regulate pupil with SEND's emotional state during interactions with peers.</li> <li>Use a wide variety of secondary sub-strategies (see column one).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupil with SEND's emotional state is regulated by the TA; reduced negative emotions.</li> <li>Pupils close and trusting relationship with TA; feels safe, secure and supported.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- M6.2 Gaining physical proximity to pupil.</li> <li>- M6.3 Telling pupil to calm down.</li> <li>- M6.4 Leading calming strategies (e.g. counting to ten).</li> <li>- M6.5 Imparting positive thoughts.</li> <li>- M6.6 Making the pupil feel loved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer interactions wherein the pupil with SEND might experience negative emotions (e.g. competitive games, physical proximity, unfamiliar social activities).</li> </ul>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil enabled to participate and engage in interactions with peers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>M7. Advocating in conflict</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range: low.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs not accommodated or ignored by peers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils without SEND: accommodating the needs of pupils with SEND.</li> <li>• Pupils with SEND: expressing or asserting their views or needs amongst peers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils without SEND individually.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Express or assert the views or needs of pupils with SEND amongst peers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil with SEND's needs met by peers.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer interactions wherein the pupil with SEND's needs were not being met and pupil not be able to communicate this effectively.</li> <li>• Joint tasks in class (paired or group activities) (most often).</li> </ul>					
<p><b>M8. Adjudicating in conflict</b></p> <p>Secondary sub-strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- M8.1 Hearing testimony.</li> <li>- M8.2 Giving a verdict.</li> <li>- M8.3 Sentencing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range: wide.</li> <li>• Pupil conflict.</li> <li>• Playground (most often) or classroom.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unresolved conflict.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both pupils with and without SEND: resolving conflict.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both pupils with and without SEND simultaneously.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjudicate in pupil conflicts.</li> <li>• Usually in three stages (secondary sub-strategies):</li> <li>• <b>M8.1 Hearing testimony</b>; listen to both sides of the dispute.</li> <li>• <b>M8.2 Giving a verdict</b>; apportion blame and responsibility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict resolved.</li> <li>• Pupils close and trusting relationship with TA; feels safe, secure and supported.</li> <li>• Pupil enabled to participate and engage in interactions with peers.</li> </ul>

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>M8.3 Sentencing;</b> decide on an appropriate action to resolve the conflict.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>M9. Explaining and teaching pro-social behaviours</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range: very wide.</li> <li>• Pupils display anti-social behaviours (e.g. rejection of a peer, bullying, not sharing).</li> <li>• Any context.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased anti-social, reduced pro-social behaviours.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both pupils with and without SEND: social understanding (norms, rules, cues, etc).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils with SEND individually (most often)</li> <li>• Pupils without SEND individually (often).</li> <li>• Both pupils with and without SEND simultaneously (sometimes).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Didactically teach or 'explaining' of social norms to increase pupils' social understanding and pro-social behaviours and reduce anti-social behaviours.</li> <li>• Inform and direct pupils to adhere to culturally specific values and expectations (e.g. sharing, not getting too angry, being kind).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased social understanding and pro-social behaviours, decreased anti-social behaviours.</li> </ul>

<p><b>M10. Explaining and eliciting empathy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range: Low.</li> <li>• Pupils display anti-social behaviours.</li> <li>• Any context.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased anti-social, reduced pro-social behaviours.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both pupils with and without SEND: understanding and showing empathy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils without SEND individually (most often).</li> <li>• Pupils with SEND individually (less often).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar properties to M9.</li> <li>• Didactically teach and rhetorically question to elicit empathy from pupils.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased empathy and prosocial behaviours, decreased anti-social behaviours.</li> <li>• Increased inclusion of pupil with SEND.</li> </ul>
<p><b>M11. Giving rewards and sanctions for interactions</b></p> <p>Secondary sub-strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- M11.1 Rewards</li> <li>- M11.2 Sanctions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range: wide.</li> <li>• Pupils display pro or anti-social behaviours.</li> <li>• Any context.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased anti-social, reduced pro-social behaviours.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both pupils with and without SEND: motivation for increased pro-social or decreased anti-social behaviours.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils without SEND individually (most often)</li> <li>• Pupils with SEND individually (often).</li> <li>• Both pupils with and without SEND simultaneously (sometimes).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apportion rewards for pro-social (M11.1) and sanctions for anti-social (M11.2) behaviours.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased pro-social, decreased anti-social behaviours.</li> </ul>

## 7.16 The sub-strategies for the TA coach strategy

TA coach sub-strategy	Short-term context and conditions (why, when, how come)		Properties (characteristics, description)		5. Short-term, intended consequences (positive outcomes for pupils) <sup>1</sup>
	1. Social scenario (when the strategy is deployed)	2. TA Perception of opportunity for social learning (skills to develop)	3. Pupils targeted for behaviour change	4. TA actions	
<b>C1. Monitoring and patrolling for pupil social problems.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is the same as strategy M1 in manager (see manager strategy tables for details).</li> </ul>				
<p><b>C2. Encouraging pupils to risk assess social situations as a basis for making decisions.</b></p> <p>Secondary sub-strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- C2.1 Encouraging pupils to only 'tell an adult' if they</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Range: wide.</li> <li>Pupil social problems in all contexts.</li> <li>Mainly pupil conflict.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To assess social risk as a basis for making social decisions, including whether or not to 'tell an adult' about a problem.</li> <li>To accept consequences of their decisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils with and without SEND individually (most often)</li> <li>Both pupils with and without SEND simultaneously (sometimes).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage pupils to risk assess social scenarios as a basis for their social decisions.</li> <li>Encourage pupils to make choices based on the risk assessments.</li> <li>Secondary sub-strategies (see column one).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils make their own risk assessments of social scenarios.</li> <li>Pupils accept the consequences of their decisions.</li> <li>Pupils less likely to 'tell an adult' about more trivial social problems.</li> </ul>

<p>assess an event as 'serious'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- C2.2 Encouraging pupils to accept the consequences of their risk assessments and decisions.</li> </ul>					
<p><b>C3. Prompting and challenging pupils to self-reflect on their mistakes.</b></p> <p>Secondary sub-strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- C3.1 Modelling and eliciting the admitting of mistakes to encourage self-reflection.</li> <li>- C3.2 Questioning pupils accounts to encourage self-reflection.</li> <li>- C3.3 Giving honest feedback to challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range: moderate.</li> <li>• Pupil conflict in all contexts.</li> <li>• Mainly pupil conflict.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be honest and to self-reflect; to admit their mistakes and role in conflict.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils with and without SEND individually (most often)</li> <li>• Both pupils with and without SEND simultaneously (sometimes).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt pupils to self-reflect using a variety of secondary sub-strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- C3.1 Modelling and eliciting the admitting of mistakes to encourage self-reflection.</li> <li>- C3.2 Questioning pupils accounts to encourage self-reflection.</li> <li>- C3.3 Giving honest feedback to challenge pupils to self-reflect.</li> <li>- C3.4 Using humour to encourage honest self-reflection.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils more likely to self-reflect; admit their mistakes and role in conflict: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pupils feel more relaxed and less judged.</li> <li>- Pupils can laugh at themselves and 'save face'.</li> <li>- Pupil problems are 'de-escalated';</li> <li>- Pupils like being challenged and told the truth.</li> <li>- Pupils have more respect for TA as a coach.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<p>pupils to self-reflect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- C3.4 Using humour to encourage honest self-reflection.</li> </ul>					
<p><b>C4. Asking solution-focussed questions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range: wide.</li> <li>• All pupil social problems in all contexts.</li> <li>• Mainly pupil conflict.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To initiate and use their own creative problem-solving abilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils with SEND individually (most often).</li> <li>• Pupils without SEND individually (often).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask questions to elicit pupils' own social problem-solving skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils more likely to initiate and use their own creative problem-solving abilities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>C5. Suggesting strategies for pupils to implement more independently.</b></p> <p>Secondary sub-strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- C5.1 Observing and bearing witness</li> <li>- C5.2 Experimenting with strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range: wide.</li> <li>• All pupil social problems in all contexts.</li> <li>• Mainly pupil conflict.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To implement problem-solving strategies or solutions more independently.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils with SEND individually (most often)</li> <li>• Pupils without SEND individually (often).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggest strategies for pupils to use to resolve social problems.</li> </ul> <p>Secondary sub-strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- C5.1 Observing and bearing witness as a means of supporting pupil to use suggested strategy.</li> <li>- C5.2 Experimenting with strategies using trial and error; taking risks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils more likely to implement problem solving strategies more independently.</li> </ul>

using trial and error.					
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## 7.17 Tables of key quotes

### 7.17.1 Table of key quotes for manager sub-strategies

Manager strategy	TA actions	Key quotes
<p><b>M1. Monitoring and patrolling for pupil social problems</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe pupils' behaviour.</li> <li>• Monitor and patrol for pupil social problems.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Riya, 89:</b> I'd be sitting there, overlooking the children, watching what they're doing. As a TA, I definitely like pick up more (than the teacher), in terms of problems within the class or if someone's being spiteful, horrible to one child.</p> <p><b>Billie, 167:</b> I'm generally next to whoever I'm with, and you're looking around, you're sort of the eyes on the ground as they say. Watching silly little behaviours or different problems.</p>
<p><b>M2. Instructing pupils to 'tell an adult' about problems.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruct pupils to defer to adult authority to resolve pupil social problems.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Amira, 29:</b> So, I explained it to her, "You can come and talk to me any time you want to, if they are being rude and mean or anything. Instead of saying rude words you come and tell me and I'll deal with it.</p> <p><b>Kerry, 68:</b> I said to him, "Raihan, you came into class and you didn't say that something had happened in the playground. When things happen, you need to come and say it to an adult, so we can know how to resolve it."</p> <p><b>Millie, 68:</b> He's got to learn to keep it in: control, speak to an adult and then it will be resolved.</p> <p><b>Millie, 87:</b> Rather than going to an adult, which I've told him to do so many times, he ends up getting in trouble.</p>



		<p><b>Susan, 2, 122:</b> For a while, within schools, all the emphasis was put on ‘tell, tell, tell’, ‘tell an adult, go to an adult’.</p>
<p><b>M3. Initiating interactions and proximity with peers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruct pupils with and without SEND to interact (e.g. sit, talk, play and work together).</li> <li>• Move pupils to be in close proximity with each other.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Kerry, 42:</b> I’m trying to get him to work with the other kids, with anything he’s doing... But I make the initiative to say that to him first.</p> <p><b>Millie, 123:</b> And he does go and sit on the table, because I do encourage him to sit with his peers... I sometimes suggest where he sits.</p> <p><b>Billie, 77:</b> I say to my one-to-one, “Why don’t you go and play with your brother?” And then he’ll sort of go, “OK.” And then go in.</p> <p><b>Amira, 90:</b> Sakash (peer) sat next to him... I said, “Sit next to Naeem (pupil with SEND).”</p> <p><b>Billie, 77:</b> I give a hint to the girls and say, “How about you include Neil?” And then they’ll, they’re brilliant, they’ll just go off and be like, “Come on Neil. Let’s go and play”. And then, they’re brilliant, they’ll just go off and be like, “Come on Neil. Let’s go and play”. They’re really good with him.</p> <p><b>Billie, 103:</b> They’d (his peers) probably pull him into things, but not as much as it happens now because of the fact that me or another adult might say, “Well, can you involve Neil?” Or “Can Neil play with you?”. I mean they do it sometimes on their own, but sometimes you have to prompt them as well.</p> <p><b>Kerry, 130:</b> I think that’s the next step, where I need to really say to them (his peers), “Try and hand it (his book) to him (instead of me).”... Because that will encourage him to step forward and peer with the class.</p> <p><b>Amira, 92:</b> If they are sitting together, so if Sara is sitting next to him, I will say, “Sara you’re partnered with Naeem.”</p> <p><b>Kerry, 32:</b> He (the pupil with SEND) said, “Miss Cook, let’s play.” I said, “No, no, no, Eddie is opposite you so you’re supposed to play with your partner.</p>

<p><b>M4. Arranging Friendships</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persuade or compel peers to include pupils with SEND in group work or play.</li> <li>• Suitable peers are identified.</li> <li>• Peers asked directly or persuaded to include using a variety of other TA strategies (e.g. M9, M10, M11).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Amira, 76:</b> I had to get a few boys to be friends with him, look after him at playtime. I said to Naeem (pupil with SEND), “Who would you like to choose as your friend, to be your buddy when we go to the pantomime?” So, he liked one boy, Sakash, so he was friends with him all the way. So, he was playing with him, so I think that helped as well, to know that, <i>I know that I’ve got a friend with me...</i> I asked him, I said, “Who would you like to play with in the playground?” And he chose a few children who he would like to be friends with, then I asked those children to, you know, as a group, look after him at playtime and lunchtime... I asked them in the corridor, away from him... In the beginning there were three, and then he chose Sakash, because they had to be in pairs when we walked in line (on a school trip). So, I said to Sakash, “I know you’re very sensible and I can count on you. I want to ask you a big favour, if you can do it, I want you to look after your friend Naeem, in the playground, during playtime and lunchtime. So, if you do it,” I said, “after lunchtime, I want you to come and tell me how it went, what did you play?” So, all those things, so they felt like, I said, “I chose you because I know that you’re very, very responsible and good and I know you can handle this.” So, they were quite happy that they had been chosen, they are the special ones... They came up to me after playtime and they were really happy. “Miss, we played with him and Naeem played with us, we played eight and other games they were playing in the playground, so we looked after him. It was good.” And they had a little tennis ball, they were sharing that, they were playing with that, so they were quite happy. They were looking after him... Naeem was very excited. He said, “Miss, Tahir played with me, Sakash played with me and Bruce, we were playing football, we were playing this...” So he was pleased as well, which was good.</p> <p><b>Amira, 27:</b> So, I made the other two girls, they were really nice and calm, so I asked them to look after her and to be friends with her and tell me after play how she was during play. And I said, “You know, if you look after her, you will get house points, or you will get a sticker,” and all that. So they were looking after this girl, Zinaida, and after play, they used to come and tell me, “Miss, we played with her for the whole of playtime and she was fine and she was happy.”</p> <p><b>Millie, 131:</b> I would say a little bit, yeah (that Finn is socially isolated). I did try... Actually, when he first came, they didn’t really engage with him, but the one or two that I’ve spoken to... because I know they’re sensible, I know that they’re a bit more mature to carry out that sort of task. If I explain “Look, just imagine it was you. You wouldn’t like it would you?” And they say, “Yeah, it’s true, we</p>
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		<p>should really help him.” And I’ve noticed, that they, the two children (the selected peers), really look out for Finn.</p> <p><b>Millie, 65:</b> There have been two children (the selected peers) who have said to him, “Finn, come over, come in our group. We want you in our group. We’ll have you! Yeah, we’re having him.” ...But before in the start they didn’t want to go with him. They were like, “Oh, no. I don’t want him.” But not so much now because the two children who have identified that he’s always on his own and have realised that it’s not nice. So they are quick to say, “I’m going to work with....”</p>
<p><b>M5. Providing structure for interactions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruct students what to do during joint tasks.</li> <li>• Impart frameworks or outlines to structure interactions or joint tasks.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Amira, 92:</b> When we are sitting on the carpet and they have to discuss things... I say, “Naeem, you need to tell Sarah, you know, what the answer is to this thing.” Or, “Sarah, you say your point of view. So, look at Naeem and tell him what you feel.” So, it’s like they attempt to do the talking and then he will do the same thing.</p> <p><b>Billie, 83:</b> I think it was circuits they were doing... I think it was about five of them in each group and he sort of just sat there and let everyone else try and put these circuits together. So then I took one of the wires and I gave it to him and said, “Right, where do you think it would go?” I said “Talk to your friends and see what they think and then you see where you think it should go”. So then he had a little talk with them and I sort of stood back while he did that, but then he sort of sat back and didn’t do anything with the wire and he just had it in his hand. So I said, “Neil! Why don’t we put it in the circuit and see where it could fit?” And then one of his friends helped him out a bit and was like, “Why don’t we put it here first?” And so he clipped it on and then they sort of spoke about it in the group and then decided where the other clip would go. So, he then got involved a bit more, but then he just sat back again.</p>
<p><b>M6. Managing emotional regulation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulate pupil with SEND’s emotional state during</li> </ul>	<p><b>M6.3, M6.4:</b></p>

	<p>interactions with peers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a variety of sub-strategies:</li> </ul>	<p><b>Kerry, 44:</b> Raihan screams loud screams. So, I tend to... as soon as he does, I say, "You need to calm down," and... I'll count and then he'll calm down and then go outside and I try to talk to him and explain what I was trying to do.</p> <p><b>M6.5:</b></p> <p><b>Kerry, 32:</b> He does not do well with losing, and playing chess is going to be a win or a lose. So, I sat there... He lost four times, did not cry once... But we kind of kept it on the down low.. We just took it in and said, "You're learning!" I sat with him, but I encouraged him by saying how well he was doing and how he's catching up to Eddie, who's much better. And the more he does that, then he'll be able to beat Eddie. I said, "The next time we'll be playing chess, I'm sure you will, because you were that close to beating Eddie ... Don't worry, we'll have it next week. You'll be fine, you'll be a pro. Play when you get home."</p> <p><b>M6.1, M6.2, M6.5:</b></p> <p><b>Amira, 64:</b> The whole school went to see the pantomime... And Naeem said, "No, I don't want to go" ... I said, "OK, but you know I'll be with you. You and me, we can sit together and if you don't like it, you can hold my hand." He said, "I don't like it, it's so scary." I said, "I will hug you, I'll put my arm around you and you'll be safe, so it will be fun. Look, everyone is going and they're so excited"... And I had to sit with him outside the theatre for the whole time... As soon as we entered he was so scared... He said, "I don't like it, can I go?" I said, "No, you will be fine. I'm sitting next to you, see? You're sitting here, I'm sitting here and you can hold my hand..."</p> <p><b>M6.6:</b></p> <p><b>Amira, 150:</b> I wanted to do whatever was within my power... to make her feel that she's loved; we care about her... we are here to help... It's not that no one likes her. So I said, "I care about you, you're my friend. I like you so much.</p>
	<p><b>M6.1 Physically touching pupil.</b></p>	
	<p><b>M6.2 Gaining physical proximity to pupil.</b></p>	
	<p><b>M6.3 Telling pupil to calm down.</b></p>	
	<p><b>M6.4 Leading calming strategies (e.g. counting to ten).</b></p>	
	<p><b>M6.5 Imparting positive thoughts</b></p>	
	<p><b>M6.6 Making the pupil feel loved.</b></p>	

<p><b>M7. Advocating in conflict</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Express or assert the views or needs of pupils with SEND amongst peers.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Millie, 125:</b> Sometimes when he does choose to go on the table, some of the other children go, “Aww, I don’t want him on that table!” And I say, “You move then. You go onto another table, because he wants to sit on this table.” But with group tasks... if he feels that they’re not really listening to what he wants to do, he tries to talk and say, ‘We can do this’. If he sees they’re not taking any notice of him, he’ll just sit back and he starts saying he’s bored. And then I have to come and say to him and the others, “Right everybody, let’s all take turns, so everybody’s getting a chance to talk and everybody’s getting a chance to write.” It just depends if he feels that he can get them to listen.</p> <p><b>Millie, 127:</b> He won’t sort of talk to them (his peers) much, he’ll talk to me about things.. Sometimes he has said... “Miss, they’re disturbing me, they’re too noisy, I can’t think”... I say to them, “You need to be quiet, please. You all need to be quiet because Finn cannot think and we need to be quiet because it’s too noisy.”</p>
<p><b>M8. Adjudicating in conflict</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjudicate in pupil conflicts.</li> <li>Usually in three stages or sub-strategies:</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>M8.1 Hearing testimony;</b> listen to both sides of the dispute.</p> <hr/> <p><b>M8.2 Giving a verdict;</b> apportion blame and responsibility.</p>	<p><b>M8.1, M8.2:</b>  <b>Riya, 13:</b> Like the girls always come up to me with their problems with each other... they’re always fighting over something silly or small... and I’m the one who has to resolve their issues... So I have to take one specific person away from the situation, then speak to them separately, speak to the other person separately... and then get them to speak to each other and then eventually we uncover that this person is actually at fault.</p> <p><b>M8.1, M8.3:</b>  <b>Billie, 67:</b> He had an argument with one of his peers the other day and I took them aside and asked them what the problem was...And they said to each other what was wrong... I said, “Do you think you could play nicely together?” ... So I suggested a game to them.</p> <p><b>M8.2:</b>  <b>Riya, 37:</b> I’m actually engaged in the dispute and telling this person, “Well you shouldn’t have done this, and shouldn’t have done that.” They just take a step back and just let it happen because... I don’t know if it’s because it’s me telling her ... If I’m telling somebody off because they’ve done</p>

	<p><b>M8.3 Sentencing;</b> decide on an appropriate action to resolve the conflict.</p>	<p>something wrong, their friends will kind of, back away and just leave her... because she was in the wrong and she won't disagree and argue back if she's in the wrong and I'm telling her off.</p>
<p><b>M9. Explaining and teaching pro-social behaviours</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Didactically teach or explain social norms to increase pupils' social understanding and pro-social behaviours and reduce anti-social behaviours.</li> <li>• Inform and direct pupils to adhere to culturally specific values and expectations (e.g. sharing, not getting too angry, being kind).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Amira, 11:</b> You have the opportunity to explain life, to explain things, to explain how to behave... Because you're working with them pretty much the whole day, so you have got the time and things to explain to them; when you play with them, when we're studying, or whenever the opportunity arises... There are various things (that I explain to them); about how to be honest, how to be friendly, how to be sharing and caring with each other, and even if you're angry and you don't like something, why you should behave in such a manner? What is the reason we do that?</p> <p><b>Amira, 140:</b> I had to... explain to other children to be nice... Because children sometimes, they don't understand what is going on... So you need to explain to them that it is OK if someone's not exactly like you, or a little bit different. We should be helpful, you should try to be helpful and be nice. You have to interfere and get them to be friends with each other as a group, and explain it to them.</p> <p><b>Amira, 166:</b> With a statemented child you need one-to-one, you need to have eye contact, you have to explain it in very simple ways, with an example, so that they understand it. And with other children, you can just explain normally and they can understand, but more or less it's the same.</p>
<p><b>M10. Explaining and eliciting empathy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar properties to M9.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Millie, 63:</b> Sometimes a teacher says, "Let's get into groups," and he and this other child are always left. So we're saying that, "If you're saying to other children; "You can't go in my group," that's isolating them." We're getting them to realise... "How do you think that child feels? How would you</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Didactically teach and rhetorically question pupils to elicit empathy.</li> </ul>	<p>feel if someone said to you? We don't want you in there, in our group," or, "We don't want to play with you?" How would you feel?" They say, "Yeah, it's true, we would feel sad."</p> <p><b>Millie, 131:</b> If I explain, "Look, just imagine it was you. You wouldn't like it would you?"</p> <p><b>Amira, 15:</b> I had to explain to them how horrible it is that, "Although he wants to play with you, you are not letting him, you're not giving him an opportunity to be your friend, to play with you," and you know; let them feel that, how he's feeling left out and lonely in the playground and even in the classroom. So I had to tell them, "It's not nice." If they were in his shoes, how would they feel, if people were nasty to them; making silly remarks and all that? So I guess then they understood. It took me a bit of time to explain it to them so they understood and said 'sorry' to the boy and they played together.</p> <p><b>Susan, 102:</b> I do explain, like I said to the boy, "How would you feel? Can you imagine being in a school in another country, where you couldn't always understand what was going on and you didn't speak the language and that you've got children actually laughing at you and you can't really understand?" I said, "It must be... she's missing all her friends"... Can you imagine how that must feel?" Luckily the child, he's an intelligent child, he could imagine.</p>
<p><b>M11. Giving rewards and sanctions for interactions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apportion rewards for behaviours.</li> <li>• Two sub-strategies:</li> </ul> <p><b>M11.1: Apportioning rewards for pro-social behaviours.</b></p>	<p>See sub-strategies below.</p> <p><b>Millie, 65:</b> And also they are getting rewarded. So I say to them, "Thank you very much. I like the way you came up to Finn and you said, "You're coming into my group." So I'm going to give you... you're rewarded a house point." So they can see that, <i>I've been very good and I'm getting something in return.</i></p> <p><b>Millie, 65:</b> But not so much now because the two children who have identified that he's always on his own and have realised that in a way it's not nice. So they are quick to say, "I'm going to work with..." And also they are getting rewarded. So I say to them, "Thank</p>

		<p>you very much. I like the way you came up to Finn and you said, “You’re coming into my group.” So I’m going to give you... you’re rewarded a house point.” So they can see that, I’ve been very good and I’m getting something in return.</p> <p><b>Millie, 197:</b> When he’s sat, he’s worked well with them... I always say... “The reason why I’m giving you this house point, Finn, is because I like the way you didn’t even moan. You got up, you went to your person to work with and you said, “I want to work with you”, and you sat down.”</p> <p><b>Amira, 27:</b> So I asked them to look after her and to be friends with her... I said, “You know, if you look after her, you will get house points, or you will get a sticker.”</p>
	<p><b>M11.2: Apportioning sanctions for anti-social behaviours.</b></p>	<p><b>Millie, 203:</b> We did say, “If this carries on, with you saying, “I don’t want you in my group”, then we’ll just put you in a group.”</p> <p><b>Susan, 77:</b> The TAs who work with some of the older children with autism... they’d be very strict if a child hurt another child, whatever the disability is... it’s not acceptable... We do get occasions when certain children might even like to wind up a child because they know (that that child has SEND)... And we come down heavily on that as well... If it’s a child say with autism they will be placed in the reflection room, or whatever, time off the computer, whatever that sanction is, whatever who works with them knows works best. But the child who did the winding up will also probably have reflection room, have, you know... If it’s really serious or it’s an ongoing thing obviously their parents will be informed.</p> <p><b>Millie, 237:</b> But I tell them (Finn’s peers) off afterwards; ‘That is not acceptable’... One of them did say that Finn is stupid. I said, “No...” They got their name moved down. They were dealt with.</p>



## 7.17.2 Table of key quotes for manager short-term outcomes

Manager strategy	Short-term positive outcomes	Short-term negative outcomes
<b>M1. Monitoring and patrolling for pupil social problems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TAs can intervene to resolve pupil problems;</li> </ul> <p>Minimal direct quotes<sup>2</sup>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A; none identified.</li> </ul>
<b>M2. Instructing pupils to ‘tell an adult’ about problems.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils defer to adult authority:</li> </ul> <p>Minimal direct quotes<sup>2</sup>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils less able to deal with problems themselves:</li> </ul> <p><b>Susan, 2, 112:</b> The other thing that children do is, because I think we've protected them so much, they will actually come and tell you, "So and so told me to shup up." ... The ‘tell, tell, tell’ was really about all the petty type of stuff that they should have been able to deal with themselves.</p> <p><b>Susan, 126:</b> And then children all make the right noises to get adult intervention ... But, it's not a good social skill, is it, to tell on people all the time?</p>
<b>M3. Initiating interactions and proximity with peers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased opportunities for interaction, participation and proximity with peers for pupils with SEND:</li> </ul> <p><b>Kerry, 60:</b> At least Raihan's in the class now. He's not outside doing his work, he's literally in the class and he's</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Degree of interaction and participation with peers did not increase;</li> <li>Positive changes not sustained:</li> </ul> <p><b>Billie, 83:</b> So he then got involved a bit more, but then he just sort of sat back again.</p>

	<p>sitting there (with his peers)... He participates. And that's really good.</p> <p><b>Kerry, 108:</b> He will sit on the carpet and he'll touch the boy and pretend as if he didn't do it... And the boys will communicate with him as well, they will pass back the initiative of doing that with him.</p>	<p><b>Billie, 77:</b> He won't necessarily say anything, but he'll just stand next to his brother as if to say, <i>I'm here</i>... He tends to just sit there in his own world. So I have to really encourage him to get involved... Sometimes I feel like I'm a puppeteer.</p> <p><b>Billie, 89:</b> But I do sort of say to them, "Right, don't forget Neil is there." Although he's not getting involved all the time... But they're really good at getting him involved, like sometimes they forget, so then I have to prompt them and just be like, "Neil" or I stand there and go "Neil's there!" and then they go, "Oh Neil, come on. Let's do this".</p>
<p><b>M4. Arranging Friendships</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased inclusive behaviours of selected peers (more play, work, etc., together);</li> <li>• Improved emotional wellbeing of pupil with SEND:</li> </ul> <p><b>Amira, 86:</b> They (the peers) came up to me after playtime and they were really happy. "Miss, we played with him and Naeem played with us, we played eight and other games they were playing in the playground, so we looked after him. It was good." ...So they were quite happy. They were looking after him... Naeem was very excited. He said, "Miss, Tahir, Sakash and Bruce played with me, we were playing football, we were playing this..." So he was pleased as well, which was good.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes not sustained; arranged friendships often did not last:</li> </ul> <p><b>Amira, 88:</b> There were times when Naeem didn't want to play with Sakash and Sakash wanted to be friends with him. I don't know what went wrong there... So I'll see how it goes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced social agency for pupil with SEND; recognition of lower social status (less social and academic skills) unequal peers relationships and dependency on peers:</li> </ul> <p><b>Millie, 65:</b> Finn knows that no one's going to run up to him and say, "Do you want to come in my group?"</p>

	<p><b>Millie, 65:</b> There have been two children (the selected peers) who have said to him, “Finn, come over, come in our group. We want you in our group. We’ll have you! Yeah, we’re having him.” ...But before in the start they didn’t want to go with him. They were like, “Oh, no. I don’t want him.” But not so much now because the two children who have identified that he’s always on his own and have realised that it’s not nice. So they are quick to say, “I’m going to work with....”</p> <p><b>Millie, 131:</b> And they say, “Yeah, it’s true, we should really help him.” And I’ve noticed, that they, the two children (the selected peers), really look out for Finn.</p>	<p><b>Millie, 73:</b> They (the selected peers) involve him and he really gets involved in the... And they say to him, “Finn, you can do this one.” Because I think they know what he can do, and it’s kind of strange because they know what he can do and can’t do. They know that. They know he can’t write. So they go, “We’ll write it out, and then we’ll read it to you,” because they know he can’t read. “We’ll read it to you.” So they know. And he accepts that and he’ll just cooperate that way, because he knows.</p> <p><b>Millie, 81:</b> They (the selected peers) can be a bit dominant. But maybe as well the reason... I’m not saying that’s why they work with Finn, but I think they know because he obviously gets isolated a lot, but also they can tell him, “Finn this is what you’re going to do,” and he’ll just do it. Sometimes he’ll say, “No, I don’t want to do it.” But they kind of can get him to do it, persuade him in some way and he’ll go along with it.</p> <p><b>Millie, 75:</b> They had to find another partner and the person I was talking about (the selected peer) said, “Finn, you’re with me!” <b>So he didn’t have a say anyway.</b> And he went “Oh, OK.”</p>
<p><b>M5. Providing structure for interactions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Join task completed;</li> <li>• Increased involvement / inclusion of pupil with SEND:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes not sustained:</li> </ul> <p><b>Minimal direct quotes<sup>2</sup>.</b></p>

	<p><b>Minimal direct quotes<sup>2</sup>.</b></p>	
<p><b>M6. Managing emotional regulation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- M6.1 Physically touching pupil.</li> <li>- M6.2 Gaining physical proximity to pupil.</li> <li>- M6.3 Telling pupil to calm down.</li> <li>- M6.4 Leading calming strategies (e.g. counting to ten).</li> <li>- M6.5 Imparting positive thoughts.</li> <li>- M6.6 Making the pupil feel loved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil with SEND's emotional state is regulated by the TA; reduced negative emotions;</li> <li>• Pupils close and trusting relationship with TA; feels safe, secure and supported;</li> <li>• Pupil enabled to participate and engage in interactions with peers:</li> </ul> <p><b>Minimal direct quotes<sup>2</sup>.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Changes not sustained; pupils with SEND unable to regulate emotions without TA present:</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Kerry, 110:</b> Because adults are normally there as well, in between. Raihan would never hit another child in front of an adult. But he will do the odd playing and talking. I might've been from before, working with one-to-one, years before, he might have done that and he's been controlled. So if he wasn't controlled, then I guess we would have that until now... All the incidents that have happened, the biting, hitting, they've been outside, and not amongst adults.</p>
<p><b>M7. Advocating in conflict</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil with SEND's needs met by peers:</li> </ul> <p><b>Minimal direct quotes<sup>2</sup>.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reduced social agency for pupil with SEND; pupil with SEND potentially embarrassed by TA advocacy (because it highlights their reduced social agency and dependency on the TA?):</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Researcher, 66:</b> And do you have those conversations straight away with the kids?</p> <p><b>Millie:</b> I do, straight away. Straight away I say to them... Sometimes I pull them to the side and say, "That's not fair", or sometimes I would say in front of Finn.</p>

		<p><b>Researcher:</b> How does Finn respond, do you reckon, when you have those conversations?</p> <p><b>Millie:</b> He stands there like... He's got this face on him like as if he's... I wouldn't say embarrassed, maybe that might be the word, embarrassed, but... Or sometimes he retaliates and says, "Yeah, you don't want me in your group and I..." kind of thing and yeah.</p> <p><b>Researcher:</b> "I don't want to be in your group."</p> <p><b>Millie:</b> Yeah.</p> <p><b>Amira, 23:</b> After play, in the morning play. So they told me this was a problem and he was crying and saying, "Miss, they're not playing with me." So I had to take them out one by one, out of the classroom to speak with them privately... And then I made them say sorry to that boy. You know can't speak in front of other people because they might feel bad or embarrassed.</p>
<p><b>M8. Adjudicating in conflict</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- M8.1 Hearing testimony</li> <li>- M8.2 Giving a verdict</li> <li>- M8.3 Sentencing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict resolved;</li> <li>• Pupils close and trusting relationship with TA; feels safe, secure and supported;</li> </ul> <p>Pupil enabled to participate and engage in interactions with peers:</p> <p><b>Riya, 19:</b> They ended up making up at that time, when they were at Chill Out Club, so it was pretty alright.</p> <p><b>Riya, 73:</b> So, yeah, I do think it's a massive thing, so I try and sort of... Even if it sounds really petty, their arguments, I do try and resolve it by the end of break or</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change not sustained: Pupils don't learn to resolve conflict themselves:</li> </ul> <p><b>Riya, 93:</b> But it's just, with him, it's like it goes in one ear and out the other, he'll do it again</p> <p><b>Susan, 126:</b> Yeah and seeing what works better. I think I've been with the, I've taken the stance of, "Oh well, you shouldn't have said that to him and then he shouldn't have said that." And you're speaking all nicely, "Because that was really unkind." And, "How did that make you feel?" And so on. But you can go too far with that and I</p>

	<p>even during break because you can see how much of an impact it has.</p> <p><b>Billie, 67:</b> and then they played really nicely for the rest of that playtime, and they just got on with it and were really happy. And it was just nice to see because before that they were like “Ahh,” (imitates shouting) at each other ... and then they played fine and they introduced a few other people with them and then it was fine.</p> <p><b>Billie, 73:</b> And they were like, “Oh, OK we’ll play that” (puts on an innocent, childish voice). And I suggested a few things within the game and then they just sort of got off and they were playing nicely for the rest of the break time. I think they only had five minutes left by then, but it was just nice to calm them down and get them to play nicely.</p>	<p>think it doesn't mean anything to the children. They just think, You're an adult doing your job. And then they all make the right noises to get adult intervention.</p> <p><b>Susan, 112:</b> the other thing that children do is, because I think we've protected them so much, they will actually come and tell you, I might have said this actually, they kind and come to say to you, "So and so told me to shup up".</p> <p><b>Susan, 43:</b> I also think a little bit, that as adults, I think we've gone, we went a little bit too far with trying to fairly solve every child's problem and every child's issue and I still think it a bit and I think a lot of children rely too much on adults. They come to the adult and they'll say like, “So and so doesn't want to be my friend or isn't playing with me”, or, “So and so called me this”. And actually, I think they're too reliant on it and I think the adult then can spend quite a lot, lot of time trying to very reasonable and sort things out to everybody's satisfaction, when in fact we're taking that away from the child's need to sort it out themselves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pupils reject TA authority as a 'judge':</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Riya, 21:</b> Sometimes it's really bad, like when they're talking really horribly to each other, so I have to get Gabriel, Mr. Mault (the Class Teacher) involved, where he'll have to get the group out later on at lunch and speak to everyone ... Just because it's really like spiteful things they'll say to each other, about their appearance</p>
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		<p>and things like that. So that's when he has to have a word with them, because I can't really, it's hard to describe, because although I could tell them off, or I could try and resolve it, it doesn't really change anything, whereas if the teacher does it, the children kind of, take it more seriously, whereas not as seriously with me, if that makes sense?</p>
<p><b>M9. Explaining and teaching pro-social behaviours</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased social understanding and pro-social behaviours, decreased anti-social behaviours.</li> </ul> <p><b>Amira, 142:</b> They listen and they understand and then they act accordingly, because they understand the reason why... They were quite supportive and they were quite nice. And it's good when you explain it to them nicely, they tend to listen to you, most of the time.</p> <p><b>Amira, 170:</b> They forgive each other, they don't hold grudges and they are friendly with each other, and they play with each other, and the classroom is calm. So then you can see, yes, their behaviour is changing... They are getting better, kinder, nicer with each other... they are understanding it.</p> <p><b>Amira, 164:</b> Once they understand it, then they will tend to do it. Maybe you will have to repeat yourself a few times, quite a few times, but because they understand the logic, the reason, it's easy for them to follow it, to act on the things.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change is slow: require lots of repeated explanations.</li> <li>• Changes not sustained beyond immediate social scenario in which strategy was deployed.</li> </ul> <p><b>Amira, 216:</b> Naeem, he doesn't like sharing his rubber with anyone... So you explain (why to share) to them and then they feel, reluctantly give it to them... But he needs reminding every time, because automatically he won't just give it. You have to convince him that it's important.</p>

<p><b>M10. Explaining and eliciting empathy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased empathy and prosocial behaviours, decreased anti-social behaviours.</li> <li>Increased inclusion of pupil with SEND</li> </ul> <p><b>Kerry, 74:</b> Well, when I explained... At first he (Raihan) didn't understand, but when I explained how Amal could have felt, and you've done that and I said, "It's a girl, can you imagine?" ... He felt it, when I explained. But before, he doesn't. Normally Raihan doesn't, until you explain it to him what he's actually done, and then he understands.</p> <p>See also outcomes for M3 and M4.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change is slow: require lots of repeated explanations.</li> <li>Changes not sustained beyond immediate social scenario in which strategy was deployed.</li> </ul> <p><b>Millie, 119:</b> They do listen and they repeat, they do say, "Yeah I suppose it's true, we wouldn't like it if that happened to us." But sometimes they don't always put it into practice, so you're constantly reminding them.</p> <p><b>Billie, 17:</b> You have to explain to them why they think... Because sometimes they'll say things and not realise how the other person can find it offensive or whatever and upsetting and you have to sit and try and explain it to them and some of them just can't get it.</p> <p>Billie, 19: And I was trying to explain to Neil, to say, "Can you understand how that person might feel because you've just said that?... For ages couldn't understand it... It was just so confusing for him..."</p>
<p><b>M11. Giving rewards and sanctions for interactions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>M11.1 Rewards for pro-social behaviour</li> <li>M11.2 Sanctions for anti-social behaviours.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased pro-social, decreased anti-social behaviours.</li> </ul> <p><b>Amira, 27:</b> So they were looking after this girl, Zinaida, and after play, they used to come and tell me, "Miss, we played with her for the whole of playtime and she was fine and she was happy."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change not sustained.</li> <li>Pupils w SEND embarrassed.</li> </ul> <p>See also outcomes for M3, M4 and M7.</p> <p><b>Minimal direct quotes<sup>2</sup>.</b></p>



	See also outcomes for M3, M4 and M7.	
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**7.17.3 Table of key quotes for coach strategies**

<b>Coach strategy</b>	<b>TA actions</b>	<b>Key quotes</b>
<b>C1. Monitoring and patrolling for pupil social problems.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Same as strategy M1 in manager (see manager strategy tables for details)</li></ul>	

<p><b>C2. Encouraging pupils to risk assess social situations; accept consequences and only 'tell an adult' if it is 'serious'.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage pupils to make choices based on the risk assessments.</li> <li>• Encourage pupils not to 'tell an adult' unless incident is assessed as a 'serious' risk.</li> <li>• Encourage pupils to accept the consequences of their decisions (or risk assessments) and to solve their own problems.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Susan, 1, 69:</b> And I'd said to him, "Look, basically, I don't really personally mind if you play those (dangerous) games. I can understand, but..." I said, "This is why we tell you not to play those games in school". I said, "I did warn you earlier, I said it was going to end in tears". I said, "You've got two choices. You don't play the game, but if you do play the game, you have to accept..." I mean I don't know if that would be the school's approach. But I just say, "If you do choose to play these games, then you've got to kind of accept the consequences a bit, you know, and not coming running to an adult." Which is what I said, "Straight away, come running to an adult saying, 'This has happened and that's happened'. Don't play the game."</p> <p><b>Susan, 1, 103:</b> If you're hurt, if you're injured, fair enough, but it's not good to run to the teacher over small things" ... I still felt we needed to have that conversation a bit, just for social skills.</p>
<p><b>C3. Prompting and challenging pupils to self-reflect on their mistakes.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt pupils to self-reflect using a variety of sub-strategies:</li> </ul> <p>- <b>C3.1 Modelling and eliciting the admitting of mistakes to</b></p>	<p>See sub-strategies below.</p> <p><b>Susan, 2, 45:</b> I like to do quite fun things. Like I will tell them, I don't know how politically correct this is, but I'll tell them something that maybe I did as a child, like a little story of one of the naughtiest things I did. And then we'll all go around, only if we want to, obviously nobody has to, and you share something that you maybe did when you were little; the naughtiest thing. And it's quite</p>

	<p><b>encourage self-reflection.</b></p>	<p>funny, it's quite good fun and the kids quite enjoy it. And I just think it's a nice thing because as adults I think we put across that we never do anything wrong; we never did anything wrong as children, we're teachers now and we were always well behaved, you know, we never did anything wrong to another child. And I don't think they can aspire to that, because already kids must think, well you know, <i>I've done all these things</i>. I think, sometimes we discuss it and talk about it and we laugh, and it's like, they're Year 6, you probably couldn't do it with the really little ones, because they're still little so they wouldn't be able to remember anything. It's got to be a while ago, so as you can kind of say, "I've grown up a bit since then. I wouldn't..." But it is just really good fun. And I think it just relaxes everyone and it makes them realise that, <i>Yeah we all do the wrong thing sometimes or don't always quite get it right</i>. And it's a nice thing... And then if they make a mistake, maybe they feel like you're not judging them so harshly. You're guiding them in saying, "You really shouldn't have done that." Like I really shouldn't have pulled the shopping trolley away. Yeah, it wasn't a very nice thing to do, as my brother still tells me to this day.</p>
	<p>- <b>C3.2 Questioning pupils accounts to encourage self-reflection.</b></p>	<p><b>Susan, 2, 112:</b> I always say to them, "Why? Why did they tell you to shut up?"</p> <p><b>Susan, 1, 45:</b> They'll come to you and they will say, "Oh so and so told me shut up". Now, before it would be like, "OK, why are you telling him to shut up? And blah, blah, blah, you know and we don't speak to people like that, and..." Now, I actually tend to say, "Why (did so and so tell you to shut up?)"</p> <p><b>Susan, 1, 63:</b> You(I) say, "Why? Why did they do that? What did you do?"</p>
	<p>- <b>C3.3 Giving honest feedback to challenge pupils to self-reflect.</b></p>	<p><b>Susan, 2, 112:</b> And so, they need telling, "Well, no. People just don't go around, just going 'shut up, shut up'." I said, "Normally, if someone said that to you, it's because you've said something that they don't like or that they don't want to hear, so they're telling you to 'shut up'."... And I will actually say to them, "Well, do you know what? If someone said that to me I might actually tell them to shut up." Because I think it's, you know... Or I say to them, "That will happen". I say, "If you go around speaking to people like that, then they will actually tell you to 'shut up'. It's going to happen out there. No one's going to stop it."</p>

		<p><b>Susan, 1, 47:</b> Now I actually tend to say, “Why?” If people are telling you to shut up, it’s normally because they don’t like what you’re saying. I think we just need to be a little bit more honest with them. It’s like if someone’s telling you to shut up, you need to think about why. And then it’ll come out they’ll say, “Oh well I was...” and I say, “Well, they shouldn’t...” I said, “You know it’s not very nice to be telling someone to shut up, but that’s why they’re telling you to shup up, basically. They don’t like what you’re saying and you’re annoying them, and people will do that”. In life, people will tell you to... It’s true though isn’t it?</p> <p><b>Susan, 1, 63:</b> Or even, kind of remind them, that maybe they were using the wrong tone. So, “It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it.” You know and it’s, “No I didn’t do that. I only...” And I say, “Yeah, but we know how you said it”. Let them know that I know as well. “I do know you didn’t say it like that.” Because a lot of times the kids will say to you... You say, “Why? Why did they do that? What did you do?” And they say, “I didn’t do anything.” And I just say, “No”, before I even speak to the other child I say, “I just know that’s not true”. I say, “Because people don’t react like that. They don’t, you know, from nowhere...” Unless there’s something terribly wrong with them and I don’t think we’ve got anyone in the school like that. They’re not... So in the end, they might say, “Well actually I did do this, but I only touched them”. Yeah, no you didn’t. Or, “I just asked them to go away”. Oh no, that’s the one they love, “Can you go away please? I just said, “Can you go away please?”” I just say, “No you didn’t, because that’s not what we say to people when we’re not... that’s not what children of your age say.” You know, you don’t... It seems a bit, but I do kind of say to them, “Look no, that’s not true.” I think we’re very worried as adults of, kind of telling children that we don’t think they’re telling the truth. I think we’re really worried about it now, and I don’t think you should ever call a child a liar or anything, but...</p> <p><b>Susan, 2, 162:</b> Sometimes I think they need to hear the truth. I know we don’t always like it.</p>
	<p>- <b>C3.4 Using humour to encourage honest self-reflection.</b></p>	<p><b>Susan, 2, 181:</b> I think the most important thing often is, I can sound quite firm and I can sound like I mean business, but I think a lot of the time is, have a bit of a sense of humour, like it’s not so serious. If you can kind of joke kids out of their... they prefer it. They can kind of save face as well, rather than have the confrontation that they might feel that they have got to keep up. It’s like, you know, it’s more like, “Really, are you</p>

		<p>really going to behave like that?" ... Have a little laugh and then often you might find that they laugh at themselves, and it kind of de-escalates things.</p> <p><b>Susan, 1, 63:</b> but I think with a bit of a sense of a humour as well... Not kind of, "No you didn't! I know you didn't!" It's more as if you're almost laughing yourself, you go, "Yeah." And sometimes I'll, sort of, I'll go, "Oh what? You said, "Oh, can you go away please?"" (Impersonates a well-mannered voice). You know, and I'll do the impression and they'll laugh as well, and think, <i>Oh, obviously she knows I didn't do that.</i> So, I think definitely a sense of humour helps.</p> <p><b>Susan, 1, 119:</b> I just think sense of humour can work... "Excuse me. Do you think she likes being spoken to like that?" If they're being a bit, you know?... Still make it a little bit humorous like, "Oh excuse, you know, did you enjoy him talking to you like that? Did you?", yeah but laughing, a little laughing. Kind of teach them, <i>Hang on, that's not the social way. That's not how we do it now.</i> Or you'll, if they're getting a bit upset about, or trying to take over a partner or whatever it is.</p> <p><b>Susan, 2, 126:</b> Whilst I've had children come up to me and they'll go, "So and so is like..." I don't know, something not very serious, "Didn't wash their hands." Or something, and it will be their best friend that they are telling on. And I'll say, "Is that your best friend?" And they go, "Yes." All proud. And I'll say, "Oh I wish I had a best friend like you." But they get the humour of it and it's just, kind of like, "That's your best friend and you've just come to tell me, that they haven't washed their hands." Sometimes they just need a little guidance, not too much.</p> <p><b>Kerry, 162:</b> There's one thing we did, I know it's naughty, but I said to him, "I'm going to draw a bottle and a sheet, a nappy, and then a cradle and write the word 'reception' and a girl who is screaming." And he said, "Why Miss Cook?" "Because that's all the things you do, so I'm going to have to remind you, when I see the screaming, I'll show you the bottle first." He smiles, and then I go, "And then, I can show you the cradle," and he smiles, "We go to reception, and that means you've got to stop at some point." But I've tried, it's never worked (Laughs). It was so funny the day that I tried it, it didn't work. But he smiled about it, he was genuinely smiling. And he goes to me, "But I don't really scream." And I go, "Please Raihan, you scream a lot." And he said, "I haven't really." I said, "Yes, you have, you have to try and control that screaming," and I said, "You know what, we're going to ask somebody else's opinion about that." So we went to Mr Baruwat and told Mr Baruwat, I'm was going to draw and encourage him to realise that he's screaming, by showing</p>
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		<p>him the bottle, the stuff. And he said, "Yes Raihan, you do scream." And he said, "No I don't!" (Laughs) It's so funny... But I haven't drawn the pictures yet. I just said that to him, just for fun really. Because I know that probably, that might cause a kick off even more, seeing a baby bottle and then seeing a nappy, and seeing a cot in reception and the girl screaming... I do try to let him loosen up, it's not always strict and straight. Have a bit of fun, I guess you learn something from it anyway, which is good.</p>
<p><b>C4. Suggesting strategies for pupils to implement more independently.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggest strategies for pupils to use to resolve social problems.</li> <li>• Two sub-strategies:</li> </ul>	<p><b>Susan, 1, 55:</b> I'll maybe, give them a bit of advice, "Do this"</p> <p><b>Susan, 2, 104:</b> There are other times when I will say to the child, "Well, have you actually told them that you don't like it?" And they'll go "No." And it's like, "Well, why not? Well, I think you need to go and tell them."</p>
	<p>- <b>C4.1 Observing and bearing witness as a means of supporting pupil to use suggested strategy.</b></p>	<p><b>Susan, 2, 104:</b> Sometimes I might, you know, then go with them (to use suggested strategy) and they'll go, "Oh." And they feel a bit safe and they go, "I actually don't like it, you know, when you", and then I'll kind of, just a little bit, say, "Alright, now you've been told. I know that she's told you, or he's told you that they don't like it so, that's it." And if they don't... Well, I don't usually have to say this, but if it does happen again I can actually say, "I actually know that you've been told." That this has got to stop.</p>
	<p>- <b>C4.2 Experimenting with strategies using trial and error; taking risks.</b></p>	<p><b>Billie, 85:</b> I was quite shocked because I thought, <i>Oh he'll probably last about ten minutes again and we'll go.</i> But I thought I'd try it just to see because I saw him enjoying it when he was doing the dancing, it was just the music was too loud...</p> <p><b>Billie, 115:</b> So, I'm going to try and, hopefully before the summer, get him in (to the lunch hall) at normal time, and see what happens. I've sort of mentioned about him going in with his class, but he's like, "No, no, no". But I might just try and find out when his class are the first ones in, the first</p>

		<p>sitting, and then try and get him to go in with them. Do it that way, because it'll still be a bit quieter. So, we'll see. We'll see how it goes with that.</p> <p><b>Kerry, 162:</b> There's one thing we did, I know it's naughty, but I said to him, "I'm going to draw a bottle and a sheet, a nappy, and then a cradle and write the word 'reception' and a girl who is screaming." And he said, "Why Miss Cook?" "Because that's all the things you do, so I'm going to have to remind you, when I see the screaming, I'll show you the bottle first." He smiles, and then I go, "And then, I can show you the cradle," and he smiles, "We go to reception, and that means you've got to stop at some point." But I've tried, it's never worked (Laughs). It was so funny the day that I tried it, it didn't work. But he smiled about it, he was genuinely smiling. And he goes to me, "But I don't really scream." And I go, "Please Raihan, you scream a lot." And he said, "I haven't really." I said, "Yes, you have, you have to try and control that screaming," and I said, "You know what, we're going to ask somebody else's opinion about that." So we went to Mr Baruwat and told Mr Baruwat, I'm was going to draw and encourage him to realise that he's screaming, by showing him the bottle, the stuff. And he said, "Yes Raihan, you do scream." And he said, "No I don't!" (Laughs) It's so funny... But I haven't drawn the pictures yet. I just said that to him, just for fun really. Because I know that probably, that might cause a kick off even more, seeing a baby bottle and then seeing a nappy, and seeing a cot in reception and the girl screaming... I do try to let him loosen up, it's not always strict and straight. Have a bit of fun, I guess you learn something from it anyway, which is good.</p> <p><b>Susan, 1, 117:</b> It should be, "Right who do you want as your partner?" Just encourage those skills. Stand back a bit and then if they're not quite getting it right, then I might encourage them to try something new, to think of what they need to do to get a partner.</p>
<p><b>C5. Asking solution-focussed questions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask questions to elicit pupils' own social problem-solving skills.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Susan, 1, 45:</b> "How did you deal with that? So what did you do?" ... "Well what did you do about it?" ... "What could you have said? What could you have done about it?" I'd rather send them off to try and resolve it themselves.</p> <p><b>Susan, 1, 63:</b> If I've got the two children, I'm more likely to say, "What could you have said to her?"</p>



		<p><b>Susan, 1, 117:</b> It should be, "Right who do you want as your partner?" Just encourage those skills. Stand back a bit and then if they're not quite getting it right, then I might encourage them to try something new, to think of what they need to do to get a partner.</p>
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## 7.17.4 Table of key quotes for coach short-term outcomes

Coach strategy	Short-term positive outcomes <sup>1</sup>
<p><b>C1. Monitoring and patrolling for pupil social problems.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same as strategy M1 in manager (see manager strategy tables for details)</li> </ul>
<p><b>C2. Encouraging pupils to risk assess social situations as a basis for making decisions.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- C2.1 Encouraging pupils to only 'tell an adult' if it is 'serious'.</li> <li>- C2.2 Encouraging pupils to accept the consequences of their risk assessments and decisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils more likely to resolve their problems independently;</li> </ul> <p>C2.1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to make their own risk assessments of social scenarios;</li> <li>- to accept the consequences of their decisions;</li> <li>- less likely to 'tell an adult' about more trivial social problems.</li> </ul> <p><b>Minimal direct quotes<sup>1</sup>.</b></p>
<p><b>C3. Prompting and challenging pupils to self-reflect on their mistakes.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- C3.1 Modelling and eliciting the admitting of mistakes to encourage self-reflection.</li> <li>- C3.2 Questioning pupils accounts to encourage self-reflection.</li> <li>- C3.3 Giving honest feedback to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils more likely to resolve their problems independently;</li> <li>- to be honest and self-reflect; to admit their mistakes and role in conflict.</li> </ul> <p><b>Researcher:</b> And so, do you think then they're more likely then to go away and attempt to resolve it?  <b>Susan, 1, 55:</b> Yeah and think about their behaviour as well.</p> <p>C3.1 and C3.4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils more likely to be honest and self-reflect;</li> <li>- to feel more relaxed and less judged.</li> </ul> <p><b>Susan, 2, 45:</b> And I think it just relaxes everyone and it makes them realise that, <i>Yeah we all do the wrong thing sometimes or don't always quite get it right.</i> And it's a nice thing... And then if they make a mistake, maybe they feel like you're not judging them so harshly. You're guiding them in saying, "You really shouldn't have done that." Like I really shouldn't have pulled the shopping trolley away.</p>

<p>challenge pupils to self-reflect.</p> <p>- C3.4 Using humour to encourage honest self-reflection.</p>	<p><u>C3.2 and C3.3:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils more likely to be honest and self-reflect;</li> <li>- pupils like being challenged and told ‘the truth’;</li> <li>- pupils have more respect for TA as a coach.</li> </ul> <p><b>Susan, 1, 51:</b> I think actually, to be honest I think they respond really well, and I think I can be a bit brutally honest with them sometimes, but I actually think they like it... I like to think that they’ve got quite a lot of respect for me, that they do like me. And I think they see it as fair in the end, because I do, I think I’m quite... honest with them. But then they know it’s not because I don’t like them and... once I’ve said it, that’s the end of it... Then it’s, they’re very nice people then.</p> <p><b>Susan, 1, 63:</b> So in the end, they might say, “Well actually I did do this, but I only touched them”.</p> <p><u>C3.4:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils more likely to be honest and self-reflect;</li> <li>- pupils can laugh at themselves and ‘save face’.</li> <li>- pupil problems are ‘de-escalated’;</li> </ul> <p><b>Susan, 2, 181:</b> like it's not <i>so</i> serious. If you can kind of joke kids out of their... they prefer it. They can kind of save face as well, rather than have the confrontation that they might feel that they have got to keep up.</p> <p><b>Susan 1, 183:</b> Have a little laugh and then often you might find that they laugh at themselves, and it kind of de-escalates things.</p> <p><b>Susan, 1, 63:</b> They’ll laugh as well, and think, <i>Oh, obviously she knows I didn’t do that</i>. So, I think definitely a sense of humour helps.</p>
<p><b>C4. Asking solution-focussed questions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils more likely to resolve their problems independently;</li> <li>- to initiate and use their own creative problem-solving skills.</li> </ul> <p><b>Minimal direct quotes<sup>1</sup>.</b></p>
<p><b>C5. Suggesting strategies for pupils to implement more independently.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils more likely to resolve their problems independently:</li> <li>- to implement problem solving strategies more independently.</li> </ul> <p><b>Minimal direct quotes<sup>1</sup>.</b></p>

<sup>1</sup>Insufficient negative outcomes for the coach strategies were found in the interview data to justify their inclusion in the theory. Therefore, no negative outcomes are presented here.

The lack of negative outcomes for the coach role is discussed in 6.4.

<sup>2</sup>Outcomes for some strategies were assumed or described too briefly or implicitly to include substantial direct quotes. For example, when TAs asked solution-focussed questions (C4), the outcome for pupil to initiate and use their own creative problem-solving skills was not directly named.

### 7.18 Incidences of descriptions of the manager and coach sub-strategies

TA pseudonym	Incidences of descriptions of manager sub-strategies in the data <sup>1</sup>												Incidences of description of coach sub-strategies in the data <sup>1</sup>					
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	Total	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	Total
Millie	1	1	3	1	-	-	3	-	4	3	8	24	-	-	-	-	-	0
Kerry	-	1	7	-	-	7	-	-	4	1	1	21	2	-	4	-	3	9
Amira	3	4	3	2	1	13	-	1	12	1	1	41	-	-	-	-	1	1
Billie	5	-	5	1	3	4	-	1	5	3	2	29	5	-	-	-	6	11
Riya	6	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	2	16	-	-	-	-	-	0
Susan	3	1	-	-	-	1	-	3	2	4	-	14	1	4	18	5	4	32
<b>Total</b>	18	10	18	4	4	25	3	5	32	12	14	145	8	4	22	5	14	53

<sup>1</sup> This table does not reflect the frequency with which these strategies are used by TAs, but the frequency with which they were mentioned by the TA participants during the interviews.

## **7.19 List of documents on the USB drive.**

### **7.19.1 MAX QDA data analysis file**

### **7.19.2 Interview transcripts**