A Constructivist Grounded Theory of the influences and practices that are thought to promote a sense of belonging in a primary school context

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A thesis submitted for the degree of:

Doctorate in Child, Community and Educational Psychology

Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust

University of Essex

Date of submission: May 2019

Abstract

A sense of school belonging has been proposed, by educational professionals and researchers, to have a powerful effect on a student's emotional, motivational and academic functioning. It has been well-documented as a predictor of academic success and emotional wellbeing, with UK Government policy increasingly recognising the central role played by school staff in the promotion of belonging in their pupils.

Although a considerable body of research exists, which presents the positive outcomes associated with experiencing a sense of school belonging, less is known about how schools cultivate such a sentiment for their pupils. The qualitative research presented here aims to address this gap by applying Constructivist Grounded Theory methodology (Charmaz, 2014) to explore the influences and practices that are thought to promote a sense of belonging in a primary school context. Purposive sampling methods were employed to recruit the primary school of study and a descriptive case-study approach was adopted. Semi-structured interviews were used to elicit the views of nine members of a primary school community in London. The processes of data collection and analysis were guided by the principles of the grounded theory method.

The findings of this study led to the construction of an interpretive theory: 'Keeping to our path: a shared commitment to the promotion of school belonging through organised and transformative child-centred practices, which integrate environmental, relational and cultural influences.' In order to promote sentiments of school belonging, this interpretive theory emphasised the importance of adopting a systematic multidimensional approach that incorporates individual, organisational and environmental factors. The conceptual model presented, that is grounded in the data, may guide educational professionals in

their effort to promote school belonging. Implications for Educational Psychology practice will be discussed.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to extend my gratitude to each individual at St Francis' School who took part in this research, sharing their thoughts and experiences so openly and honestly. I would like to thank the Head Teacher who welcomed me with kindness, enthusiasm and support from day one. The commitment and passion of each individual I met at this school was remarkable.

I would also like to thank Professor Kathryn Riley for her thought-provoking seminar at the beginning of my research journey that subsequently led to her introducing me to the community of St Francis' School.

Thank you to my research supervisor, Dr Rachael Green, and my personal supervisor, Dr Chris Shaldon, for your ongoing support, guidance and encouragement throughout this journey.

Thank you to my placement supervisor, and the Principal Educational Psychologist, for your flexibility and support during the final months of submission.

And finally, thank you to my family. To my mum, whose support is (and has always been) infinite, to Guto for his unwavering acceptance and containment, to my brother Tom for always, always being there, to Liz for truly understanding the plight(!) and to Charlie, for being my tonic.

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I have lived most of my life near the sea…If I am not looking at it, I am visualising it –

Kyffin Williams: Behind the Frame
National Library of Wales, 2018

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Chapter overview

This chapter introduces the research area of school belonging and offers an interpretation of the contextual landscape of the study. The current sociopolitical climate and the growing concerns regarding the metal health and wellbeing of children and young people, are integral to the context of this study, and will be discussed within this chapter. The working definition of 'school belonging' will be presented and the participating school discussed.

1.2 The need to belong

The hunger to belong is at the heart of our nature; something within each of us calls out for the anchor of belonging (O'Donogue, 1998). Establishing a sense of belonging is considered a fundamental motivational need with critical implications for human growth and development across the life span (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Slaten, et al, 2016).

We are living in a world of rapid change and uncertainty (Riley, 2017). The challenges facing school communities are becoming ever more substantial, yet there is a growing recognition of the power of schools to be sources of emotional wellbeing, resilience (DfES, 2003) and places of belonging. It is hoped that the findings of this study, which aims to capture how a sense of belonging has been promoted within a school setting, will illustrate how educational professionals and school leaders alike can create a framework for school belonging and build upon the current thinking and practice. Kathryn Riley, Professor of Urban Education at the Institute of Education, University College London, with a long and varied career bridging the worlds of social policy, research and practice, proposed that "when young people feel that they are safe in school, when they feel they

belong, when they feel rooted, school becomes a place for them. They become open to learning and they succeed in many spheres" (Riley, 2017, p ix).

1.3 Defining 'school belonging'

Belonging is a "complex and multi-faceted" affective phenomenon (Cartmell and Bond 2015, p. 92). St-Amand and colleagues carried out a comprehensive literature review in order to explore the defining attributes and main determinants of school belonging. After a careful examination of the definitions, the researchers found that although the terminology varied, consistent defining attributes did emerge:

1. Positive emotions, which include: a feeling of attachment, intimacy, worthiness and pride.
2. Trusting, supportive and respectful relationships with peers and teachers.
3. Individuals would demonstrate a willingness to get involved in a meaningful way if they are feeling a sense of belonging within the school.
4. Finally, harmonisation is often mentioned as an attribute in the definitions of school belonging; individuals will adapt and adjust to align themselves with persons and situations if they feel they belong.

St-Amand et al (2017) stated that knowing the defining attributes of belonging is crucial for those working within education. They believe this knowledge could lead teachers to adopt more precise pedagogical strategies and foster a sense of belonging within the school context.

For the purpose of this study, the working definition for school belonging, presented by Goodenow (1993a), is believed to encapsulate the defining attributes:

> [Belonging is] a students' sense of being accepted, valued, included and encouraged by others (teachers and peers) in the [school] setting and of feeling

> oneself to be an important part of the life and activity [within the school]. More than simply perceived liking or warmth, it involves support and respect for personal autonomy and for the student as an individual (Goodenow, 1993a, p. 25)

1.4 The Socio-political landscape of belonging

Whilst the subject of this study is school belonging, the wider socio-political landscape needs to be considered in order to contextualise the study in a time and place. In this section, the wider context of the study will be discussed. Reference will be made to the growing prevalence of uncertainty, generated by recent economic austerity, 'Brexit',[1] and global affairs.

Although the future is always unknowable, the sentiments of uncertainty appear to be rising exponentially, and at a global level (Riley, 2017). Uncertainty pervades many facets of society ranging from climate change to zero-hour contracts and economic austerity. For many children, these feelings of uncertainty are extremely personal. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (2016) described how there are many communities that are missing out on opportunities as a result of socio-economic deprivation, social invisibility, and cultural barriers. Economic inequality and the ramifications of such income differentials are significant and have far-reaching effects (Neuman, 2006). Simultaneously, the emotional wellbeing and overall happiness of children and young people remains a public concern (*The Good Childhood Report*, 2018).

[1] The (proposed) withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, and the political process associated with it (Oxford English Dictionary).

Children's interactions with those around them, and how they perceive those interactions have implications for how they feel about themselves (*The Good Childhood Report*, 2018). Young people spend a significant period of their childhood in school (Werner & Smith, 2001), consequently, the impact and influence of schools cannot be underestimated. Schools must be places of possibility, opportunity and optimism; places of belonging. This foundational principle will enable them to access the "world of unparalleled opportunities and boundless possibilities" (Riley, 2017, p. 11).

1.4.1 Diversity and division

Growing up in divided societies is "a normal rather than abnormal experience for most of the world's children" (Leonard, McKnight, and Spyrou, 2011, p. 520). However, in society today, there seems to be growing sentiments of cultural and political division and opposition. Like adults, children belong to interrelating social, cultural and ethnic groups which influence their sense of self and identity. Whilst certain aspects of a child's identity may be 'accepted', others may be subsumed by dominant groups sometimes leading to an "us" and "them" narrative (Leonard et al, 2011), which can be played out in schools. It is important to consider how schools can absorb, resist and ultimately support their pupils to feel a sense of belonging in spite of the division and opposition that often surrounds them.

In June 2016 citizens of the United Kingdom (UK) cast their vote as to whether or not the UK should remain or leave the European Union (EU). The results of the referendum indicated a majority of 51.9% of the population were in favour of leaving the EU. Following a period of 'Brexit' negotiations, the UK is set to leave the EU in 2019.

The referendum has proven to be deeply polarising along racial, ethnic, class, geographical and generational lines (Tyler et al, unpublished). Its aftermath propelled a process of 'othering' which manifested through an increase in violent hate crime, xenophobia, and anxiety and uncertainty relating to an individual's future rights (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2016). However, Umunna (2016) explained that this result should not have come as a surprise. In the General Election in 2015, different parties won in each of the UK's four constituent nations, giving the impression of a kingdom with divided political views (Umunna, 2016).

Writing in the Fabian Society's *Integration Report* (2016) Chuka Umunna referred to Theodore Roosevelt's speech in 1899 where Roosevelt described 'fellow-feeling' – "the mutual kindness, the mutual respect, the sense of common duties and common interests, which arise when men take the trouble to understand one another" (Roosevelt, 1904). Roosevelt asserted that fellow-feeling was the most important factor in producing a healthy political and social life. He proclaimed that social and political unrest stems from a misunderstanding by one group of society about another or when two groups of society are so far removed from each other, neither appreciates the other's "passions, prejudices, and indeed, point of view" (Roosevelt, 1899, speech). This affirmation seems particularly poignant today. Although Britain has become increasingly diverse, with rising possibility and opportunity for many, our social solidarity and unity continues to be challenged (Umunna, 2016). Our 'fellow-feeling' is being disputed and we see less of ourselves in one another; Britain is "at once more diverse and less integrated" (Umunna, 2016, p.7).

It is inevitable that these external political realities permeate school life; their undercurrents stretch beyond pure policy and procedure. In this context of uncertainty and division, the critical challenge for schools is to be places where children have the opportunity to develop the capacity and confidence to tolerate this uncertainty and to recognise the positive choices they have ahead of them (Riley, 2017). Schools need to be places of *certainty* and acceptance where children consistently feel they *belong*, and are safe to be who they are.

1.4.2 Community cohesion[2]

As inferred in the section above, many children are growing up in divided communities (Leonard et al, 2011). Schools are seen as key sites for cultivating community cohesion by policy makers and educators alike. "Schools and colleges have a key contribution to make to cohesion by giving young people the skills to adapt to change and deal with difference, alongside giving them a sense of belonging" (DCLG[3], 2008, p. 18).

Following the race riots in 2001,[4] there was a policy focus on community cohesion. The aspiration for community cohesion was to create a society where all communities feel a sense of belonging (DCFS[5], 2007). Schools across the country were expected to support the building of community cohesion (Riley, 2013) by ensuring that "all young people had the opportunity to fulfil their potential and feel part of a community at a local, national and international level" (DCFS, 2007, p.2). Schools must know and understand the lives of their pupils and make meaningful connections with families in the community it serves.

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[2] Community refers to the immediate local environment.
[3] Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).
[4] In 2001, a number of towns in the north of England rioted largely in response to racial tensions.
[5] Department for Children and Family Services (DCFS).

Despite the 2007 policy focus on community cohesion, in 2014 the Social Integration Commission conducted an independent study and found that even in ethnic and income diverse communities, people were significantly more likely to interact with individuals from similar backgrounds to them. As such, efforts for community cohesion and connectivity continue to be societal priorities.

1.5 The educational context of belonging

It is impossible to imagine a school, without thinking about the people within it. Each individual in a school community carries with them not only their varied life experiences, language and cultural knowledge, but also their wide-ranging social and emotional experiences, their relationship expectations and their diverse ethnic and spiritual heritage (Geddes et al, 2017). Viewing the school community in this way, alludes to the complexities of education. Moreover, one must consider the school community as *alive*; it is dynamic and ever-changing. This again highlights the challenge for school leaders and staff is to create nourishing environments where every individual feels a sense of belonging (Riley, 2017).

In the school environment, children can experience a sense of belonging, or conversely, exclusion (Riley, 2017). Disengagement from school is considered to be a key indicator of a lack of school belonging (Christenson and Thurlow, 2004) and may predict whether a young person leaves school prematurely (Rouse and Kemple, 2009). Hargreaves, Earl and Ryan (1996) argue that "one of the most fundamental reforms needed in… education is to make schools into better communities of caring and support for young people" (p.

77). Furman (1998) stated that a community is not present until its members experience a sense of belonging.

1.5.1 Inclusive and exclusive education

Legislation in the UK prohibits discrimination in education and supports inclusive education (e.g. The Equality Act, 2010; The Children and Families Act, 2014; The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0-25, 2014). Roffey (2013) emphasised the responsibility of professionals to ensure full and equal access to education (Roffey, 2013). Much of the current political discourse is preoccupied with the significant cuts to public services. These budget cuts have specific implications for those students in school who come from "disadvantaged circumstances and often find it more of a struggle to learn, achieve and behave in desired ways" (Roffey, 2013, p. 39). In 2017, the DfE figures showed that 4152 children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) were left without a school place and subsequently not in receipt of any formal education. In 2010, the equivalent figure stood at just 776 showing a sharp increase in recent years.

A further educational concern relates to the growing number of educational exclusions in the UK. Despite the increase in professional and legislative attention on inclusive education and on the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young, more and more children and young people are being permanently excluded from schools. In January 2013, national statistics indicated that there were 14,050 students in Pupil Referral Units (PRU), of whom 1430 had 'Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties' (BESD) which is 10.18% of the PRU population, and 9405 (67%) were identified as having Special Educational Needs (Statistical First Release, 2014). Without positive

intervention, these children and young people are at risk of becoming socially excluded in the future (Roffey, 2013) so may seek a sense of belonging elsewhere.

Dying to Belong: An In-depth Review of Street Gangs in Britain[6] was compiled by the Gangs Working Group in 2009 in response to the rise in gang related violence over the last 10 years. The Office for National Statistics (2015) stated that nearly 1% of children between 10 and 15 years of age are members of a street gang. The majority of gang members either truanted or were officially excluded from school (Aldridge et al, 2011). As a result of alienation from mainstream society, Anderson (1999) stated that these young people are fulfilling their belonging needs through gang membership. Within the report completed by the Gangs Working Group, reference was made to a conversation between a police officer and a young male in a Pupil Referral Unit who was suspected of gang membership. It was noted that the male indicated his gang involvement provided him with a sense of belonging.

This report emphasises the need for preventative and sustainable measures. If belongingness and inclusion are actively promoted in school, it is likely to discourage the development of 'connection' to negative groups such as gangs (Gangs Working Group, 2009). Students are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviours and succeed academically when they feel a sense of school belonging (Roffey, 2013).

1.5.2 Mental health in schools

The concept of belonging has a far-reaching impact on human motivation and behaviour (Osterman, 2000). The need to belong is considered a fundamental motivational need

[6] An independent review of the current landscape of gangs in Britain.

with critical implications for human growth and development (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Perceiving a sense of belonging or connectedness with one's school is related to emotional health and wellbeing (Anderman, 2002), and feeling safe and connected to school were found to be predictive of emotional wellbeing (Lester and Cross, 2015). The Department for Education advice in the UK (DfE, 2015) states that a "school should be a safe and affirming place for children where they can develop a sense of belonging and feel able to trust and talk openly with adults about their problems" (DfE, 2015, p. 8).

In 2013, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) published a report examining children and young people's emotional wellbeing; the UK was placed 16th among 29 developed countries. Research estimates that one in ten children aged between 5 and 16 have a diagnosable mental health disorder (Green, McGinnity, Meltzer, Ford and Goodman, 2005). The Department of Health and the DfE responded to this growing concern with new initiatives and legislation. Educational policies and guidelines emphasised the active involvement of school staff and educational professionals in the promotion of children's mental health and wellbeing (e.g. Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision, 2017; Future in Mind: Promoting, Protecting and Improving Our Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing, 2015).

Both nationally and locally the numbers of children identified as having Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs is growing; it is the most common occurring category of Special Educational Needs in England (Sheffield and Morgan, 2017), with 19.3% of those on the SEND register described in this way (DfE, 2015). It has been suggested that young people with SEMH become "a victim to a system that labels them as failures, and does not provide the academic, social or emotional support

they need" (Cefai and Cooper, 2009, p48-49). These educational policies and reforms have highlighted the responsibility of schools to elevate their awareness, and develop their competence in identifying and responding to emotional and mental health needs. Maslow (1971) proposed that most emotional illness and instability could be traced to the failure to gratify the basic human need for belonging. Thus, finding ways to promote sentiments of belonging in school is a worthy endeavour.

1.6 Theoretical underpinnings

There are a number of theoretical frameworks that underpin this area of research. Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs provides a foundational framework through which to view the construct of belonging. Maslow (1968) placed 'love and belongingness needs' in the middle of his motivational hierarchy below self-esteem and self-actualisation. This meant Maslow believed a sense of belonging was required in order to attain self-actualisation.[7] As such, belongingness is considered a motivational force influencing an individual's behaviour.

Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self Determination Theory[8], also offers insight regarding the need to belong and human motivation. The researchers described how human behaviour stems from intrinsic motivation (i.e. values, thoughts, interests) and extrinsic motivation (i.e. external influences e.g. accolades, evaluation from others). Psychological relatedness, that is, people's need to have a sense of belonging and connectedness with

[7] Self-actualisation represents the "highest level of psychological development" (Colman, 2006, p. 679)
[8] Self Determination Theory (SDT) "is an approach to human motivation and personality that highlights the importance of humans' evolved inner resources for personality development and behavioural self-regulation… It is the investigation of people's inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs that are the basis for their self-motivation and personality integration, as well as the conditions that foster those positive processes" (Deci and Ryan, 2000, p 68).

others, is a fundamental intrinsic need involved in self-determination.[9] Human beings can be "proactive and engaged, or alternatively passive and alienated, largely as a function of the social conditions in which they develop" (Deci and Ryan, 2000, p. 68). Leary and Baumeister (2000) hypothesised that the need to belong is a fundamental human motivator. They stated that humans are innately driven to find belonging and, as such, the need to belong may indeed provide explanation for many human behaviours.

Furthermore, ecological theories provide a framework for examining the school environment. They highlight the importance of connections between individuals and their environment (McMahon, Wernsman and Rose, 2009). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory provides a helpful theoretical construct with which to investigate the concept of school belonging. Bronfenbrenner states that a child's development is subject to multiple levels of environmental influence. Allen and Bowles (2012) applied Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory to the context of the school. They suggested that the microsystem represents the social network of family, friends, teachers and peers; the mesosystem represents the school's resources and organisational processes and how these influence teaching practices and school culture. The exosystem relates to the school's interaction with the broader community of parents and external organisations and services. Finally, the macrosystem represents how governmental policies and legislation influence the school setting (Allen and Bowles, 2012). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems framework illustrates the various individual, relational, organisational and socio-political layers that can affect a student's sense of school belonging (Allen, Vella-Brodrick and Waters, 2016).

[9] The process by which a person controls their own life (Oxford English Dictionary, 2017).

1.7 The local context: St Francis' School

This small-scale research study took place in St Francis' School, a one-form entry primary school in London. The school is located within a culturally diverse community and in March 2016, the school was rated by Ofsted as Good in all areas.

St Francis' School is smaller than the average sized primary school with 175 pupils on roll. There is a higher than average proportion of pupils eligible for additional government funding (pupil premium[10]). Most pupils come from minority ethnic heritages and a wide range of heritages are represented in the school. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than average (56%), as is the proportion of pupils with SEND.

In 2014, a research team from the University College London, Institute of Education (Professor Riley, Dr Max Coates, Dr Dina Mehmedbegovic and Rhoda Furniss) set up a two-year project 'School: A Place where I belong?' in London schools. This action research project aimed to generate greater understanding about how a sense of place and belonging is experienced in schools. Thirteen schools in London participated in the research and sought to explore: *Is 'our' school a place where everyone feels they belong?* St Francis' School contributed to this research project and, it was for this reason among others, that St Francis' School was thought to be in an informed position to address the research question of this study.

[10] Pupil Premium: an additional Government funding that is used to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.

1.8 Chapter summary

In this chapter the socio-political landscape of the study was introduced. This included an overview of the legislative framework within the field of education which related to inclusion, SEND and mental health in schools. Furthermore, current societal trends and priorities were described with reference to the concept of belonging and the school of study was discussed. The next chapter provides a preliminary review of research literature which addresses more specifically the concept of belonging within the school context.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter describes the first of a two-part literature review conducted for this study. This preliminary literature review sets out to systematically review what existing research says about the significance and impact of school belonging. In this chapter, the search strategy for the preliminary literature review will be described, followed by a critical review of the retrieved research on school belonging. The chapter concludes with the aims and rationale for this study within the presented context.

2.2 Approach to reviewing the literature

This research will be using a Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) methodology to explore the influences and practices that are thought to promote school belonging. The place of the literature review in Grounded Theory (GT) has long been disputed (Charmaz, 2006). Classic Grounded Theorists (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978) advocate for delaying the literature review until completion of analysis in order to avoid imparting preconceived ideas onto the research findings (Charmaz, 2006). However, the presumption that the researcher is able to remain 'removed' from the research process, allowing for the emergence of an objective theory, sits firmly within a positivist epistemology (Lincoln, Lynhan and Guba, 2011).

The current study adopts a constructivist epistemology; knowledge is assumed to be *constructed* in nature, and inseparable from the researcher (Lincoln et al, 2011). As is consistent with the CGT tradition, a preliminary literature review was conducted prior to data collection in order to explore the research landscape of belonging, and justify the unique aims and objectives of the current study (Birks and Mills, 2015). Charmaz (2006)

proposed that the acquisition of knowledge this affords could be a source of 'sensitising concepts'[11] that might guide the analytic process and provide a general sense of direction (Charmaz, 2006).

A second literature review was conducted after data collection and analysis, an approach consistent with the Grounded Theory Method (GTM). The rationale for the second literature review was to consider the conceptual findings of the current study and determine theoretical correspondence with the literature. The second literature review can be found in Chapter 5.

2.3 Aims of the systematic literature review

The preliminary literature review has the following aims:

1. Describe the findings of previous research in order to establish what is already known about the significance and impact of feeling a 'sense of belonging' in school.
2. Provide an account of how 'school belonging' has been investigated in previous research in order to explore which methodological approach would be most appropriate for the current study.
3. Justify the unique aims, objectives, research questions and overall rationale of this study.

[11] Charmaz (2014) described sensitising concepts as "points of departure for studying the empirical world while retaining the openness for exploring it… [they] provide a place to *start* inquiry, not to *end* it" (pp. 30-31).

2.3.1 Search Strategy

A systematic literature search was conducted in April 2018 using the EBSCO online index. The search was then repeated between October 2018 and December 2018. Relevant literature was identified by searching PsychINFO, PsychARTICLES, Psychology and Behavioural Sciences, ERIC and Education Source databases. The articles included in the review were critiqued using Holland and Rees' frameworks for critiquing qualitative and quantitative studies (see Appendix A). The reader is asked to refer to Appendix B for search terms and inclusion criteria, and Appendix C for a tabulated summary of the studies included.

A further search was conducted in order to explore the literature that specifically examines the influences and practices thought to promote school belonging in Primary School contexts in the United Kingdom (UK). This was piloted as a 'scoping exercise'; this permits the researcher to survey the empirical studies conducted in the area of interest (Peterson, Pearce, Ferguson and Langford, 2016). This scoping review is detailed in section 2.5.

2.4 The significance and impact of a sense of school belonging

The primary aim of the preliminary literature review was to explore what is already known about the significance and impact of a sense of school belonging. Studies that explored the *outcomes* associated with feeling a sense of school belonging are included in this section. In total, 22 studies met the inclusion criteria for review. The positive implications of feeling a sense of belonging in school are pervasive in the literature yet quantitative methodologies, and correlational findings dominate the field. Key themes that emerged from the review relate to:

- Academic attainment and educational values
- Emotional wellbeing
- Misconduct and health-risk behaviours.

Each of the key themes will be discussed with reference to the literature retrieved. A critique of the literature included in each section will also be presented.

2.4.1 School belonging, academic attainment and educational values

A number of studies have investigated school belonging in relation to academic attainment, self-efficacy and motivation. School belonging was described as a critical component in the investigation of social mechanisms that promote academic achievement (Maurizi et al, 2013) and has been linked to positive academic attainment (Goodenow, 1993) and motivation (Goodenow and Grady, 1993; Roeser et al, 1996).

Sanchez, Colon and Esparza (2005) conducted a quantitative study examining the role of belonging in the academic outcomes of Latino adolescents in a large urban high school in Midwestern America. The researchers utilised Goodenow's (1993b) Psychological Sense of School Membership scale (PSSM) with 143 participants to assess their sense of belonging. Further scales were used to measure motivation, academic effort, and educational aspirations (α = .64 - .90). The researchers conducted Bivariate Pearson correlation analyses between 'sense of school belonging' and various study variables (e.g. absenteeism, expectancy for success, GPA[12] etc.) The analyses were conducted separately for males and females.

[12] Grade Point Average (GPA).

It was reported that school belonging was positively related to intrinsic value for English (.73, $p < .01$) and expectancy for success in English (.24, $p < .05$) amongst female participants, although not for male participants. Amongst the male participants, a sense of belonging was significantly correlated with absenteeism (-.39, $p < .01$) and their educational expectations (.37, $p < .01$); the same was not found for the female participants. The researchers conducted a series of regression analyses; the results indicated that a sense of belonging significantly predicted absenteeism ($\beta = .19$, $p < .05$), expectancy for success and intrinsic value for English and academic effort ($\beta = .35$, $p < .001$) amongst the participants. However, a sense of belonging was not found to significantly predict GPA, educational aspirations, or education expectations.

These findings are consistent with other retrieved studies that explored the role of school belonging in relation to academic motivation, academic effort, and absenteeism within the Latino population (e.g. Maurizi, Ceballo, Epstein, and Cortina, 2013; Kuperminc, Darnell, and Alvarez-Jimenez, 2008; Vera, Polanin, Polanin, and Carr, 2018) and with regards to students' intrinsic value for and belief in the utility of school, across the four years of high school (Gillen-O'Neel and Fuligni, 2013). However, incongruent with prior studies (Goodenow, 1993a; Roeser et al, 1996), Sanchez et al (2005) did not find a sense of belonging to be a significant predictor of GPA or educational expectations and aspirations. Although, a lack of association between GPA and school belonging was also reported by Gillen-O'Neel and Fuligni (2013).

Sanchez et al (2005) hypothesised whether their findings may be due to the limitations of the measures used, and the fact that the participants were high school students. Although this was not a study variable in the research conducted by Sanchez et a (2005), another

influencing factor may relate to parental involvement. Kuperminc et al (2008) found parental involvement to be key influence on the academic achievement of Latino students. The authors surmised that parental involvement contributed to positive sentiments of school belonging which *in turn* impacted upon perceptions of academic competence and attainment.

A similar finding regarding the influence of parental factors was reported by Frehill and Dunmuir (2015) who examined sense of belonging and absenteeism amongst traveller and non-traveller students in an Irish secondary school. Their MANOVA[13] analysis revealed that whilst school connectedness significantly predicted absenteeism in their model which examined 'belonging variables' and absenteeism (F=5.857, p<.05), in their final model which examined 'belonging variables' and 'background variables', the only significant predictors of absenteeism were 'mother's level of education' ($\beta = -.266$, $p<.001$) and 'group membership' ($\beta = -.504$, $p<.001$).

Statistically significant relationships between school belonging and academic self-efficacy have been reported in prior research with other population demographics (Goodenow, 1993a; Roeser et al, 1996; McMahon, Parnes, Keys and Viola, 2008; McMahon, Wensman and Rose, 2009). Goodenow (1993a) explored the sense of school belonging of 353 pupils, between the ages of 11 and 15, attending a suburban middle school in New England. Goodenow (1993a) examined the relationship between belonging and expectation for success, motivation and attainment. Each participant completed a scale of classroom belonging, expectancies for success, and intrinsic interest and values. In addition, the pupils' grades and effort ratings were obtained from their

[13] Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA).

English teacher. A significant relationship was reported between belonging and expectancy for success and intrinsic interest and values in both zero order correlations and multiple regression analyses. Furthermore, belonging and support explained one third of the variation in students' expectation for success ($r^2 = .38$). However, 'teacher support' was the largest *predictor* of belonging and support, expectancies for success and intrinsic interest and value for a subject. With regards to effort and grades, a significant relationship to belonging and support was reported. However, expectancy of success was found to be the primary predictor of effort and grades.

An interesting finding is that the effects of belonging and support on motivation declined from 6th grade to 8th grade. This indicates that early adolescents may gather much of their academic motivation from how they perceive support from others in the school setting. This perception was found to be the most influential single component of belonging and support with regards to effort and achievement.

In a later study, McMahon, Wernsman and Rose (2009) explored school belonging and 'classroom climate' in relation to self-efficacy,[14] which the authors describe as a key construct influencing learning outcomes. McMahon et al (2009) examined classroom environmental factors (satisfaction, cohesiveness, difficulty, competitiveness and friction) and sense of school belonging in relation to language arts, and maths and science self-efficacy. The quantitative research was conducted with 149 young people aged between 9 and 11 in two elementary schools in California. The authors used a

[14] Perceived self-efficacy includes beliefs about one's ability or competence to bring about intended results (Oxford Dictionary of Psychology, 2006, p. 679).

simplified version of Goodenow's (1993b) PSSM scale on account of the age of the participants. This did affect the internal consistency of the measure ($\alpha = .66$).

The results of the study indicated an interconnected relationship between sense of school belonging and the classroom environment. The authors described how a sense of school belonging is likely to positively influence an individual's engagement with learning, which may then lead to positive classroom perceptions. Similarly, students who feel they have a cohesive class also feel a sense of belonging to their school. School belonging was found to be the most important *contextual* predictor of improved language arts self-efficacy ($\beta = .19$, $p < .05$). However, the same was not found for maths and science self-efficacy; 'less difficulty' was the only contextual variable which predicted self-efficacy in these subjects. The authors speculated whether the instructional techniques may influence this disparity; 'arts-based' subjects include more discussion, which may create a more cohesive classroom environment with positive perceptions of student-teacher relationships, which then impacts upon sentiments of school belonging. In addition, the authors assumed that typically, the demographic of their sample ("low-income students") find maths and science more difficult. However, this seems to be a rather broad generalisation.

McMahon, Parnes, Keys, and Viola (2008) were interested in examining the impact of school belonging on academic and psychological outcomes among adolescents with disabilities. In order to investigate this relationship, the authors developed a theoretical model, and then tested the model with 136 demographically diverse students between the ages of 11 and 20. The majority of participants had a mild, moderate or severe registered disability; 31 (23%) of participants did not have an identified disability. All participants

had recently experienced a transition to a different school due to the closure of a specialist provision. The PSSM scale (Goodenow, 1993b) was used to measure school belonging. A number of other internally consistent measures were used to examine school stressors, academic self-efficacy, school satisfaction, and depression and anxiety. The results of the study supported their proposed theoretical model; students who have more school-related social resources (i.e. positive peer relationships; support and empathy from school staff) and fewer school-related stressors (i.e. peer rejection; victimisation; difficult interpersonal relationships with teachers) experience higher levels of school belonging. This in turn predicts higher levels of academic self-efficacy and school satisfaction. The authors concluded that their findings indicate the central role of school belonging in the school experiences of students with disabilities.

Uwah, McMahon, and Furlow (2008) reported conflictual findings with regards to general perceived school belonging and academic self-efficacy. The researchers examined the school belonging, educational aspirations and academic self-efficacy among 40 African American male students between the ages of 14 and 16. The PPSM scale (Goodenow, 1993b) was used to measure belonging. Additional measures were incorporated to the PSSM scale by the researchers: 'perceived likeness and inclusion' (PLS); 'feeling encouraged to participate' (FEP); and 'general feelings of belonging' (GFB), with respective Cronbach Alpha scores of .63, .66, and .77. The authors found that the PSSM scale, the PLS and the GFB scale did not positively relate to academic self-efficacy among this sample. However, significant findings were reported with regards to the FEP scale and academic self-efficacy ($r = .42$, $p < .001$) and also between academic self-efficacy scores and educational aspirations ($r = .39$, $p < .05$). Furthermore,

the FEP subscale (β .39, $p < .05$) and educational aspirations (β .33, $p < .05$) significantly predicted academic self-efficacy.

2.4.1.1 School belonging and academic attainment and motivation: study limitations

In summary, the literature reviewed provides some promising findings regarding the relationship between a sense of belonging and academic attainment. However, the studies have several methodological weaknesses that mitigate the strength of the findings. Firstly, the majority of the studies included report upon correlational findings meaning they do not imply causality. The relationship between academic attainment and school belonging is likely reciprocal; children and young people who are functioning better academically, are likely to feel more connected to their schools.

Additionally, most of the studies have relied upon self-reporting measures. There are several limitations of self-report methods to consider. The researcher is trusting that the respondent is answering honestly to the questions; issues of social-desirability/ response bias may influence participants' answers. For example, in the study conducted by Frehill and Dunmuir (2015) the authors identified discrepancy in the responses from teachers and 'traveller' students. It was noted that the traveller students completed the questionnaires in the presence of their families which may have impacted their responses. However, including the views of the teachers shed light on this possibility. In some of the other studies included, the findings would have been strengthened if the views of other (for example, parents and teachers) were also obtained.

A comparable limitation within some of the studies reviewed relates to the internal consistency of the measures used (McMahon et al, 2009; Kuperminc et al, 2008; Sanchez et al, 2005) which brings into question whether the scales are indeed measuring what the researchers intended the measure. Furthermore, some of the scales applied were developed for the purposes of the study in question and it was unclear whether they had been sufficiently piloted prior to use (Goodenow, 1993a; Uwah et al, 2008). Furthermore, it could be argued that the measures used (predominantly the PSSM scale) were based on a Eurocentric[15] view of belonging.

Sample limitations are also present within the studies reviewed. In a number of studies, the findings are based upon a specific sample (Uwah et al, 2008; McMahon et al, 2008; Sanchez et al, 2005; Frehill and Dunmuir, 2015). As such, generalisability beyond the study sample is limited. Furthermore, in some studies (Sanchez et al, 2005; Uwah et al, 2008; Frehill and Dunmuir, 2015) sample bias may have occurred. For example, the sample of the study conducted by Sanchez et al (2005) the participants included in the study were deemed the 'better' students in the sense that they had overcome educational obstacles and defied the high drop-out rate prevalent in the school. The study may have revealed different results if a wider sample of participants were used. Similarly, the schools included in the study conducted by Frehill and Dunmuir (2015) may have agreed to participate because they were adopting 'traveller inclusive' practices which may not be representative of other schools. This hinders the possibility of making valid inferences about the population on the basis of the data collected and raises questions regarding external validity.

[15] Eurocentrism refers to a bias towards the European experience.

2.4.2 School belonging and emotional wellbeing

Five of the retrieved studies focused on the examination of a sense of school belonging in relation to emotional wellbeing. Greater school belonging has been associated with fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety, and general psychological functioning amongst children and adolescents.

A large-scale survey was conducted by Anderman (2002) whereby data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health was used to examine the relations of perceived school belonging to various psychological outcomes. The researchers developed their own scale to measure school belonging, which although yielded good reliability (α .78), had not been used in prior studies that investigated school belonging. Other scales were used to measure depression, optimism, self-concept and social rejection and were similarly deemed internally consistent. Results of the survey revealed that perceived individual school belonging was related negatively and significantly (p <.01) to depression (r –.28), social rejection (r –.27), school problems (r –.34), and absenteeism (r –.13).

One important, but somewhat troubling finding of the study was that aggregated school belonging (i.e. schools where many children report a sense of school belonging) was found to relate positively to social rejection. This suggests that in schools where many children feel they belong, those who do not feel that they belong experience more extreme feelings of social rejection, which is known to impact psychological development (Anderman, 2002). This is an important finding from the perspective of school reform, policies and practices, and constitutes further research in the area of whole school belonging. It shows the need for careful and strategic consideration

because an increase in school belonging for some students at the exclusion of others, may lead to greater levels of perceived social rejection. This has implications for schools in areas with low BME[16] representation, and schools with dominant religious beliefs.

Shochet, Dadds, Ham and Montague (2006) found similar findings with regards to *individual* feelings of school belonging and emotional wellbeing. Shochet et al (2006) conducted a study with 2,022 Australian students who were aged between 12 and 14 years investigating the relationship between 'school connectedness' and symptoms of depression and anxiety. The authors were also interested in the predictive nature of 'school connectedness' and emotional wellbeing. As such, participants completed measures of emotional wellbeing and school belonging[17] at two time points. The second time point was 12 months after initial completion. The findings of the study indicated a significant correlation between school connectedness and concurrent symptoms of depression and anxiety for both males and females. Significant results were also found indicating the predictive nature (i.e. one year later) of school connectedness for depressive symptoms for both boys and girls, as well as anxiety symptoms for girls. The same significant results regarding anxiety symptoms was not found for boys.

Contrary findings were reported by Loukas, Suzuki and Horton (2006) who amongst other factors, explored the predictive nature of school connectedness on depressive symptoms in a sample of 489 young people between the ages of 10 and 14. School connectedness was a significant predictor of conduct problems in 'wave 2' of analysis one year later; the same was not found for depressive symptoms. The author concluded

[16] Black and minority ethnic (BME).
[17] Using the PSSM scale (Goodenow, 1993).

that other variables (such as family relationships, parental mental illness) not examined may be better predictors of depressive symptoms. However, the overall findings are supportive of further exploration regarding the influence of school belonging on emotional wellbeing.

Adolescence is a developmental period where many young people experience difficulties 'fitting in' at school and depressive symptoms often become increasingly prevalent during this period (Kia-Keating and Ellis, 2007; Loukas et al, 2006). Refugee adolescents face added challenges to their experience of belonging, such as cultural and language differences, and discrimination (Kia-Keating and Ellis, 2007). These specific challenges to their experiences of school belonging are confounded by previous experience of trauma and adversity (Kia-Keating and Ellis, 2007). Recognising an absence in the literature exploring school belonging amongst the refugee population, Kia-Keating and Ellis (2007) conducted a study examining the relationship between exposure to adversities, school belonging, and mental health in 76 Somali refugees who had resettled in America. The PSSM scale (Goodenow, 1993b) was used to measure school belonging, as well as various measures to explore emotional wellbeing and trauma. The findings indicated that a greater sense of school belonging was associated with lower depression, and higher self-efficacy. However, the authors' prediction that school belonging would moderate the effect of the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was not supported.

Begen and Turner-Cobb (2012) were interested in examining the relationship between self-esteem and belonging, and in extension, their impact upon acute physical symptoms and mood in adolescents. 159 11-14-year-old pupils from a school in England

participated in this quantitative study. Hierarchical and mediation analyses were conducted to test their hypotheses that: 1) levels of belonging would be associated with physical health symptoms and mood and 2) self-esteem would influence levels of belonging which would *then* influence health and mood outcomes.

Analyses confirmed the researchers' hypothesis that higher levels of inclusive belonging were associated with fewer physical health symptoms. Furthermore, higher levels of overall perceived belonging were associated with positive affect ($r^2 = .107$, $p < .001$). A further finding was that 'school belongingness' was specifically associated with positive affect (β=.282; $p < .002$). Of note, self-esteem was found to mediate the relationship between inclusive belonging and health symptoms and perceived levels of belonging and positive affect, again proving the researchers' hypothesis. Begen and Turner-Cobb (2012) theorised that levels of belongingness influences levels of self-esteem, which subsequently impacts upon physical symptoms.

Fong Lam, Chem, Zhang and Liang (2015) examined the mediating effects of academic emotions in the relation between school belonging and academic attainment. The authors conducted a path analysis and found that school belonging was positively associated with 'positive activating emotions' ($\beta = .38$, $p < 0.001$) and 'positive deactivating emotions' ($\beta = .39$, $p < 0.001$) and negatively associated with 'negative deactivating emotions'[18] ($\beta = .20$, $p<0.001$). Fong Lam et al (2015) concluded that this subsequently contributes to their academic attainment.

[18] "Four categories of academic emotion can be distinguished: Positive activating emotions (e.g. enjoyment of learning, hope of success, pride), positive deactivating emotions (e.g. relief, contentment, relaxation after success), negative activating emotions (e.g. anger, anxiety, shame), and negative deactivating emotions (e.g. boredom, hopelessness)" (Fong Lam, Chem, Zhang and Liang, 2015, pp. 395-396).

2.4.2.1 School belonging and emotional wellbeing: study limitations

Similar methodological limitations are present in the studies that examined school belonging and emotional wellbeing as those discussed in section 2.4.1.1 relating to school belonging and educational values and outcomes. Three of the included studies presented correlational findings (Anderman, 2002; Kia-Keating and Ellis, 2007; Begen and Turner-Cobb, 2012); it is possible that belonging could be a *consequence* of the psychological variables presented as opposed to a protective factor against those outcomes. In short, the relationship is likely reciprocal in nature. Furthermore, all the studies relied upon data from self-report questionnaires. The same limitations discussed in section 2.4.1.1 regarding self-report methods apply here. In extension, whilst Loukas et al (2006) and Shochet et al (2006) offered further interpretation by examining the *predictive* nature of belonging, issues of common method variance[19] may have influenced the findings reported at time two.

A further limitation regarding the measures used relates to the fact that most of them required the respondent to rate 'to what extent' they believed with a statement on a Likert scale. Unsurprisingly, individuals interpret rating scales differently (Austin et al, 1998); some participants may be more 'extreme' responders, while others more 'conservative.'

A further limitation of the studies discussed relates to the study samples. The generalisability of the findings presented is limited, with perhaps the exception of

[19] Common method variance is "variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than to the constructs the measures are assumed to represent" (Podsakoff et al, 2003, p. 879).

Anderman (2002) who conducted a methodologically rigorous large-scale study (58,653 students) with a representative sample of adolescents. Whilst the study conducted by Kia-Keating and Ellis (2012) addressed the paucity of research examining school belonging with the refugee population, due to the researchers' recruitment procedure, refugees of Somali heritage alone were represented in the sample. The researchers employed a 'word of mouth' approach to recruitment which likely restricted who heard about the study. Furthermore, the study conducted by Shochet et al (2006) was acknowledged as being over representative of participants "on the pathological end of the spectrum" (Shochet et al, 2006, p. 178) which will have likely influenced their findings.

2.4.3 School belonging, misconduct and health-risk behaviour

School belonging has been discussed in relation to delinquency and health-risk behaviours (Demanet and Van Houtte, 2012; Drolet et al, 2013; McNeely and Falci, 2004, and Merrin et al, 2005). McNeely and Falci (2004) conducted research investigating the influence of school connectedness on adolescent health-risk behaviours (i.e. cigarette smoking, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, suicidal ideation). The authors concluded that "different dimensions of school connectedness" (p. 290) have different effects on health-risk behaviours.

Their findings suggested that adolescents who perceive their teachers to be fair and supportive are less likely to engage in health-risk behaviours. However, social belonging alone (i.e. simply enjoying school and feeling a part of the school) had no effect on the instigation or termination of health-risk behaviours, with the exception of marijuana use (McNeely and Falci, 2004). Of note, when the variables of school connectedness were

added, social belonging was found to be a significant *risk* factor for the initiation of cigarette smoking and alcohol misuse (i.e. regular episodes of getting drunk). Whereas, 'Teacher Support' was found to be a significant protective factor against the initiation of cigarette smoking, alcohol misuse, suicidal ideation and both the transitioning into and out of violent behaviour.

In summary, the degree to which school connectedness protects an individual from engaging in health-risk behaviours depends on the *type* of connection they have to school (McNeely and Falci, 2004). The researchers termed this distinction conventional connectedness and unconventional connectedness. Conventional connections (i.e. relationships with teachers, and prosocial relationships with peers) promote healthy behaviour, whereas unconventional connections (i.e. relationships with peers who do not engage with social norms) open up opportunities for health-risk behaviours (McNeely and Falci, 2004).

This notion of conventional and unconventional connectedness described by McNeely and Falci (2004) relates to the study conducted by Merrin, Hong and Espelage (2015) who examined the risk and protective factors for gang involvement. Applying the ecological systems framework, the aim of the study was to identify subgroups of youth (i.e., current or former gang members, youth who resisted gang membership, and nongang youth) who have experienced multiple levels of risk and protective factors for gang involvement. The sample consisted of 17, 366 middle and high school students in Wisconsin. The majority of participants were white (74.4%). 625 participants identified as being current or former gang members, 973 had been asked or felt pressurised to join a gang but resisted and 15,768 identified as non-gang members. Data was collected via

an online survey. Among other measures, school belonging was assessed through six Likert scale questions which were deemed to have good internal reliability (α .86).

Data was analysed using a multinomial logistic regression. The model indicated that a number of variables were significant predictors of gang involvement. It was found that those students who resisted gang affiliation, amongst other factors, experienced a sense of school belonging and perceived that their teachers were fair and could be relied upon. The results of this study provide a holistic understanding of the multiple factors that might impact gang affiliation, which include: individual, family and social factors.

Demanet and Van-Houtte (2012), influenced by the schools-as-communities narrative[20] (Battistich et al, 1995), examined the preventative influence of school belonging, with regards to misconduct in school, at the individual and group level. In extension, the authors explored whether a distinction should be made as to *whom* the individuals feel connected to within the school. This quantitative research was conducted with 11,872 adolescents in Belgium. The PPSM scale (Goodenow, 1993b) was used to measure school belonging, alongside measures of school misconduct behaviours. Results indicated that, with regards to school misconduct, individual sentiments of school belonging (i.e. peer attachment, perceived teacher support, and general school belonging) were more important than overall school cohesion. Therefore, simply creating a 'cohesive school' may not suffice in the endeavour to reduce school misconduct (Demanet and Van-Houtte, 2012).

[20] "Students experience the school as a community when their needs for belonging, autonomy, and competence are met within that setting. Students in such a community feel that they are respected, valued and cared about by the other community members, and that they make meaningful contributions to the group's plans and activities." (Battistich et al, 1995, p. 5).

Drolet, Arcand, Ducharme and Leblanc (2013) used a qualitative methodology to explore the impact of an American educational programme, 'Lions Quest', a programme designed to prevent and delay adolescents engaging in alcohol and drug abuse by supporting the development of social skills and competencies. The study was conducted in Canada with 26 students between the ages of 12 and 14. Five teachers who supervised the program also participated in the study. Data was collected via semi-structured interviews and then transcribed for coding into themes and categories. Reflecting upon the interview data, researchers made the connection with Faircloth and Hamm's (2005) requisites for feeling a sense of school belonging[21] which linked primarily to positive relationships with peers and school staff.

In essence, Drolet et al (2014) asserted that the Lions Quest programme encapsulates the sentiments of school belonging described by Faircloth and Hamm (2005). The researchers concluded that both teachers and pupil participants perceived school belonging, and the pupils' feeling of belonging to the group itself, contributed to the achievement of the programme.[22] The authors reported that the sentiments of school belonging were prevalent throughout the interviews, emphasising the need to incorporate this form of wellbeing into preventative interventions of at-risk behaviours. It is of note that this is the only qualitative study retrieved from this review. It provided a helpful alternative stance regarding the exploration of belonging, and illustrated the concept's multifaceted and relational nature. However, the procedure of analysis was considered

[21] The individual has: a) a network of positive friends through which the young person feels recognized and b) a positive tie with teachers or other adults through which the adolescent feels appreciated, supported, and assured of help in difficult times, and c) has opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities.

[22] i.e. a growth in the individual's capacity for self-assertion and conflict resolution; an increase in self-confidence, and development of interpersonal skills.

brief; it was noted that inductive and deductive methods of analysis would be employed, but this was not described in detail.

Loukas, Suzuki and Horton (2006) examined the extent to which school connectedness mediated the effects of perceived friction, cohesion and competition amongst students and their overall satisfaction with classes. The authors hypothesised that school connectedness would account for each of the four aspects of school climate, and at one year later, account for conduct problems and depressive symptoms. A path analysis was used to test the study hypotheses; this method of analysis enables researcher to estimate the magnitude and significance of causal connections between variables. School connectedness was also found to be predictive of conduct disorders one year later. The results confirm the researchers' hypotheses, and show the positive implications of school connectedness in terms of conduct. Although this study adds to previous findings which are largely correlational in nature, the measures are once again, based on self-reports. Furthermore, there is the possibility of shared method variance[23] meaning that the results at wave 2 (a year later) could be inflated. This was acknowledged by the researchers.

2.4.4.1 School belonging, misconduct and health-risk behaviour: study limitations

The studies reviewed in this section provided some insight regarding the relationship between school belonging, misconduct and health-risk behaviours. Individual feelings of belonging as opposed to simply 'whole school cohesion' were found to negatively relate to health risk behaviours (McNeely and Falci, 2004; Demanet and Van-Houtte, 2012).

[23] "Variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than to the constructs the measures are assumed to represent" (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee and Podsakoff, 2003, p. 879).

Furthermore, the importance of positive relationships with teacher emerged (Merrin et al, 2015; Demanet and Van-Houtte, 2012). However, 'unconventional' relationships with peers was deemed a risk factor for health risk behaviours (Merrin et al, 2015; McNeely and Falci, 2004).

Whilst providing some insight regarding the relationship between school belonging, misconduct and health-risk behaviours, three of the four studies reported upon correlational findings (McNeely and Falci, 2004; Merrin et al, 2015; Demanet and Van-Houtte, 2012) thus causality cannot be assumed. Furthermore, the study conducted by Merrin et al (2015) was geographically limited to suburban and rural areas, and the study by Drolet et al (2014) reported upon a small number of participants. As such, generalisability beyond the study sample is limited.

Longitudinal exploration would provide further insight into this area of research. For example, the impact over time of the intervention discussed by Drolet et al (2014) is unknown; longitudinal exploration would strengthen the findings.

2.5 Study formulation and rationale

There is a considerable body of research which indicates that perceived school belonging is associated with academic attainment and motivation (Maurizi et al, 2013; Goodenow, 1993; Roeser et al, 1996), emotional wellbeing (Anderman, 1999; Anderman, 2002; McMahon et al, 2008; Begen and Turner-Cobb, 2012, Shochet et al, 2006) and physical wellbeing (Demanet and Van-Houtte, 2012; McNeely and Falci, 2004; Drolet et al, 2013). It is therefore a justifiable area for further exploration.

A general reflection following this review is the prevailing positivist research that emerged from this review. All of the research included in this review, with the exception of the study conducted by Drolet et al (2013), adopted quantitative methodologies, whereby sentiments of belonging were measured using various rating scales. Thus, at times, representing the multifaceted concept of belonging as a unidimensional construct.

This initial review – with aims to explore the *outcomes* associated with feeling a sense of school belonging – uncovered a number of articles which reported, among other implications, an increase in school belonging as a result of environmental and/ or social factors. For example, Sancho and Cline (2012) described how positive interpersonal relationships with peers were found to increase sentiments of belonging for children when they start a new school, and Lutes, Johnson and Gunnar (2016) reported that the emotional and informational support from teachers contributed to feelings of school belonging. Although those articles did not meet the inclusion criteria for this systematic review, they did serve to indicate the dearth of real-world qualitative research with *principal* aims to explore *how* schools might foster belonging.

In order to test this assumption, I conducted an additional review which served primarily as a 'scoping exercise' to examine the literature relating to what is known about the influences and practices that are thought to promote a sense of belonging in a primary school context. Whilst it is acknowledged that there is growing interest in the concept of school belonging internationally (e.g. Bouchard and Berg, 2017; Vaz et al, 2015; Gowing and Jackson, 2018), I made the decision to limit the search to empirical research published in the UK due to the pertinence of the current socio-political climate for the present study. The search terms, and the inclusion criteria are presented in Appendix D.

Four studies were retrieved as a result of this search; one of which was introduced above (Sancho and Cline, 2012). Another study, was conducted by Boorn, Hopkins and Page (2010). The authors described an awareness programme – '*Growing a Nurturing Classroom*' – developed by Educational Psychologists in Leicestershire, with the aim of providing an optimal environment for learning and emotional wellbeing. The environment of a nurturing classroom was characterised by "a clear sense of consistency, a common approach of shared values and a sense of belonging and connectedness" (Boorn et al, 2010, p. 311). To this effect, one can assume that the authors are suggesting that through the awareness training programme, the classroom environment becomes a place of belonging. However, this is not explicitly stated in the findings of the study, and a 'sense of school belonging' is not defined as a key theme promoted through the training. The key theoretical framework underlying the programme was derived from the principles of Nurture Groups, which were developed by Marjorie Boxall in the 1970s to promote inclusion in schools for children with emotional, social and learning needs.

The final two articles retrieved focused on vulnerable groups of children and young people: those who had recently experienced a managed move[24] (Craggs and Kelly, 2017), and separated refugee children (Devici, 2012). Both of these articles are based on children and young people's testimonies and case examples, and from which, the authors offer strategies for supporting these groups of children and young people whom are likely experiencing emotional distress in response to their circumstances. The authors

[24] In the UK, managed moves are presented as an alternative to permanent exclusion for children and young people whose educational placements have broken down, providing a 'fresh start' in a new school (DfES, 2008).

advocate for the critical role schools play in supporting these children and young people through this transitional process.

Whilst the papers described uncover important implications for practice, particularly when supporting children and young people with social, emotional and learning needs, the current study aims to address the paucity within the research by exploring how primary schools in general might foster and promote school belonging for *all* their pupils.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Chapter overview

This chapter describes the methodological procedures adopted for this study. It provides an account of the research design, strategies and methods used to address the research question. A description of how the qualitative data will be captured, treated and analysed, using a Constructivist Grounded Theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006) will be presented, and issues associated with establishing validity and trustworthiness (Yardley, 2008) will be discussed. The processes of engagement with reflexive practice will also be discussed, before concluding with ethical considerations.

3.2 Research purpose

The purpose of this research is to develop an interpretive theory of the influences and practices that are thought to promote a sense of belonging in a primary school context. Qualitative methods were adopted to explore and explain the phenomena within a primary school setting. A qualitative approach was employed as it allows the researcher to "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, p. 3).

A preliminary systematic literature review was conducted and revealed an extensive body of quantitative research, which postulates school belonging as a protective factor for child and adolescent health, education and wellbeing. However, the scoping review uncovered limited research focusing primarily on *how* primary schools in the UK can promote a sense of belonging. Consequently, the aim of the current research is to address this gap in the literature and offer a unique contribution in this area.

It is hoped that the insights derived from the research may assist the work of Educational Psychologists (EPs) and other professionals, by offering an interpretation of how 'belonging' could be nurtured in primary schools. The research was guided by the following research question:

- What are the influences and practices that are thought to promote a sense of belonging for children and young people in a primary school context?

3.3 Ontology, epistemology and the theoretical perspective

Assumptions about the nature of reality, how knowledge is acquired, and the relationship between human beings and their environment underpin any investigative approach (Cohen et al, 2007). In order to explore which influences and practices are thought to promote a sense of belonging for children and young people in a primary school context, a relativist ontology was assumed; this ontological perspective views reality as multiple and constructed (Charmaz, 2014) and influenced by history, culture, and context (Mills, Bonner, and Francis, 2006). The purpose of research from a relativist ontology is to understand the subjective experience of reality and multiple truths (Levers, 2013).

The ontological perspective has implications for the epistemological stance of a study. This in turn informs the methodology and research methods employed (Oliver, 2008). Epistemology is concerned with how we make meaningful sense of our world (Levers, 2013). The intention of the present study was to explore individuals' understanding of the influences and practices that are thought to have promoted a sense of belonging within their school. The study assumed a constructivist epistemology whereby

"meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world." (Crotty, 1998, p. 8).

The 'theoretical perspective' of a study was described as "the philosophical stance informing the methodology" (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). Constructivism is congruent with the theoretical stance of interpretivism (Charmaz, 2006). Interpretivism is a perspective often attributed to Max Weber and his concept of '*verstehen'*, which means '*understanding something within its context'* (Holloway, 1997). Interpretivist research looks for "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). The current study was a 'within-context' exploration, which focused on the subjective views and experiences of the participants; it lends itself to an interpretivist theoretical stance.

Holloway (1997) posited that a researcher cannot be divorced from the phenomenon they are studying; it is inherently biased since the values of the researcher and participant are always present (Holloway, 1997). Knowledge is "always filtered through lenses of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 21). As such, it is acknowledged that neutrality and objectivity cannot be achieved. Holloway (1997) and Charmaz (2006) claim that interpretivist research must be reflexive and evaluative; the remedial measures employed in this study will be discussed in sections 3.6 and 3.8.

3.4 Research strategy

The Grounded Theory Method (GTM) of qualitative research was the framework for this study. GTM "uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived

grounded theory about a phenomenon" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.24). GTM is an approach that enables the researcher to "learn about the worlds that [they] study" (Charmaz, 2014, p17) by exploring the personal experiences of the participants.

3.4.1 Grounded Theory Method

GTM was originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a methodology that enabled the development of a theory about issues of importance in people's lives (Glaser, 1978; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Glaser and Strauss' (1967) GTM was a reaction to the dominant narrative, which claimed that qualitative methods of research inquiry could not achieve the scientific rigor available through quantitative research methods (Thornberg, 2012).

Grounded theory is a broad method, which spans contrasting ontological and epistemological positions, but maintains consistent guidelines and procedures (Sutcliffe, 2016). Through the processes of coding, theoretical sampling and constant comparison, data is broken down. The emerging relationships identified between codes form categories that are then used to construct a theoretical framework that expresses the conceptual ideas and explains the phenomena (Sutcliffe, 2016).

The GTM is a continuously evolving method of research inquiry (Sutcliffe, 2016). The GTMs appear to have evolved along three main pathways, which are reflective of various epistemological positions (Sutcliffe, 2016). Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) is a contemporary revision of Glaser and Strauss' (1967) original conceptualisation of Grounded Theory (GT). It was developed by Kathy Charmaz in response to the previous model of grounded theory defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967)

whereby the researcher was deemed an 'objective observer' of the research (Mills et al, 2006). However, in CGT, the researcher is viewed as part of the constructed reality of the research (Charmaz, 2014).

CGT was found to be the most appropriate strategy of inquiry for this study. The approach is compatible with the constructivist epistemological stance of the research question and the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon under study. Charmaz (2008) commented that classic GT (i.e. Glaser and Strauss, 1967) emphasises "generality not relativity, and objectivity, not reflexivity" (p. 399). Generality and objectivity are both unattainable and incongruent with the current study design.

3.4.2 Constructivist Grounded Theory

CGT considers how theories evolve from the context in which they occur (Charmaz, 2006). The epistemological and procedural foundations of CGT enable the exploration of subjective experiences, processes, and patterns within a context, from the perspective of the participants (Tweed and Charmaz, 2012, p134). In CGT, the researcher is deemed "external to the data yet internal to the emergence because there is a relationship between the data and the emergence through the researcher" (Levers, 2013, p. 5).

This contemporary revision of the GTM adopts the *tools* of GT but is incongruent with the objectivist and positivist assumptions favoured by the more traditional methods (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz's approach "explicitly assumes that any theoretical rendering offers an interpretive portrayal of the studied world not an exact picture of it" (Charmaz 2006, p. 10). CGT is more supportive of a multivariate grounded theory that accounts for the main thoughts of the participants, in keeping with the ontological position of

relativism and multiple realities (Martin, 2006). The aim of the current study is not to produce a 'truth statement' about an objective reality (Suddaby, 2006) and it is acknowledged that the final theory will be open to interpretation, modification and further inquiry (Breckenridge et al, 2012). The theory that is generated is positioned within the current socio-political landscape; it is historically and culturally specific, and subject to change with time.

3.4.3 Other methodologies considered

Alternative qualitative methodologies were considered when designing this research but were not deemed appropriate in light of the research aim. Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was a closely considered alternative methodology. Thematic Analysis supports the researcher to identify recurring themes, and organise and describe data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). However, thematic analysis was deemed to lack the level of *interpretation* sought in this study; a GTM was felt to afford greater depth and interpretation.

3.5 Sampling procedure

3.5.1 School recruitment

It was necessary to involve a school in which members of staff who were willing, knowledgeable and in a position to contribute to the study (Cohen et al., 2007). In doing so, the researcher is "actively seeking individuals he or she believes can reveal something in relation to the phenomenon of interest" (Tweed and Charmaz, 2012, p136). I[25] used both purposive and convenience sampling methods to select the school of study.

[25]In order to emphasise the co-constructivist nature of the study, the decision was made to write in the first person; I acknowledge my own role in authoring the story (Mills et al, 2006).

Purposive sampling permits the researcher to select "particular settings, persons or events… for the important information they can provide" (Maxwell, 1997, p.87). Convenience sampling ensured that I was able to access a suitable setting within a restricted time frame and in a suitable locality.

When considering the process of school recruitment, an 'inclusion criteria' was tentatively formulated in response to the literature on school belonging. These criteria are detailed below:

- A mainstream primary school in London, located in the borough where I am on professional placement.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) is in line with, or above, the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is in line with, or above, the national average.
- A primary school that is deemed 'Good' or 'Outstanding' in its most recent OFSTED inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The attendance data is deemed consistently good.

The process of school recruitment changed course when it transpired that a school located in the borough where I was on professional placement, had contributed to a project[26] exploring place and belonging. In June 2018, I approached a member of the

[26] 'School: A Place Where I Belong?' A two-year project had been conducted by a team of researchers from University College London, Institute of Education (Professor Kathryn Riley, Dr Max Coates, Dr Dina Mehmedbegovic and Rhoda Furniss) in partnership with a number of schools in London. St Francis' School was not directly involved in the two-year action research (i.e. they were not one of the participating schools), but contributed to the larger project exploring place and belonging.

UCL research team, Professor Kathryn Riley, to discuss the project, as well as the current study. Professor Riley invited me to an event at St Francis' School[27] where the ideas of '*place and belonging'* were being presented to members of the school community. During this event, it was evident that the leadership team at St Francis' School had an espoused commitment to promoting belonging for their pupils and were familiar with the language of 'belonging'. This links to Cohen et al's (2007) description of purposive sampling whereby the researcher "build[s] up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs" (p.115); it was deemed that members of St Francis' School community would be able to comment upon the matters of interests to this study (Cohen et al., 2007).

I had the opportunity to have an informal discussion with the Head Teacher of St Francis' School, following which arrangements were made for a more formal discussion with both the Head Teacher and the Deputy Head Teacher. During this discussion I presented the study aims, and the anticipated time and participant commitment. I was met with interest and enthusiasm for the study, and St Francis' School formally agreed to being the site of this study (see Appendix E for recruitment letter). Negotiations for participant recruitment were discussed and a tentative course of action was agreed.

3.5.2 Study participants

As the aim of the study was to explore the influences and practices that are thought to promote school belonging, it was deemed appropriate to begin my exploration with the school leadership (i.e. the Head Teacher and the Deputy Head Teacher). It was felt that

[27] I have called the school St Francis' School for the purpose of this study, in order to protect anonymity; this is not the school's real name.

they would be able to describe school-wide practices and influences, providing a helpful starting point directing future exploration.

The research was designed to be consistent with the key principles of the GTM, one of which being theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling is a process designed to sample new cases or data actively in order to develop, refine and elaborate the emerging analytic categories (Tweed and Charmaz, 2012). In accordance with the theoretical sampling procedure, the first interviews were transcribed, reflected upon through memo writing, and they subsequently channelled the direction of participant recruitment. However, it was anticipated that other members of school staff (e.g. teachers, support staff) and pupils would be interviewed in due course. For this reason, during the negotiations in July 2018, the Head Teacher (HT) stated that she would share information about the study with the staff group and ask for hypothetical expressions of interest. Prior to each interview, I met with the participant to discuss the study in order to ensure informed consent.

In order to ascertain pupil views, all year 6 pupils in the school (who met the following inclusion criteria) were invited to participate in the study:

- The pupil is in year 6 at the time of data collection.
- A certain level of spoken English and understanding of the English language is desirable, in order that they can share their views within the context of the interview (children who are receiving ongoing input from the Speech and Language Therapist for receptive and/or expressive language difficulties will not be included in the study).
- A willingness to be interviewed in person.

Year 6 pupils were specifically asked to participate as it was deemed that they would be best placed to reflect upon belonging within their school in the context of the interview. The Head Teacher sent the recruitment letter, the information sheet and a consent form to the parents of all these year 6 pupils (see Appendix: F, G and H); a simplified letter, information sheet and assent form was also included (see Appendix: I, J and K). Table 1 below provides details for each contributing participant. The participants were each allocated a pseudonym to ensure anonymity.

Table 1: list of participants and corresponding pseudonyms

Interview number	**Pseudonym**	**Role/ position**
1	Shona[28]	Head Teacher
2	Claudia	Deputy Head Teacher/ SENCO
3	Marcel	Year 6 pupil
4	Natalie	Year 6 pupil
5	Katie	Family Worker
6	Karen	Year 2 Class Teacher
7	Amy	Year 6 pupil
8	Penny	Teaching Assistant
9	Rachel	EAL/ Literacy Lead

[28] Two interviews were conducted with the Head Teacher.

3.6 Procedures for data capture

3.6.1 Descriptive case study

In order to explore what influences and practices were thought to promote a sense of belonging for pupils in a primary school, a descriptive case-study approach was adopted. This approach was selected because it provides an "all-encompassing method" for systematically studying and describing a phenomenon within its context (Yin, 2003, p. 14). Descriptive case studies are thought to be fertile grounds for "conceptual and theoretical development" (Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson, 2001, p. 3) and offer possibilities for transferability to similar sites. Yin (2003) added that the case-study method is appropriate "when a 'how' or 'why' question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control" (p. 9).

3.6.2 Intensive interviewing

The method of 'intensive interviewing' was adopted to capture the data. Charmaz (2014) defined intensive interviewing as "a gently-guided, one-sided conversation that explores research participants' perspective on their personal experience with the research topic" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 56). A tentative interview schedule was developed (Appendix L) and used as a guide, although a flexible stance was maintained as it "permits interviewers to discover discourses and to pursue ideas and issues immediately that emerge during the interview" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 85). The interviews with the adult participants lasted between 40 and 70 minutes, and the interviews with the year 6 pupils lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed by the researcher.

Tweed and Charmaz (2012) presented the concept of sensitising concepts in relation to CGT research. "Sensitizing concepts are seen as a starting point to GT research" (Tweed and Charmaz, 2012, p136). Charmaz (2006) described how she would use her initial thoughts, disciplinary perspectives and sensitising concepts as "*points of departure* to form interview questions, to look at data, to listen to interviewees, and to think analytically about the data" (Charmaz, 2006, p17). Likewise, these factors have influenced the decisions made in this study.

3.6.3 Transcription

I began transcription following each interview using a computer and a headset. All interview encounters were transcribed verbatim (see Appendix M for a complete interview transcript). Although a denaturalised system is commonly used in CGT to uncover meanings and perceptions (Charmaz, 2000), some principles of naturalism were applied in the current study.[29] I recorded laughter, sighs and pauses in order to gain a richer sense of the quality of the exchanges (Wiggins & Potter, 2008). However, vocalisations such as "umm" and "err" were omitted.

3.6.4 Theoretical sampling

Theoretical sampling is a key feature of the GTM; participants are selected based upon their relevance or relationship to the emerging themes and ideas (Denscombe, 2014). The process involves collecting data "from people, places, and events that will maximize opportunities to develop concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions, uncover

[29] There are two principal approaches a researcher can adopt when transcribing interview data: naturalism and denaturalism. Naturalism describes the practice whereby every verbal and non-verbal expression is transcribed in fine detail. In contrast, when adopting a 'denaturalist' approach any distinctive sounds (stutters, pauses, non-verbal and involuntary vocalisations) are removed (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005).

variations, and identify relationships between concepts" (Strauss and Corbin, 2008, p.143). As described by Charmaz (2006), initial sampling is where you start, and theoretical sampling directs you where to go. Through the processes of coding, constant comparison and memo writing, analytical ideas will emerge; theoretical sampling is a mechanism that supports the refinement and enhancement of these ideas.

The data generated during the initial interviews conducted with the Head Teacher and the Deputy Head Teacher uncovered leads to follow, specifically with regards to who to interview next and how to refine the interview questions. For example, both interviewees referred to the importance of working alongside families. It was therefore important to speak to the member of staff who was tasked specifically with linking with families, the Family Worker. This process of theoretical sampling continued with the aspiration of attaining theoretical sufficiency within the categories.

3.7 Data analysis

This section presents the process of data analysis undertaken. In accordance with the CGT method, data was gathered and analysed concurrently. The CGT method of analysis comprises a number of phases, which will be described in this section. Whilst this is presented in a linear fashion, in reality, it was an iterative process of data collection in the school, re-reading transcripts, and coding and renaming codes. A visual presentation of the process of data collection and analysis is presented in figure 1 on the following page.

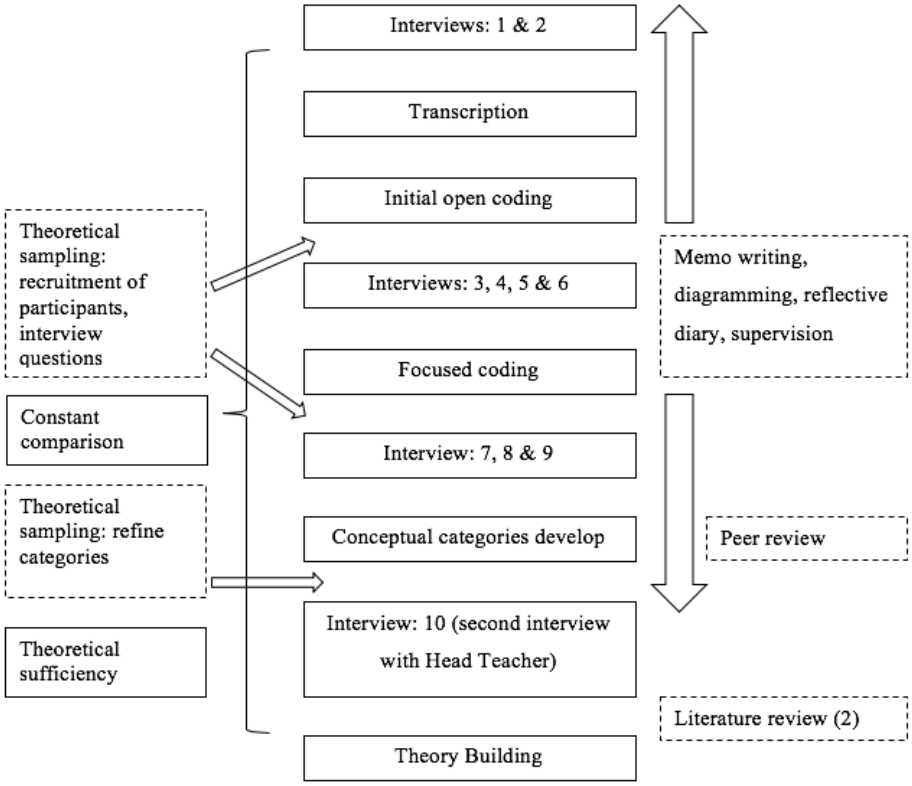

Figure 1: Process of data collection

3.7.1 Data analysis software

Initial and focused coding was conducted in MaxQDA[30] (MaxQDA, 2011). MaxQDA supports the organisation of interview data and facilitates the various stages of coding, memo writing and categorisation (Alemu, Stevens, Ross and Chandler, 2015). It facilitates the constant comparison of data in the GTM, allowing codes to be created and memos to be attached (Saillard, 2011). See figure 2 for a screenshot showing the document and code system of the data collected, and figure 3 for a screenshot showing the focused codes for the conceptual category '*a unified staff group'*.

[30] Max QDA is a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS).

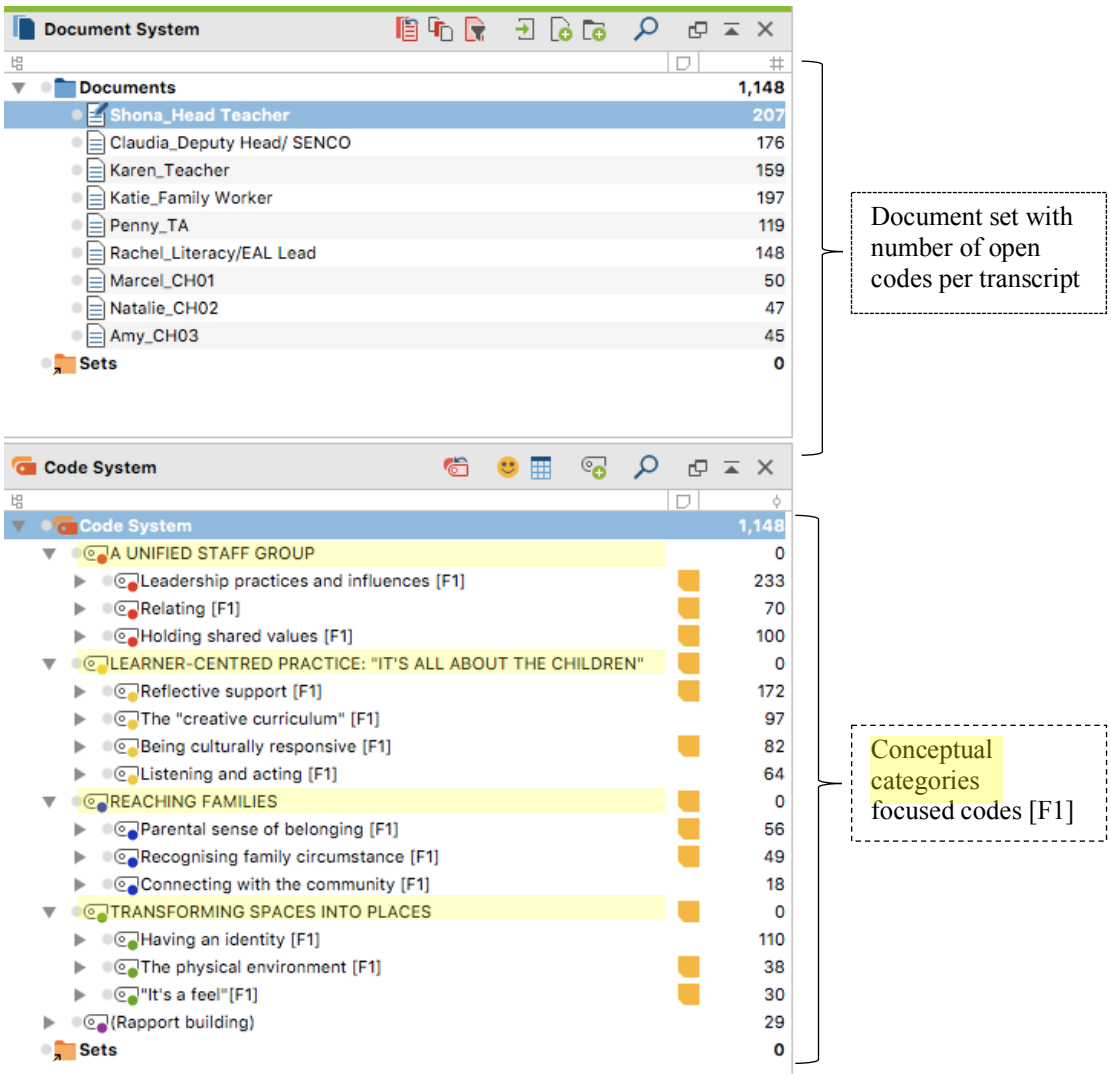

Figure 2. Screenshot showing MaxQDA document set and code system

3.7.2 Coding

The process of coding requires the researcher to stop and ask analytical questions of the data gathered, in order to gain further understanding of the studied phenomenon and also to direct subsequent data collection (Charmaz, 2014). Coding is "the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data" (Charmaz, 2006, p.46). Grounded theory coding gives you the tools to interrogate, sort, and synthesise your data. Through this process of examination, the researcher moves beyond concrete statements in the data and begins to make analytical sense of stories, statements, and observations (Charmaz, 2014). The processes involved in CGT coding

illuminates how categories and concepts are 'grounded' in the data (Charmaz, 2006). The procedure adopted comprised open coding, followed by focused coding and category construction.

3.7.2.1 Open coding

After the interview was conducted, it was transcribed and then open coding was conducted. The process involved examining each transcript line-by-line and naming the segment of text with a concise phrase to account for that piece of data (Charmaz, 2006). I interrogated the data asking 'what' not 'why' questions in order to remain grounded in the data (Charmaz, 2006). During open coding, you scrutinise early data for analytic ideas to pursue through further data collection and analysis. The goal is to remain *open* to all possible theoretical directions within the data (Charmaz, 2016). [31]

Charmaz (2014) advocates coding using gerunds[32] in order to gain "a strong sense of action and sequence" (p. 120). Attributed codes such as: *'communicating with parents', 'learning from difference'* and *'feeling able to disagree'*, capture the essence of what was said by the participant. Charmaz (2014) described open coding with gerunds as a "heuristic device to bring the researcher into the data" (p. 121). On occasion, the participant's 'own words' were used as codes; these codes are referred to as *in vivo* codes and include: *'putting down roots', 'it's all about the children'* and *'it's a vocation'*. Charmaz (2014) described how *in vivo* codes "help us to preserve participants' meanings of their views and actions in the coding itself" (p. 134). The process of open line-by-line coding using gerunds protected against the forcing of data

[31] Appendix N provides an example of line-by-line open coding of an excerpt from an interview. Appendix O provides an illustration of the open codes that constructed one focused code.
[32] A gerund is a verb form which functions as a noun (i.e. a verb ending in '-ing').

according to any pre-conceptualisations held, remaining close to the participants' views (Charmaz, 2006).

3.7.2.2 Focused coding, constant comparison, and constructing categories

A total of 1,148 codes were established during the process of open coding. The second stage of coding – focused coding – requires the researcher to synthesise and explain larger segments of data (Charmaz, 2006). Focused coding supports the researcher to identify the most significant and predominant 'themes' within the data (Charmaz, 1983), and facilitates the identification of emerging categories (Alemu et al, 2015). During the process of focused coding, the 'minor' conceptual categories that were identified during open coding were studied and compared in order to establish their relevance at an analytical level (Charmaz, 1995). See figure 3 for a screenshot of the focused codes which comprised the conceptual category: *'a unified staff group.'*

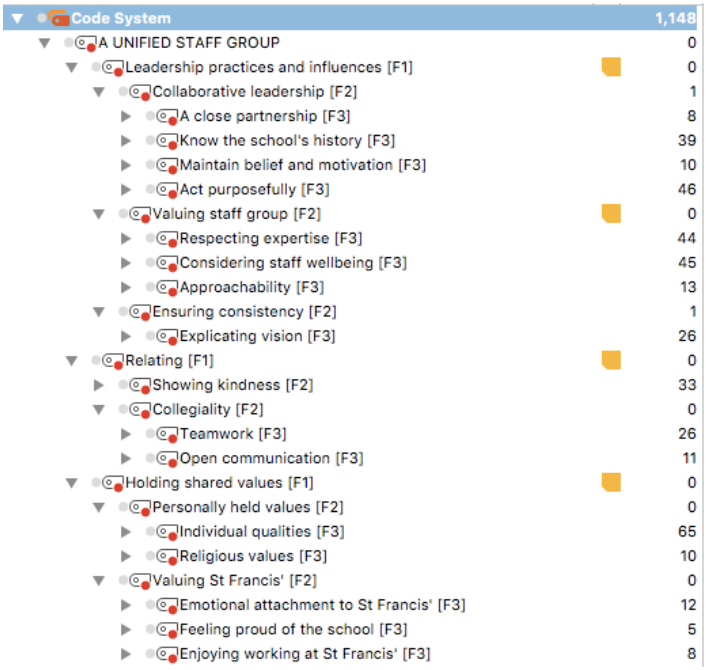

Figure 3. Screenshot showing focused codes for 'a unified staff group'[33]

[33] See appendix Q for screenshots of focused codes for all conceptual categories.

Through the process of building a category, you must examine all the data it covers, the *variation* within the category, and how it relates to other categories (Charmaz, 1990). The constant comparative method maintained the impetus of data analysis and category construction by ensuring that I moved "back and forth between the identification of similarities among and differences between emerging categories" (Willig, 2013, p. 71). The process of constantly comparing the various perspectives of how school belonging was thought to be promoted often resulted in code names changing – and/or extending – to include further sub-categories to better illustrate all attributes and properties of the developing content.

During the process of focused coding, the research question was held in mind, attending to the *influences* and *practices* being explicitly or implicitly described. As the process continued to evolve, code names were compared, integrated and organised into categories that represented larger chunks of data (Charmaz, 2014). The constant comparison method is a useful reflexive device, through which understanding of the data becomes increasingly sophisticated and refined (Srivastava and Hopwood, 2009). Figure 4 provides an illustration of the process of coding.

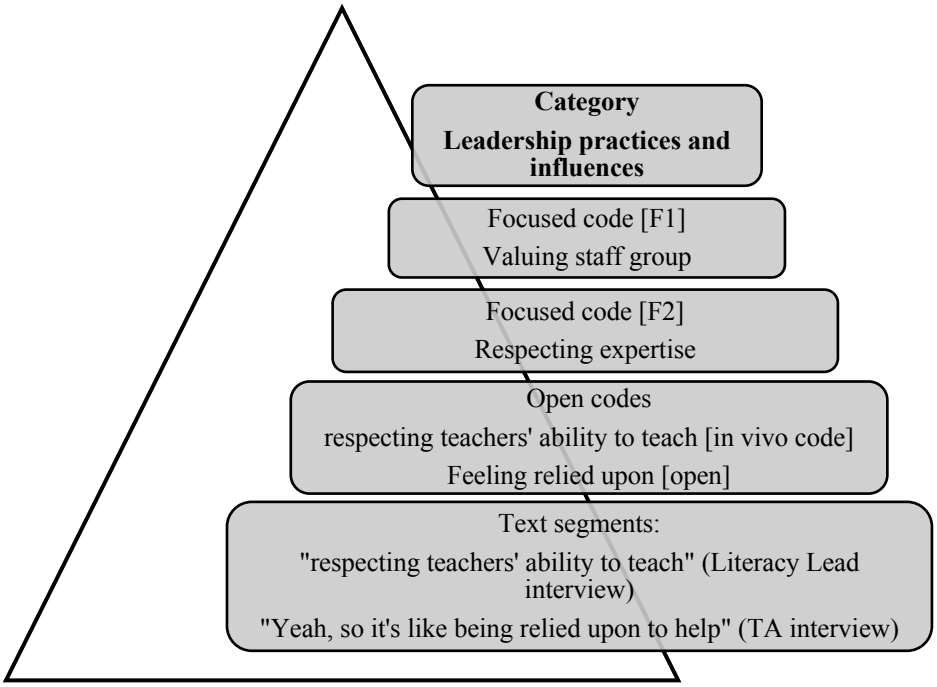

Figure 4. Illustration of the coding process

3.7.3 Memo writing

Memo writing occurs throughout data analysis (Charmaz, 2014). They capture the researcher's thinking process, and document theoretical ideas, implications, connections and emerging questions (Thornberg, 2012; Charmaz, 2014; Carmichael and Cunningham, 2017). During early stages of analysis memo writing supports tentative category formation (Charmaz, 2006). In the latter stages of analysis, memo writing serves to elaborate existing categories and supports the exploration of connections between the categories (Tweed and Charmaz, 2012). Lazenbatt and Elliot (2005) state that memo writing supports the establishment of trustworthiness as they document the analytical decisions made by the researcher.

The process of memo writing occurred alongside data sampling and analysis. It supported the process of theoretical sampling by directing who to interview next, and how to approach and/or adapt subsequent interviews (Holton, 2008). 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). In addition to memo writing during the process of coding, Charmaz (2017) advises the CGT researcher to make memos of the thoughts and ideas that may occur whilst in the setting or whilst in the midst of an interview encounter. I made use of a reflective diary in order to capture the more subjective experience of the research encounter. Memos were recorded on MaxQDA as well as on paper during analysis.[34]

3.7.4 Theoretical sufficiency

Charmaz (2006) suggests ceasing data collection once rich and sufficient data has been achieved. The construction of conceptual categories, and the comparisons between the data are deemed sufficient to generate and inform the researcher's ideas (Charmaz, 2006). Dey (1999) advocates the term "theoretical sufficiency" as opposed to theoretical saturation; Dey argues that categories may be 'suggested', instead of saturated, by the data (Dey, 1999, p. 257). Wiener (2007) argues that theoretical saturation is a judgement, and also acknowledges the more practical implications of conducting research.

3.8 Integrity and trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers are often criticised for failing to employ a representative sample and yield objective findings that can be replicated (Yardley, 2000). However, Yardley (2000) argues that traditional criteria for research quality are inappropriate: "if the purpose of the researcher is to offer just one of many possible interpretations of a phenomenon… and for researchers who believe that knowledge cannot be objective, but

[34] The reader is referred to Appendix R for examples of paper recoded memos and diagrams, and Appendix S for examples of the memos made on MaxQDA.

is always shaped by the purposes, perspective and activities of those who create it" (Yardley, 2000, p.218). Nevertheless, Yardley (2008) does emphasise the need to verify validity and integrity of qualitative research by establishing 'trustworthiness'. In order to address issues of 'trustworthiness', I drew upon Yardley's (2008, p. 265-268) four principles of validity of qualitative research:

1. Sensitivity to context
2. Commitment and rigour
3. Coherence and transparency
4. Impact and importance.

Sensitivity to context involves the process of becoming familiar with the area of interest. The researcher must become sensitive to the sociocultural context of the participants throughout the research process. In order to address this principle, I visited the school prior to commencing the study, yielding the opportunity to spend some time 'becoming sensitive' to the setting. Furthermore, due to the Grounded Theory methodology of the current study, whereby data collection and analysis occurred concurrently, I visited the school on a number of occasions over a period of ten months. In extension, I am on professional placement within the school's locality, which offered some sensitivity to the local context. It is hoped that the practice of methodological self-consciousness, discussed in section 3.8, contributed to the sensitive treatment of the data collected.

To ensure commitment and rigour, Yardley (2008) states that the exploration and analysis should be of sufficient breadth and/or depth in order to deliver further insight. This sufficiency could be achieved through the method of data collection and/or analysis.

The process of CGT requires the researcher to continue to collect data until they reach a point of theoretical sufficiency (described in section 3.7.4). I was able to develop a sufficiently full conceptual understanding of the participant's thoughts and experiences through the interview encounters. I then considered the findings against existing theoretical and research literature.

Coherence refers to the extent to which the study makes sense as a whole. This corresponds to the theoretical approach adopted, the research questions posed, and the methodology and data analysis (Yardley, 2008). In order to ensure coherence, attempts were made to ensure explicit congruence between the research question, the theoretical paradigm of the study, its epistemological position, and the methods adopted for data collection. The principle of transparency links closely with coherence. Yardley (2008) describes how transparency relates to how well the reader is able to understand the research process and the rationale behind the decisions made. Reflexivity is therefore an important aspect of transparency. It is hoped that the use of a reflective diary, and engagement with memo-writing, contributed to the overall transparency and subsequent credibility of the findings.

Finally, the study should have direct and practical implications. As described, it is hoped that the findings will assist the work of Educational Psychologists and professionals working within the field of education, by offering practice-based suggestions on how the sentiment of belonging can be fostered in primary schools. It is also hoped that this study will generate further thought and discussion with regard to the concept of school belonging and its significance in young people's lives. This contribution is considered

pertinent since the number of children and young people being identified with SEMH needs in the UK is growing, and timely in terms of the current socio-political climate.

3.9 Methodological self-consciousness

Methodological self-consciousness refers to the practice of recognising and reflecting upon ourselves, and the analytical decisions and meanings we make throughout the research process. Clarke and Hoggett (2009) describe how the reflexive researcher must take a "sustained and critical self-reflection on [the] methods and practice, to recognise [their own] *emotional* involvement in the project" (p7). Fundamental to a constructivist approach is the understanding that our analyses of the social world are constructed and influenced by our history and narrative (Lather, 1991). A self-reflexive stance facilitates an awareness of how one's *self* may influence the narrative. Essentially, researcher reflexivity increases the transparency and trustworthiness of the study (Gentles et al, 2014).

3.9.1 The researcher's position

This research forms part of the requirements for the professional Doctorate in Child, Community and Educational Psychology at The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. In a professional sense, my interest in the area of belonging developed through practice as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) in schools. It was frequently observed that the concept of 'school belonging', or lack thereof, informed understanding and formulation of problem situations. Over time, my perception that feeling a sense of belonging in school was at the root of many situations – particularly with regards to SEMH needs – was strengthened. However, *articulating* this interpretation, and

identifying *how* one might foster a sense of belonging remained an area of unknown. This preceded my decision to explore further the concept of school belonging.

On a more personal note, belonging to me most strongly relates to a sense of belonging to *place*, landscape and sea. Coming from the west coast of Wales, I would always get a "rootsy" feeling when crossing the border into Wales. More recently, I came to understand that there is a Welsh word for this feeling: '*hiraeth'*.[35] Although there is no direct English translation, an approximation would be a mixture of longing, yearning, and nostalgia for a place or a time gone by. The writings of many distinguished Welsh authors and poets including Emyr Humphreys, R. S. Thomas and Saunders Lewis have been stirred and steered by this sense of *hiraeth*.

My *sense of belonging*, and *hiraeth* has become more profound since moving away to work and study in London; my sense of connection to *place* has grown through separation. Belonging can mean different things for different people; it can mean belonging to a place, a language, a people or a culture, and many of us often take it for granted. Yet in this post-modern paradoxical era of globalisation and individualism, an increasing amount of people are feeling isolated and marginalised (O'Donohue, 1998). The appeal of "borders, separation and exclusion" (Croucher, 2018, p. 2) is rising; there is a "crisis of belonging" (O'Donohue, 1998, p. xxv) which has been heightened by the current refugee crisis, socio-political difference and the consequential uncertainty (Riley, 2017). Therefore, the need for belonging is ever more intense and urgent (O'Donohue, 1998); schools must strive to be places of belonging for all by fostering the sense of community, openness, and togetherness.

[35] Pronounced 'here-eyeth'

3.10 Ethical considerations

When conducting research with people, the primary ethical consideration relates to care for the participant (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009). Clarke and Hoggett (2009) describe how ethical consideration must extend to how the participant's views and experiences are represented and ensure that the research presents what is important to the participant. An array of ethical issues will arise through the grounded theory process (Chong and Yeo, 2015). In this section, ethical consideration will be given to issues of consent, anonymity and confidentiality, a participant's right to withdraw, and data storage and handling. Furthermore, the establishment of trustworthiness will be discussed.

3.10.1 Ethical approval

Prior to commencing the study, ethical approval was sought via the Tavistock Research and Ethics Committee (Appendix T). Furthermore, the proposed research was discussed with and agreed by the Principal Educational Psychologist of the local authority where I am on professional placement. The research complied with the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2018) and reference was made to E*thics and Educational Research, British Educational Research Association* (2018) throughout the process.

3.10.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

The confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is considered the norm for the conduct of research (BERA, 2018). Institutions and individual participants have a right to privacy and anonymity, and should be made aware of this entitlement. Throughout the research, I adhered to the General Data Protection Regulation (2018)

policy, which included clarifying the extent of personal information required and the systems for storing data securely. All participants were made aware of the limits to anonymity with small sample sizes, such as in this study. Additional measures were taken to ensure the maintenance of anonymity. Identifying features of participants were carefully removed during transcription and write-up phases; this was upheld by using pseudonyms.

3.10.3 Informed consent

Researchers should do everything they can to ensure that all potential participants understand, as well as they can, what is involved in a study (BERA, 2018). Gaining informed consent is a procedure for ensuring that research subjects understand the process they will go through and are informed of any potential risks they might incur (Social Research Association, 2003).

Participants' voluntary informed consent was obtained at the start of the study. Throughout the process, I remained sensitive and open to the possibility that participants may wish, for any reason and at any time prior to data analysis, to withdraw their consent. In the first instance, I approached the Head Teacher of the selected primary school, and formally invited the school to participate in the study. The study was discussed in detail, and in person, with the Head Teacher and the Deputy Head Teacher. It was stressed that the decision not to participate would not affect any aspect of Educational Psychology Services to the school.

Child participants[36]

Once permission was granted, the Head Teacher sent a recruitment letter, the information sheet and a consent form to the parents of the pupils in the year 6 class group (see Appendix F, G, and H). The information sheet described all aspects of the study. This included: the purpose of the research, what involvement would entail, and the details of data protection and informed consent. If the parents consented to their child participating in the study, they were asked to return a signed consent form. A simplified letter, an information sheet and an assent form were also included for the benefit of the child (see Appendix I, J and K). It was emphasised that a decision whether or not to participate was entirely voluntary and would not affect any aspect of the child's education. Prior to interviewing the pupil participants, I discussed the simplified letter and information sheet with the child, before completing the assent form.

Adult participants[37]

The Head Teacher informed the staff group of the research during a staff meeting, summarising the aims and background of the study. Members of school staff were invited to participate; they were each given a letter inviting them to participate (Appendix U), an information sheet (Appendix G) and a consent form (Appendix V). Once again, they were assured of the voluntary nature of participation. I met with the members of staff who had expressed an interest in participating in the study to discuss the research – as well as what participation would entail – before obtaining formal consent. Due to the nature of the research methodology and the theoretical sampling

[36] In this study 'child participant' referred to the year 6 pupils invited to participate in this study.
[37] 'Adult participant' refers to the members of school staff at St Francis' School who participated in the research.

procedure, the ongoing nature of consent was explained, and the participant's right to withdraw at any time prior to data analysis was emphasised.

Chapter 4: Interpretive findings

Constructivists view data as constructed rather than discovered, and we see our analyses as interpretive renderings not as objective reports or the only viewpoint on the topic –

(Charmaz 2009, p. 131).

4.1 Chapter overview

This chapter provides a description of the Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) shaped through the theoretical rendering of the interview data following the methodology outlined in the previous chapter. "Grounded theory has been described as an excellent tool for understanding invisible things, as it can be used to reveal the invisible work involved in many kinds of tasks" (Star 2007, p79). The purpose of this study was to make visible the influences and practices that are thought to promote a sense of school belonging in a primary school context. Insight was gained through the reconstruction of multiple narratives shared by members of a primary school community in London. This chapter seeks to respond to the research aim by presenting the tentative grounded theory developed through analysis.

In order to help the reader to acquire an understanding of the context of the school studied, this section begins with the 'story' of St Francis' School, its journey towards being a place of belonging. The story is told from the standpoint of the school leaders, Shona (Head Teacher, HT) and Claudia (Deputy Head Teacher, DHT). This narrative is followed by a visual representation of the tentative grounded theory. The properties and dimensions of the conceptual categories shown in the visual model will then be interpreted analytically. Direct quotes from participants will be provided throughout to

help give meaning to the findings and show how the emergent conceptualisation was grounded in the data.

4.2 St Francis' story

It is my belief that every school has its own unique story and sentiment. It is unique in the sense that it serves its own community; it has its own history and it has its own identity. As such, I believe it is important to tell the story that emerged from the interview encounters at St Francis' School and, in doing so, provide a contextual landscape for the study.

Through the opening interviews with the HT and the DHT, it transpired that St Francis' School had been on a significant journey of change to reach where it is today. Shona (HT) began working as a class teacher at the school in 1988 and described how, since then, the school has "changed and changed and changed again". Shona took up the post of Head Teacher a decade ago and, alongside Claudia (DHT), embarked on a mission to change the school that was burdened with a bad reputation for behaviour and learning. Shona described a deep loyalty to the school and when speaking about achieving her NPQH[38] asserted that: "it was always about here, it was never about being a head teacher to go anywhere else, it was always about being a head teacher here".

Both Claudia and Shona shared a sincere belief in the potential of the pupils and of the school; Shona (HT) reflected how she wanted "everybody to *feel* about St Francis' the way [she] felt about it". Having established a strong partnership, Shona and Claudia

[38] National Professional Qualification for Headship.

were motivated to create opportunities for every child and were driven by a desire for social justice; these implicit beliefs shaped their approach and leadership practice.

Shona and Claudia described this journey of change as part of a strategic process. This process involved looking beyond the school gates to the diverse community where St Francis' was situated. At the time, they recognised that the diversity within the community was not reflected in the school. In order to create a culture of belonging and to capture the unique spirit of the community, Claudia and Shona recognised the need to understand and respond to its diversity. This diversity needed to be reflected in both the workforce and the curriculum.

The school leaders shared the belief that it was important for the workforce to be aligned with the school's vision and values. To ensure consistency, it was essential for the leadership to be explicit about their vision for the school and to maintain transparent structures and procedures. Shona described how the proposed changes were met with conflict and resistance, but acknowledged that this was part of the evolutionary process. She reflected how it was a process of "building a team at the same time as dismantling another team". She recognised that in order to successfully establish a collaborative and cohesive staff group, they too needed to feel a sense of belonging, a sense of value and worth within the school community.

The foundational aspect of this process was the establishment of a 'climate' where all members of the school community could feel a sense of success and capability. This was underpinned by a determined focus to create a fertile learning environment in which every child was able to flourish. To realise this ambition, the behaviour and attainment

within the school needed to be addressed. This involved ongoing training, monitoring and evaluation. In-service training incorporated their vision for the school; it involved explicit training on their shifting approach to the curriculum, teaching and behaviour management. This ongoing training and transparency propelled the assimilation of the whole-school commitment. As a consequence, there was more capacity within the workforce to 'think about' the children and provide a reflective and responsive learner-centred environment.

Establishing strong relationships with parents was also recognised as a key contributing factor to improving the learning environment at St Francis' School. The leaders set about forging trusting relationships with parents by involving and engaging them at every opportunity. This involved inviting parents into the school and maintaining open and transparent dialogue. Together these practices cultivate an environment which permits every child to thrive and feel a sense of belonging. Claudia reflected upon a quote of Marcus Garvey to explain her thoughts:

> If you don't know your culture, if you don't know who you are, if you don't know your identity… you're like a tree without roots, I think that every human being is placed here to grow… if you don't have a sense of belonging you can't put down any roots, and if you don't put down any roots you can't grow (Claudia, DHT).

4.3 Defining the conceptual categories

As detailed in section 3.2 the research question for the present study was:

What are the influences and practices that are thought to promote a sense of belonging for children and young people in a primary school context?

CGT analysis led to the construction of four conceptual categories:

1. A unified staff group
2. Learner-centred practice: “it’s all about the children”
3. Reaching families
4. Transforming spaces into places.

In response to the research aim, they collectively encompass the influences and practices that are thought to promote belonging in St Francis’ School. In this section, the four conceptual categories are presented. Figure 5 on the following page provides a summative overview of the grounded theory conceptualisation.

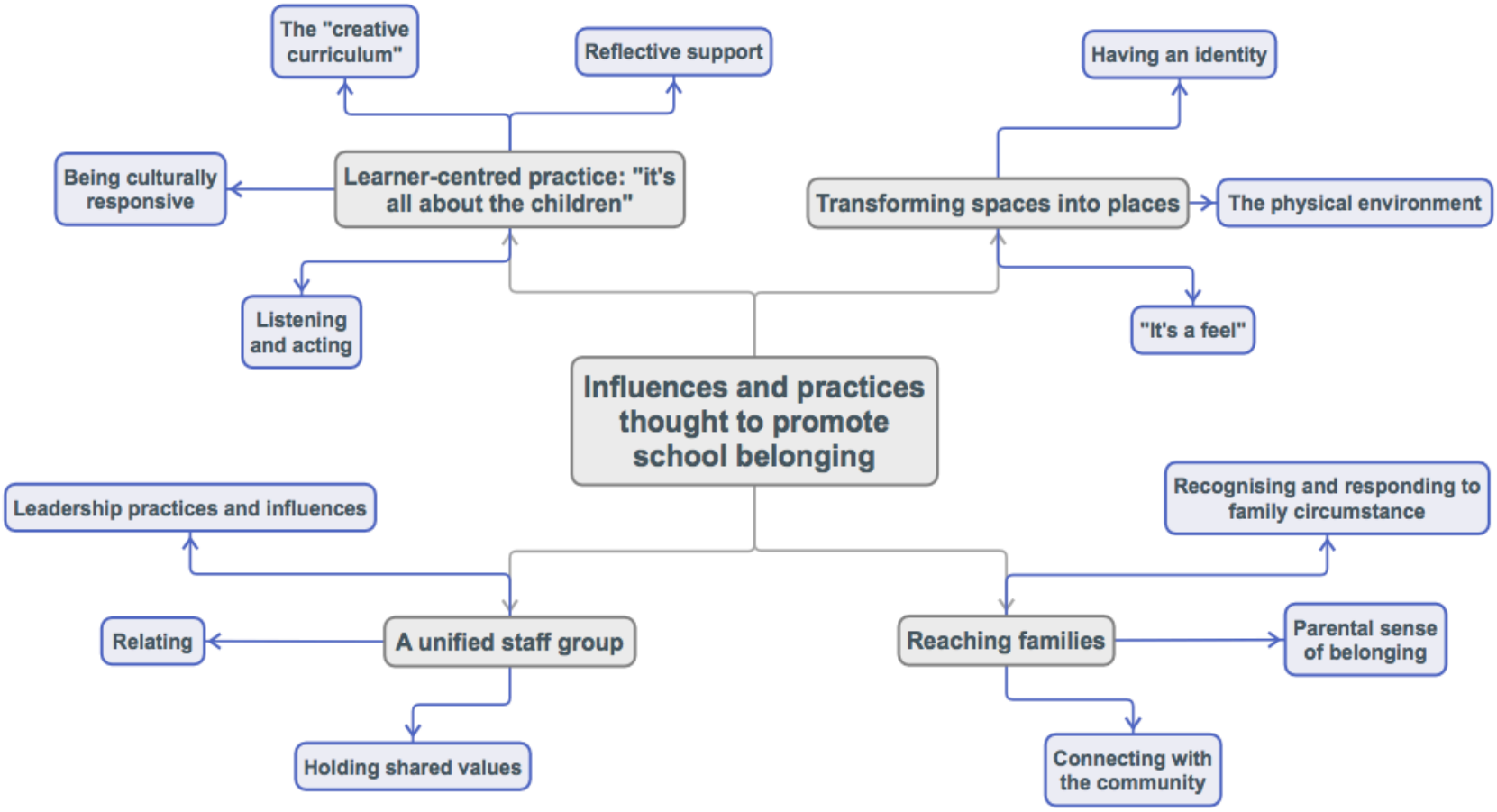

Figure 5. Summative overview of the tentative grounded theory

Charmaz (2014) emphasised the importance of integrating the categories when constructing the theoretical framework; in this study the four categories are considered a nexus of practices and influences, and are meaningful when considered in this way. Strauss and Corbin (1998) described how "theorising is the act of constructing ... from data an explanatory scheme that systematically integrates various concepts through statements of relationship" (p.25). The interconnectivity of the four conceptual categories and their constituent parts demonstrates a 'systematic integration' of the practice enactments and influences that are thought to promote school belonging in St Francis' School. On the following page, figure 6 provides a more detailed visual representation of the tentative grounded theory, and illustrates how the conceptual categories are interlinked.

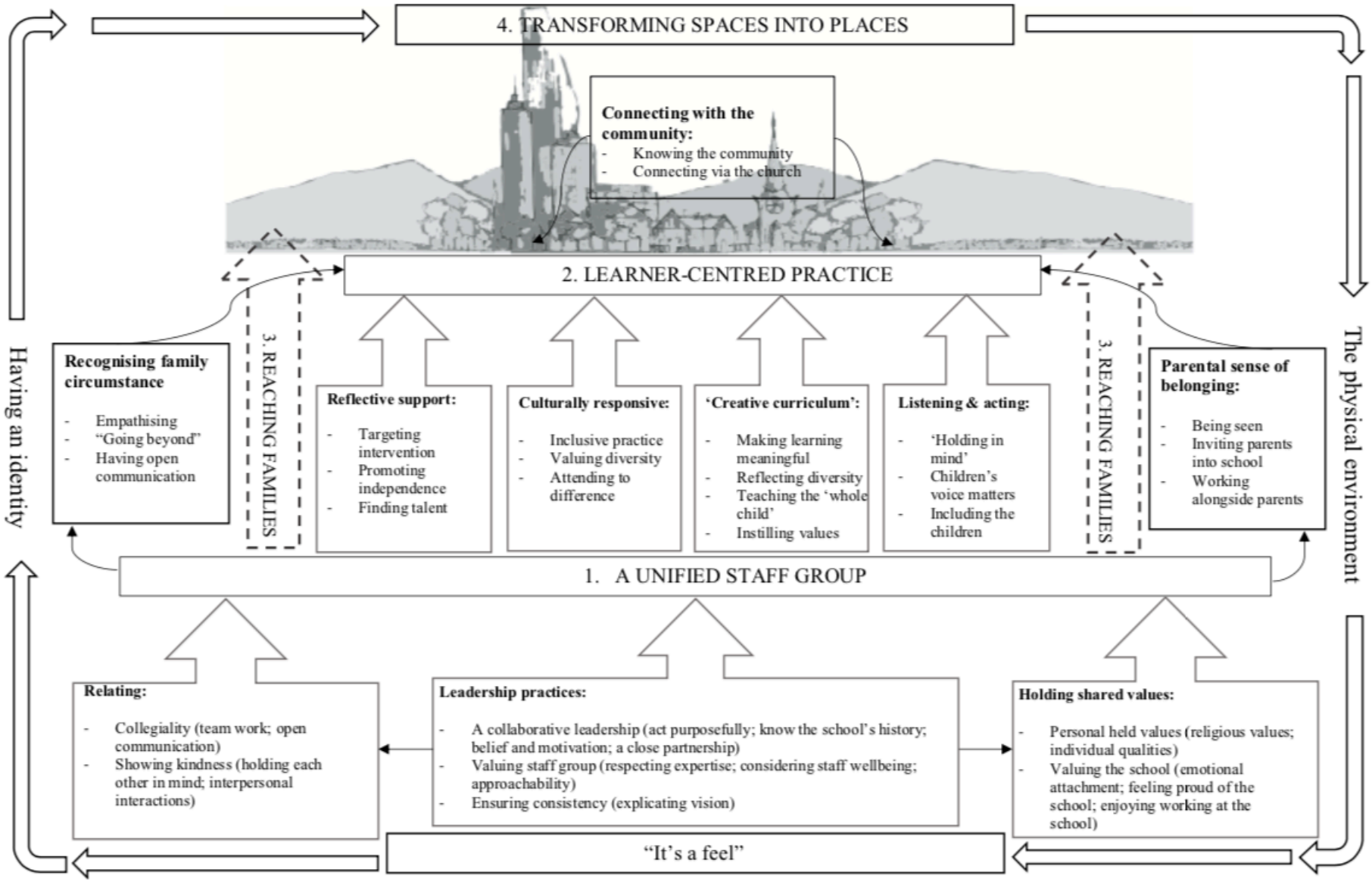

Figure 6. Visual representation of the tentative grounded theory

4.3.1 (1) A unified staff group

Analysis revealed the realisation of a '*a unified staff group'* to be a key influence of school belonging. The decision to present this category first was a deliberate one. In many ways, the decision links to an assertion made by Claudia (DHT) that it is the *people* within an environment that bring the "heart and soul". Referring to school belonging, she maintained that "it's the people that create [belonging]"; promoting school belonging *starts* with a unified workforce, it relies primarily upon human engagement and interaction.

This category was constructed in order to represent the influences and practices associated with establishing a cohesive staff group at St Francis' School. This category comprises of three interlinking subcategories: *leadership practices and influences*, *relating* and *holding shared values*.

4.3.1.1 Leadership practices and influences

Data analysis indicated that the practice enactments of the leaders at St Francis' School influenced the formation of a unified staff group. Figure 7 illustrates the constituent parts of *leadership practices and influences*: 'collaborative leadership'; 'valuing the staff group' and 'ensuring consistency'.

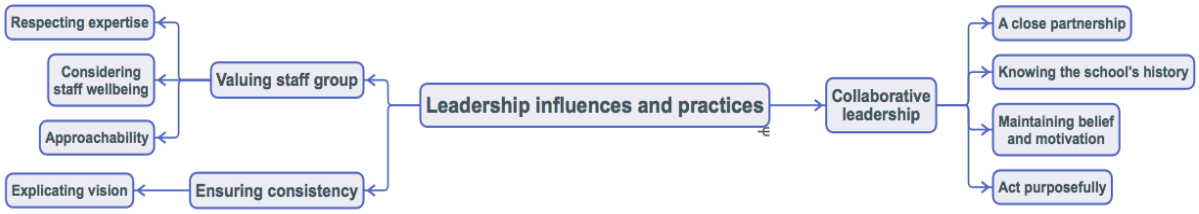

Figure 7. Leadership influences and practices

A key theme that developed during the initial interview encounter with Shona (HT) was associated with the need for a strong partnership, "a good deputy" (Shona, HT).
A collaborative model of leadership was adopted at St Francis' School. This meant that Shona and Claudia worked closely together to bring into fruition their learner-centred vision for the school. They wanted to ensure that St Francis' School was a place where everyone felt that they belonged. They maintained the belief and motivation that their vision for the school could be realised despite the "many obstacles" (Shona, HT) they faced along the way. They preserved the mentality of 'sticking to their path', and put aside the challenges perceived to be beyond their control:

> So, I don't let those big things- I just get on and keep to the path… I can't do anything about what's politically 'the in thing' so we just keep on doing what we are doing – so those big things are not a distraction at all (Shona, HT)

They were willing to do whatever was necessary to achieve a school where every child can achieve:

> I always say it's not a dress rehearsal for the children, and this is it. We've got to provide the best possible education for them and… that's what Shona and I believe and we had to do whatever was necessary to make that happen (Claudia, DHT)

These statements indicate that Shona and Claudia have a strong sense of agency. A belief that they *can* achieve their vision for the school.

A further collaborative practice enactment of the leaders at St Francis' School relates to the fact that they reserve time to simply talk about their school openly and creatively:

> Claudia and I would… do a lot of talking about our school. And that is where creativity comes into it… we bring creativity into what we're doing in the same way that we bring creativity into the children's education, we apply that creative thinking and problem solving (Shona, HT)

During these 'creative conversations' Claudia and Shona establish strategic and purposeful actions and practices:

> It's not just… throw it all up in the air and see where it lands… It's important as a leader… to be strategic, and to have a vision of where you want to get to (Claudia, DHT)

During the second interview with Shona (HT) I explored with her how these conversations are shared with members of staff. Shona explained that:

> Claudia and I will have already done a lot of the teasing out, and so the way you take it to staff is kind of different… You might bring it to them in a staff meeting, and then there is ownership of it and you might say… what would be best? And which would you rather do? (Shona, HT)

Shona was describing a process of presenting thoughts and points of discussion in a contained way. She recalled difficulty in recreating the 'conversational' format with the

whole staff group stating that it often becomes “messy” and fruitless. However, there is a shared ownership of decision making, and staff contribution is actively sought.

Another purposeful practice that emerged through analysis was concerned with the recruitment processes at St Francis’ School. One member of staff described how Shona is purposefully “looking for like-minded people” (Rachel, Literacy Lead). This practice was explored further with Shona; she confirmed that this was a guiding influence, and explained that whilst the recruitment processes were stringent in terms of experience and skill, the deciding factor often related to “how [an interviewee] made [her] feel” (Shona, HT) during the interview, and how the individual was observed relating to others. Shona attributed this emotional response to whether or not the interviewee held the same core beliefs and values as those held at St Francis’ School.

It became apparent that the practice enactments were influenced by the leaders knowing the school; understanding its history and knowing the community it serves:

> I suppose our head teacher now, she was a teacher here, and she knew the community very well, she knew the children very well, she knew the families very well, she could see from previous leadership and management what wasn’t working… and what was going wrong (Katie, Family Worker)

By knowing the needs within the school and the community, the leaders were able to identify what roles were needed, and what support structures and policies needed to be in place to realise their vision for the school.

Ensuring consistency is a further leadership approach influencing the cultivation of *a unified staff group*. In this instance, consistency relates to ensuring that the leaders' vision for the school is clearly explicated to all members of the school community. As such, the vision becomes a whole school commitment whereby each individual is working towards a common purpose. In response to *how* the vision is made explicit, Claudia shared the following:

> Through a series of staff meetings, but also in terms of accountability … monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and… providing support for individuals who… are finding it quite challenging (Claudia, DHT)

Claudia is describing how across-school consistency is established through a process of monitoring and evaluating practice, which then minimises the within school variance in terms of teaching and learning. In doing so, she is securing and embedding the moral purpose of the learner-centred school. Rachel (Literacy Lead) echoed this assertion stating that:

> Our professional development is about making sure everyone is doing the same approach to things… It's very clear what we should be doing (Rachel, Literacy Lead)

Remaining open and transparent, and making explicit the intention to create learning opportunities for every child, influences how members of staff approach their practice; they act in a way that is consistent with the vision and values of the school. Penny (TA) portrayed how this consistency of approach manifests in the classroom environment:

> We work together… and we are all saying the same thing. Whatever the teacher is saying to the to the children, I will then reinforce it… everyone is on that same page (Penny, TA).

'Valuing the staff group' is considered a relational leadership practice influencing the formation of a *unified staff group*. This subcategory is concerned with how the school leaders relate to their members of staff. Fundamentally, it considers how the wellbeing of the workforce is nurtured, and explores the leadership's role in this endeavor. Analysis revealed the following interrelating themes: 'respecting expertise', 'approachability' and 'considering staff group wellbeing'.

Principally, the school leaders hold high expectations of their workforce demonstrating a confidence and trust in their capacity:

> I'm very much an advocate of valuing teachers, valuing staff; I think that's really important but actually… making the standards clear… whatever we do we should be excellent (Claudia, DHT).

One member of staff shared her belief that the leaders of St Francis' School respected the expertise of the teachers:

> It's about respecting teachers… ability to teach. I know that at my previous school, they wanted us to do things like include the questions you were going to

> ask on your lesson plan… There was a real doubt in the teacher's abilities… and I don't believe it is like that here at all (Rachel, Literacy Lead)

The leaders show respect by permitting autonomy and freedom. The teaching staff are given a say in how they approach their primary task of teaching. Karen (Teacher) inferred a sense of autonomy reflecting how she is free to use different areas of the school for teaching and is able to embrace learning themes innovatively. Similarly, Penny (TA) shared how she feels able to offer information and trial new approaches and then receive feedback based on the choices she made:

> We're… given the opportunity to give information that maybe somebody else doesn't know, and we can then work on it and trial things to see whether it works… and we will have feedback… I help with resolving issues… I'm involved, so that gives me that sense of belonging (Penny, TA)

It is advocated that each member of staff is respected for the expertise they can contribute to the whole school commitment. Each role and responsibility are purposefully thought through and considered in terms of the needs within the school. For instance, there is a very high proportion of children with EAL[39] in the school and, in response, Rachel was employed as a Literacy Lead and EAL specialist to provide targeted support in this area. During the interview Rachel referenced the concept of feedback and inferred a personal sense of worth:

[39] English as an Additional Language (EAL).

> Whenever… we sat down to go through progress… Claudia is always saying "you know, look, this is what we're doing and thank you so much because you are part of this impact that we are having" (Rachel, Literacy Lead)

A further influence contributing to the sentiment of mutual respect related to a sense of 'equality' within the workforce. Both Katie (Family Worker) and Karen (Teacher) described how a traditional 'hierarchy' was absent at St Francis' School:

> There isn't a hierarchy… everybody's approachable, no matter what level they are on… if there's something bothering anybody, they can raise it (Karen, Teacher)

Karen appears to be linking this absence of a 'felt-hierarchy' to a belief that "everybody's approachable"; there is always the opportunity to discuss your thoughts and concerns with all members of staff. Penny (TA) also shared this experience of feeling heard, and having a voice; "it's like a validation" (Penny, TA).

A further theme to emerge in relation to approachability was the notion of the leadership team 'being seen' around the school. Claudia stated that she will work within the classroom setting to demonstrate that she is "not removed from the day-to-day business of teaching and learning" (Claudia, DHT). She felt this to be important particularly when "you're in a position where you are evaluating and giving feedback, then you still have credibility and that authenticity… because people see you practise" (Claudia, DHT). This theme of being seen was also reflected by Penny (TA) who stated that "the leadership team are… always there on hand… not just isolated in an office."

Another contributing factor to the subcategory of 'valuing the staff group' related to the leadership considering the wellbeing of their workforce; empathising with the experiences of the staff group "[putting] myself in their shoes" (Shona, HT). Rachel (Literacy Lead) shared her belief that the welfare of the staff group is "really important to the leadership". Rachel made comparisons with her experience at other schools stating that:

> I think at a lot of schools [staff group wellbeing] isn't [important], and I think that creates a high turnover of staff and you hear about these teachers… burning out… and I don't get that sense from [the teachers] here (Rachel, Literacy Lead)

This consideration of staff group wellbeing is perhaps linked to the leaders holding realistic expectations of their staff group. Karen (Teacher) described how the leadership "are not giving us things that are extra burden… they're more realistic in what they are asking us to do" (Karen, Teacher). Rachel (Literacy Lead) considered the leadership's acknowledgement of the 'whole person' to be an influencing factor of staff group wellbeing. She explained how they are "understanding of your life, not just of your work but of things that are going on outside of school as well". Rachel shared that she had experienced personal events whilst working at the school and felt that there was an inherent understanding that "life gets in the way sometimes".

As well as the underpinning relational and structural influences, Shona (HT) inferred the importance of the "day-to-day" interactions:

> It's about the small day-to-day- if… I hear somebody doing something really good, I'll tell them and so will other members of staff (Shona, Head Teacher)

Claudia (DHT) described similar customary practices that demonstrate a recognition of staff group wellbeing:

> I think… everyone's been working really hard all day and you have the staff meeting, if you have some nice refreshments at the staff meeting, and… not having meetings that are so long… after a long day in the classroom (Claudia, DHT)

4.3.1.2 Holding shared values

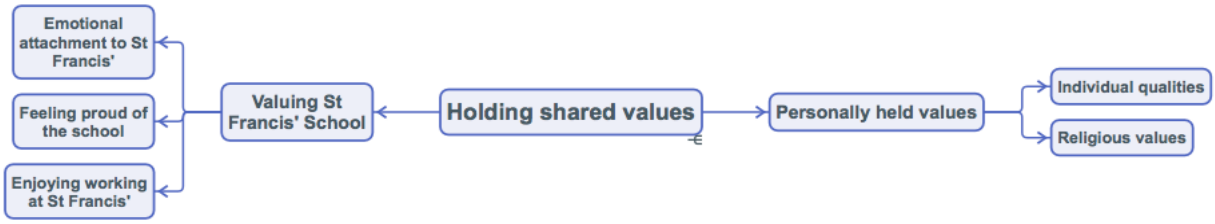

Figure 8. Holding shared values

Holding shared values is the second subcategory influencing the formation of *a unified staff group*. As illustrated in figure 8, the influencing factors of this subcategory are: 'personally held values' and 'valuing St Francis' School.'

St Francis' School is a Catholic primary school with an enduring Catholic ethos underpinning practice. Claudia shared her thoughts about the religious element of the school in terms of the values and core beliefs:

> It's a religious school… but it's actually an *inclusive* school, so there are children and staff who have faith, different faiths and no faith at all. But actually, it's very much about values… being kind, being compassionate, being purposeful; having a vision of where you want to go (Claudia, DHT)

Karen (Teacher) and Rachel (Literacy Lead) also described how the Christian ethos of the school affects the values and beliefs cultivated: "[faith] teaches you… good moral ethics of how to treat other people… there is a very strong message through that of respect and of loving and kindness" (Rachel, Literacy Lead). Katie (Family Worker) reflected how it is these core values and beliefs that are the bedrock of the school and described how a family of Islamic faith had recently chosen St Francis' School by virtue of its foundational values. When reflecting upon the values of St Francis' School, Shona (HT) stated instinctively "the values are catholic values, the values are Christian values, the values are British values, the values are human values – the values are just values for humanity".

Schools are settings where interpersonal interactions take place frequently between all members of the school community. Marcel, a Year 6 pupil at St Francis' School described how members of staff at St Francis' School are "kind" and "fair", and another pupil described how "everybody was very welcoming towards me" (Natalie, pupil) when she joined the school in Year 4. A number of individual qualities emerged from the data including maintaining an optimistic outlook, acting purposefully and believing in the power of education. Katie (Family Worker) linked the positivity she observed in the staff group to the love she perceives staff have for their job: "it's not just a job, it's a vocation because we love it… it's just a happy place".

Claudia (DHT) shared how education has always been important to her:

> Education has always been very important… I think schools really do make a difference… And I think if you're in education then you have to believe that in spite of all the things that are outside of your control… you have to believe that being in education is a real privilege because you get to impact lives for generations (Claudia, DHT)

Rachel (Literacy Lead) commented on the effort within the school to disseminate the message of the importance of education to parents and families: "I think there is just more of an expectation for parents to be here and being part of what's going on here".

Another theme that emerged through analysis related to the workforce simply liking children. Katie (Family Worker) affirmed "every member of staff has got the school and the children in their hearts". Claudia shared the importance of showing the children that you care about them and that you respect them; she described how this can be demonstrated in the way you speak to the children:

> We don't advocate telling children to "shh, don't do that"… if you do that to an adult, that is perceived as "*gasp* she just told me to shh!" … So why would you do that to a child (Claudia, DHT)

Through the processes of analysis, it emerged that members of the school community valued St Francis' School; they felt a sense of pride and attachment to the school and

found pleasure in working at the school. During the interview encounter with Katie (Family Worker) she shared that she had worked at the school for 20 years, and described her own personal attachment to the school: "it's important to me because this was my primary school as well… I came here when I was five years old … so yeah, the school has got a big place in my heart (Katie, Family Worker).

4.3.1.3 Relating

Figure 9. Relating

The final influential factor contributing to *a unified staff group* is interpreted as 'relating'. This subcategory responds to the interpersonal relationships within the school. As summarised in figure 9, the themes of 'showing kindness' and 'collegiality' comprise this subcategory.

Collegiality at St Francis' School is defined by the working relationships between members of staff. The concepts of teamwork and maintaining open communication were the most common occurring components contributing to a climate of collegiality. A number of participants described how teamworking was valued at St Francis' School. Claudia (DHT) perceived the workforce were "very much a team" and she felt she could rely on her colleagues when faced with a challenge. Similarly, Penny (TA) felt supported by other members of staff:

> [Colleagues] will say "oh if there's something that you don't understand just ask…" I'm in year two, so the teachers who have already worked in Year 2 before

> will say, “oh it's here and this is what you need to do,” so we work together (Penny, TA)

Katie (Family Worker) portrayed an almost flattened management structure where each member of the school community is working together towards a common purpose, and everybody’s input is valued:

> I think everyone just… works together, there’s nothing like “oh, my role is higher than yours” all the teachers are on the same level, the TAs are trusted to take their groups out and work alongside the teachers and speak to parents and so there’s no sort of discrimination, it’s just everyone works together (Katie, Family Worker)

Claudia (DHT) observed a “coaching-type” mentality within the school. She shared how “everyone here has a go-to person” to approach to generate ideas and articulate thinking.

In her role as Literacy Lead and EAL specialist, it is necessary for Rachel to work closely with members of teaching staff. When discussing the nature of team work at St Francis’ School, she referred to the open lines of communication, and the need for compromise and flexibility:

> I feel like everyone here is very receptive. People communicate easily… if I've got an issue with something, I don't feel worried about speaking to any of the teachers or… speaking to Claudia (Rachel, Literacy Lead)

This climate of collegiality at St Francis' School is likely to be reinforced by the purported kindness shown between members of staff. When speaking about belonging in St Francis' School in the opening interview with Shona (HT) she exclaimed: "it's all about relationships – it's the relationships that we have with the children, it's the relationships we have with each other" (Shona, HT). Karen (Teacher) attributed the positive relationships to the underpinning element of mutual respect.

Rachel inferred experiences of being 'held in mind':

> If you're having a social conversation, people want to talk about the things that matter to you… people remember things that you've mentioned to them in the past (Rachel, Literacy Lead)

This sentiment of kindness also emerged from the interviews with the pupils. It was noted that the school experiences high mobility meaning there are new students starting at different stages of the year. Both Marcel and Natalie (pupils) were interviewed and shared a sense of being made to feel welcome when they joined St Francis' School: "they smiled at me and made me feel welcome and comfortable" (Natalie, pupil). Similarly, Karen (Teacher) described a sense of feeling welcome when she came to interview for the role of class teacher, she described how she was warmly greeted and encouraged prior to her interview and stated that she felt that she "belonged straight away".

4.3.2 (2) Learner-centred practice: "It's all about the children"

As described in the section above, members of staff at St Francis' School shared a unified commitment to providing the best possible education for all their pupils. This section

examines the practices and influences that support this educational endeavour. The following four subcategories emerged through analysis: *reflective support*, *being culturally responsive, the 'creative curriculum'* and *listening and acting* upon the voices of the children. Together these subcategories form the conceptual category of *learner-centred practice*, which are collectively thought to promote school belonging.

4.3.2.1 Reflective support

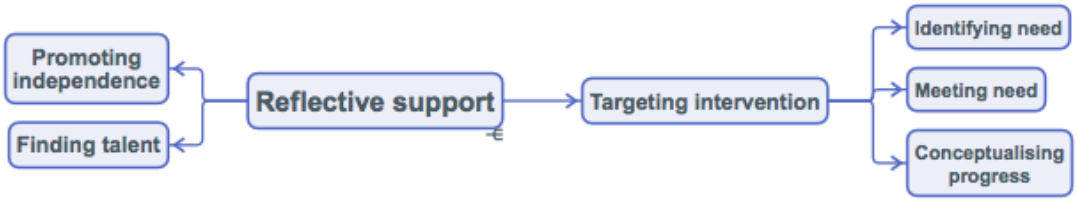

Figure 10. Reflective support

Providing reflective support for the pupils at St Francis' School was found to be an influential practice enactment contributing to the conceptual category of *learner-centred practice.* Figure 10 presents the influences and practices that emerged from the data: 'targeting intervention', 'finding talent' and 'promoting independence'.

Developing support that was responsive to individual needs required the effectual targeting of intervention. This involved a process of identifying needs, meeting the needs identified and conceptualising progress. Various practice enactments and influential factors emerged through analysis, which supported this process of identification. Katie described how her joint role of Family Worker and SENCo assistant enabled a more informed practice and provision of support. She described the following:

> [As a Family Worker] I got to know the families really well, more with… vulnerable families really… so that made it easier then when I did come into the

> SENCO role… a lot of these families… that I'd worked with before, their children would fall under SEN so… just knowing the children so well… and then to know the families so well… knowing their needs, it just… brings it together (Katie, Family Worker)

Katie is inferring that knowing the families well meant that as a practitioner, she has a greater awareness of the wider contextual factors. This could include the child's home learning environment, as well as parental aspirations and attitudes towards education. This awareness enables a more informed approach when targeting support and intervention for the child and their family.

It was advocated that interventions are tailored to support pupils with varying needs so that all children are able to participate, progress and achieve. Claudia (DHT) described how "we have pupil progress reviews every term and then at those we identify children that might need to be supported, or extended." Small-group teaching is provided for children who would benefit from additional support to address areas of need or extend areas of strength, and were described as "just part and parcel of the way we do things here" (Shona, HT). Karen (Teacher) stated that each child in the classroom has their own individual targets, which allow members of staff to "[keep] track with that child and their achievements" (Karen, Teacher). Karen also inferred the importance of having the *time* to think about a child and their individual learning preferences: "it's getting the opportunity- that time to really think about what are the needs here, thinking about the individual".

Within St Francis' School, there are group interventions, these were instigated in response to specific needs. As noted, there is a high proportion of children with EAL in

the school. In response to this contextual factor, specialist EAL provision is provided to those children who require additional support with their English language learning. Rachel (Literacy Lead) is specialised in this area. Rachel stated that children with EAL are "[assessed] on entry to get an idea of whether they need additional support for English in the classroom". She explained that the assessment outcomes would indicate the level of proficiency the child has in English, and would enable her to describe to teachers "what that might look like [in the classroom]", and also give advice on what additional support is required.

Although Rachel (Literacy Lead) is the employed specialist in the area of EAL support, she is describing how the support provided to these children requires collaboration between a number of adults within the school. This also ensures consistency of approach. The EAL support provided at St Francis's School emerged as an important factor of belonging for two of the children that were interviewed. Marcel and Natalie both described how the support they received to learn English when they arrived at the school helped them feel comfortable and included in the school community.

Historically, attendance was a concern at St Francis' School and identified as an area of priority. In response to this concern, an 'attendance group' was set up and is facilitated by Katie (Family Worker). Katie described how each member of the group has their own 'attendance diary' to enable them to "look at how well they have done" and promote engagement and belonging in school.

Promoting independence emerged as a guiding influence on practice, and it contributes to the practices of *reflective support* at St Francis' School. When exploring *how* members of

staff promote independence, Shona (HT) described how firstly, the children need to "have high expectations of themselves, be resilient… self-manage their behaviour". She added that the children "need to experience failure in a very safe environment" and see that failure is not something to fear.

At St Francis' School a culture of collaboration was encouraged. Children were supported to problem solve and work together in the classroom. Penny (TA), Claudia (DHT) and Rachel (Literacy Lead) described how children were thoughtfully 'buddied up', particularly when considering their support to learn English. Natalie (pupil) shared her experience of being helped in the classroom by her peers: "they explained what the teacher was saying to me, and they kind of used their hands to show me what she means".

Encouraging the development of metacognitive[40] skills was a further contributory factor to the promotion of independence at St Francis' School. These included supporting the children to monitor their own learning and to identify when they needed help; asking metacognitive questions of the children; and encouraging them to problem solve peer conflicts independently. Penny (TA) and Shona (HT) referred to the importance of the children knowing when to ask for help: "I'm always sort of reminding them… if you're struggling with something, you need to speak to an adult… so it gets them to be more independent" (Penny, TA). Penny added how her role involves prompting children of prior learning and modeling problem-solving processes.

[40] Knowledge and beliefs about one's own cognitive processes… the term is also sometimes applied to regulation of cognitive functions, including planning, checking, or monitoring (Oxford Dictionary of Psychology, p. 456).

Karen described how the 'restorative justice' approach that is fostered throughout the school promotes independent thinking and problem-solving. She referred to how this manifested in the playground:

> The children sort it all out on their own… they are able to solve problems, and they are happy… [it] is allowing them to be independent… and it's telling them… we respect you…we trust that you want to do the right thing (Karen, Teacher)

Karen identified the independence she observed in the playground as indicating the children's sense of belonging:

> It's a time where they can be themselves and are left to *think*… I saw it come naturally because they had that sense of belonging here… they've felt that their views matter (Karen, Teacher)

Claudia (DHT) described how, through modelling the restorative approach to the children, they learn the skills to approach conflict in a constructive way:

> If there was an argument or some sort of disagreement or dispute, you'll hear one child… mediating… they model what we model for them (Claudia, DHT)

When reflecting upon her friendships, Amy (pupil) described how when there is a conflict "we feel like we can sort it out ourselves" but stated that she would feel able to approach an adult if it were something "more serious".

Simply encouraging the children was a further factor contributing to the development of independence. The provision of encouragement and reassurance was particularly significant for Penny (TA), she described how "as a teaching assistant, it's gathering the children and getting them to talk about their worries and their concerns and encouraging them that they can achieve".

Finding talent also emerged from the data and contributes to the 'reflective support' at St Francis' School. Katie (Family Worker) described the importance of recognising the children as individuals and finding something that they "actually enjoy and belong to… they find their own skill and talents". Claudia shared a similar belief:

> I say to the children that you are all smart, we just need to find out what it is, for some… they will excel in Maths and English, for others it will be Art and Design and Music, so it's actually nurturing those gifts and those talents (Claudia, DHT)

When exploring *how* these talents are 'found', the participants described how there are a number of different clubs and groups available within the school. Natalie (pupil) shared how she was part of the choir and stated that: "it makes me feel like I am part of something great, and I enjoy it!". Reference was also made to the 'creative curriculum' at St Francis' School, which is discussed in the next section.

4.3.2.2 The 'creative curriculum'

Figure 11. The 'creative curriculum'

The curriculum at St Francis' School is based upon the vision, values and intentions of the school to be a place of belonging. This subcategory represents the influences and practices that contribute to *the 'creative curriculum'*. The intention of the creative curriculum is to help the pupils develop an understanding of the world in which they live. As illustrated in figure 11, it is concerned with 'making learning meaningful'; 'reflecting diversity'; 'teaching the whole child'; and 'instilling values'.

Shona (HT) described the curriculum at St Francis' School as "evolving" and reflected that "it will always be evolving"; this intimates that Shona views the curriculum as always open to change and improvement. She described how developing the creative curriculum at St Francis' School has been an ongoing process of making the learning meaningful, making it "real and relevant" to the world in which the children are living.

Karen (Teacher) also shared the importance of making learning meaningful for the children, and explained that she achieves this by encouraging a 'learning by doing' approach. In extension, she described the importance of having a *reason* for doing a learning task: "*this* school gives us an outcome… if you do it in your class, there is an opportunity… to then present it [to the whole school], so we're not doing it for the sake of it". She described how she responds to incidental learning opportunities, which occur in the classroom setting and that she has the freedom to pursue such openings.

Both Claudia (DHT) and Shona (HT) commented on the importance of making the curriculum reflective of the diversity within the school. It needs to be a curriculum "that reflected their heritage, so that [the children] could relate to it, they could see themselves"

(Shona, HT). Claudia (DHT) provided a practice example of how the curriculum is made reflective:

> This month… it's black history month, our focus is Windrush… in year 6 they will be looking at immigration whereas in… a younger class they might be looking at… starting somewhere new… going on a journey… there's a big boat in the back of the year 1 outdoor area so that could be the Windrush, you know… how do you feel when you go to a new class, when you have new friends, our school has got very high mobility… so it's actually… using real life (Claudia, DHT)

Shona (HT) explained how the literature is used as a vehicle to promote and reflect diversity. She described how teaching "start[s] with the literature"; they "make sure that… the children are exposed to high-quality literature from… classics to very modern authors". If the children do not see themselves in the curriculum, Claudia (DHT) believed that there is a risk of them feeling like an outsider, which will impact their sense of belonging within the school.

Claudia (DHT) stated that the principal intention of the *creative curriculum* is to support young people to become "well-rounded and secure" individuals. Penny (TA) shared a similar view. She stated that that the purpose of education is to ensure that an individual grows as a "whole person". Claudia (DHT) described the ongoing process of making the curriculum broad and balanced:

> When I came here, the curriculum wasn't as broad and it wasn't as balanced so… [now] we teach Spanish, all the children learn Spanish… from a specialist, we have a music specialist, we have an IT specialist… (Claudia, DHT)

Claudia (DHT) is presenting a 'specialist approach' to the delivery of certain aspects of the curriculum, which was also referenced by other participants. This contributes to there being a varied curriculum – "every day there is something new" (Natalie, pupil) – where specialist skill and expertise is respected. Amy (pupil) referred to her enjoyment of the extracurricular and "outdoor activities" at St Francis' School.

A practice enactment that helps to promote a rounded curriculum is the pastoral emphasis at St Francis' School. There is a priority to educate in a holistic way; promoting the social and emotional aspects of the curriculum is seen to be as important as the academic aspects. Karen (Teacher) stated that the SEAL[41] curriculum is very much *embedded* at St Francis' School. She explained that the SEAL curriculum is seen as a priority and not as simply an 'add-on'. In a similar vein, Katie (Family Worker) stated that the 'restorative justice' approach is a practice enactment which supports the imparting of compassion and authenticity.

A number of participants commented upon the importance of teaching and instilling values as part of the creative curriculum. Shona described the importance of ambition and integrity:

[41] Social and emotional aspects of learning.

> I want them to strive for whatever they want to do… have ambition… just be good people – I tell them… that I want them to be the people who are looking after me when I'm old, I want them to be… the politicians because then I know that everything will be well looked after (Shona, HT)

Claudia (DHT) explained how the sentiments of 'belonging' that are fostered within the school are linked to the values the school is committed to imparting:

> It was very much about knowing who you are, being secure in your identity, being proud of where you come from and what you have to bring (Claudia, DHT)

Rachel (Literacy Lead) referred to the "positive attitude towards learning that's going on here". She described how there is an impetus of "respect for what you are doing in school". Rachel reflected on how this respect is achieved by giving children an ownership of what they are doing:

> The way that we're teaching reading now for example that's really giving children more ownership of what they're doing… The children are really proud of themselves (Rachel, Literacy Lead)

This purported belief that the adults in the school are instilling this sense of respect for learning was implied by Natalie (pupil) who explained that the staff members "help everyone understand why school is important and that they should learn". Karen (Teacher) stated that the curriculum and the environment of St Francis' School facilitates

this positive attitude towards learning: “the children are looking forward to feeling, yes, this is a learning school, this is what I’m going to learn about and I want to achieve”.

4.3.2.3 Being culturally responsive

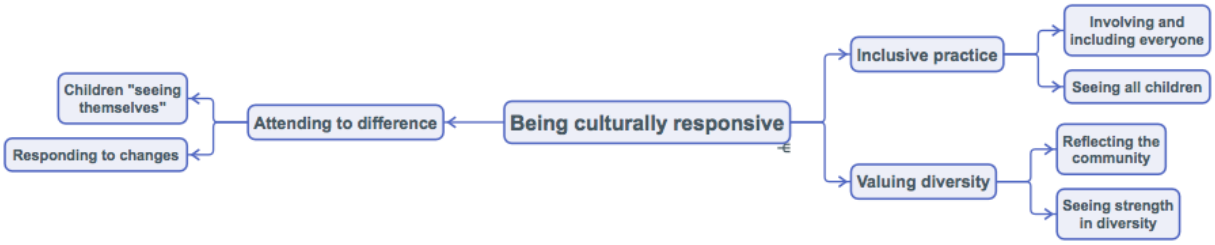

Figure 12. Being culturally responsive

As shown in figure 12, ‘valuing diversity’, ‘attending to difference’ and ‘inclusive practice’ constitute the subcategory: *being culturally responsive*. Participants espoused how at St Francis’ School, there is a commitment to inclusive practice; participants described the sentiment that every learner is involved, included and valued. Shona reflected on inclusive practice in relation to St Francis’ School being a faith school:

> Lots of people would maybe look at [being a faith school] as being *exclusive*… but actually done properly, it can be very *inclusive* because everyone is genuinely welcome (Shona, HT)

Shona added that it is the *values* of the school that are important. She described the importance of remaining true to the ‘inclusive practice’ underpinning St Francis’ School by always returning to what you are aspiring to be; a place of belonging for every child. Natalie (pupil) shared her belief that St Francis’ School “is a great place for everybody, everybody is welcome.”

A relational factor influencing inclusive practice at St Francis' School was the perceived compassionate nature of the workforce: "I think that the staff here really put themselves out to support everyone" (Rachel, Literacy Lead). Penny (TA) described it as a process of constantly "looking out for all the children". She explained how in the classroom, it is important to ensure all voices are heard; Penny believes her role is to advocate for those children whose voices may be quieter:

> [The quieter children] are the ones that you speak to, and you get them answering questions… include them so that they can say something (Penny, TA)

Amy (pupil) described how an adult in her classroom helps her to feel a sense of belonging by talking to her, and providing her with support if required: "she just comes to each one of us… she will talk to each of us, and… she'll tell us our work is nice, even though we can be like struggling she'll easily help us."

Attending to difference and valuing diversity emerged as contributory factors to the subcategory of *being culturally responsive.* As previously referenced, Shona (HT) reflected how historically the changes in the school with regards to its demographics were not attended to. She described how nobody appeared to be attending to what makes the children "unique and different, and actually how important that is for the curriculum". Shona (HT) specifically referred to the "expectations for black children" and the importance of children seeing themselves:

> It didn't matter how much I told them you can be whatever you want to be… because those words are meaningless until you can see somebody who is a doctor,

> who is a teacher, who is a lawyer, who is a is a business man… I always knew that the curriculum was key, that we had to have a creative curriculum but also a curriculum… that reflected the children in the school (Shona, HT).

Katie (Family Worker) and other participants referred to the diversity of St Francis' School and reflected upon the richness of learning generated through difference. Rachel (Literacy Lead) and Penny (TA) referred specifically to the high proportion of children with EAL in the school. School leaders were clear that this diversity needed to be attended to and that they needed to demonstrate that difference was valued. Shona (HT) provided a practice example of the school attending to difference and demonstrating that the diversity within the school is valued: "we had a culture celebration… we just asked people to bring food, make a dish and bring it to share and the children did some performances". Shona reflected how this celebration supported the relationships that were being forged with the families. Penny (TA) described how the 'culture day' offers a learning opportunity and instils curiosity; it enabled you to "build connections with other groups in the school".

Karen (Teacher) shared her views regarding how St Francis' School reflected the diversity of its community, which focused upon the environment of the school; she exclaimed: "it reflects [the community] inside and outside". She described her first impressions of the school: "I loved the colours, the colours were amazing because it's like reflecting society, that we all are different, but… we all belong in the school".

St Francis' School is multi-ethnic and diverse; the participants are describing the importance of recognising and representing all aspects of the community in order to promote school belonging.

4.3.2.4 Listening and acting

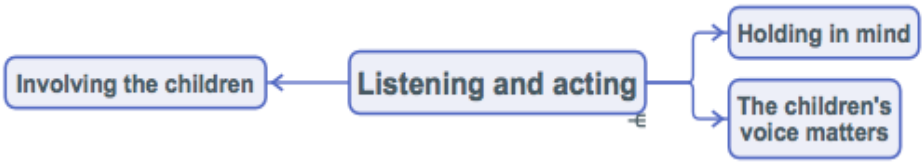

Figure 13. Listening and acting

The final subcategory influencing *learner-centred practice* at St Francis' School is the practice of *listening and acting* upon the voices of the children. Staff are fostering the learner-centred commitment of St Francis' School by holding the child in mind, by involving them and affording them the experience of agency and autonomy. In doing so, they are advocating for the pupil voice. Figure 13 illustrates the themes that constitute this subcategory.

As previously described, there is recognition of the complexities and challenges that some of the children in St Francis' face at home. Shona (HT) described how part of their role as a school is to "make up for what they don't have, because a lot of them don't have opportunities, they don't go to the theatre… they don't necessarily all have very positive role models".

Katie (Family Worker) described the practices she employs when facilitating the 'attendance group'. In the following excerpt, she seems to be describing the concept of 'holding in mind'; providing the children with experiences of being thought about and

missed if they are absent from school. She is then attributing this sense of being missed to promoting a sentiment of belonging.

> I know sometimes, it's not their fault… it's about making the school feel important to them, and that their being here matters… if they're not in, I'll ask them who do you think will miss you… they'll say my friends will miss me, yeah, and the teacher will miss you and you'll be missed out on the playground, the dinner ladies will say, where is so and so today, everyone will miss you… they will understand that they really belong here, it's like a little link that is not here today (Katie, Family Worker)

Similarly, Penny (TA) described how members of staff are aware and "constantly thinking about the children they are working with". Amy (pupil) shared how she enjoys talking to the adults in the playground: "every time I walk in the playground, me and [adult] have a little chat – I talk about my parents, and how they're doing, and my birds". Amy added that she feels respected "as if we are another person, not just respecting us like we're a child".

Karen (Teacher) referenced how the children at St Francis' School feel "that their views matter". Claudia (DHT) described how this is achieved by *acting* upon what the children have said. Their views are sought via whole school questionnaires and via the school council. Simply talking to the children was also seen as an important practice that enabled staff to hear their views:

> Just talk to them, just talk to them – I think you can tell so much by just speaking to children (Claudia, DT)

Both Claudia and Shona shared that empowering the children to use their voice, and then acting upon their voices contributes to the promotion of belonging within the school. By acting on what the children say, they see that there is a "value in what they say because they see changes" (Claudia, DHT). The children are *involved* in the choices made within the school. Shona (HT) referenced how the children were given a choice regarding the colour of the school uniform and were involved in the transformation of spaces into places of belonging. For example, both Claudia (DHT) and Shona (HT) referred to the fact that the "sunshine room" – a quiet space within the school – was named by a child. The children are also given responsibilities at St Francis' School. Claudia (DHT) stated that it is the children who show visitors around the school; they are "the advert for the school".

Penny (TA) shared her belief that by virtue of the children being effectively supported in the classroom environment, they feel that they are understood and thus belong to the classroom community. Illustrative of this view, Marcel (pupil) shared that "the teachers explain everything to me – I'll ask them and they will explain… they listen to me".

4.3.3 (3) Reaching families

A further conceptual category to emerge through analysis was interpreted as *reaching families*. This category represents the influences and practices associated with developing productive and harmonious relationships with the families within the school community. There were three components to this category illustrated in figure 14: promoting *parental*

sense of belonging, recognising and responding to family circumstance and *connecting with the community*.

4.3.3.1 Parental sense of belonging

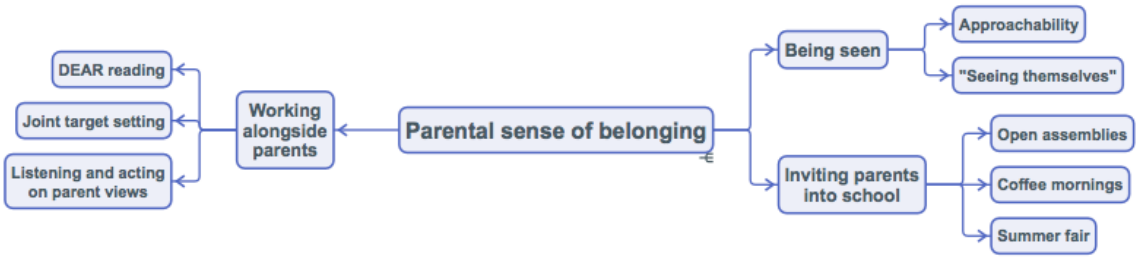

Figure 14. Parental sense of belonging

Recognising the importance of a *parental sense of belonging* was found to contribute to the development of synergistic relations with families. Analysis revealed three interweaving influences and practices that were thought to promote a *parental sense of belonging* at St Francis' School: 'being seen', 'inviting parents into school' and 'working alongside parents.'

Establishing effective working relationships with parents was considered to be a contributing factor of parental belonging. Practice enactments at St Francis' School involved building trusting and enduring relationships with parents. This development of trust was supported by being seen and, accordingly, appearing approachable. Shona (HT) described the practices as the "little things": smiling, saying hello in the morning, and showing interest in the lives of the parents.

Katie (Family Worker) who often works with the more vulnerable families in the school, described the importance of making parents feel comfortable; empowering them to reach out for support. Katie reflected how she is often the first person parents see in the morning, as she manages those children who come into school late. Katie inferred the

importance of simply being available: “it might just be for a little bit of advice or as to who they should go to in the school with a particular issue or problem”. Permitting parents to seek help, support and advice by being both visible and approachable, was thought to promote a *parental sense of belonging*.

A further layer to this influential factor related to what Shona interpreted as the parents’ “seeing somebody that looks like them”:

> I think it’s just about being really approachable, it’s interesting when Claudia first came, and her and I would be out in the playground… I suppose Claudia was really the first black teacher that had been at the school and what happened was the black parents would go to Claudia…I can remember feeling a bit miffed, you know, why are they ignoring me… and Claudia said… it’s just because they see somebody that looks like them (Shona, HT)

Shona (HT) is describing the importance of recognising and considering this implicit influencing factor when seeking to promote parental belonging. This links to the observation she made in her opening interview regarding the changes in the community demographics: “the diversity of ethnicity, and families coming from different parts of the world, almost kind of happened, because any change like that happens gradually… almost without anybody paying any attention to the change”.

Analysis revealed a distinction between the *involvement* of parents and the *engagement* of parents. Put simply, parental involvement constituted inviting parents into the school, holding coffee mornings and ‘open assemblies’, all of which were school-initiated. These practices meant that parents were present and interacting with the school:

> We've got the events, the school's summer fair, that's great getting the parents involved, and they've the Parent's Association so they are running it (Karen, Teacher)

> For any parents with new starters… we invite them in for a coffee morning at the beginning of the school year… So, the first one I did some years ago, we hardly had anybody attend… But this year… the room… was filled (Katie, Literacy Lead)

Through the processes of ensuring visibility and involving parents, it is hoped deeper trust and confidence is established. This increase in trust enables more collaborative practices, which comprise the subcategory of 'working alongside parents.' Katie (Literacy Lead) attributed the observed increase in attendance at the most recent coffee morning to an increase in parental *engagement*:

> There's a lot more inviting parents into the school these days and the pride that the children take in their work is really evident as well, so… that message is going home. There's been a real push towards this sort of respect for what you're doing in school… and parents are invited in during the day for things like DEAR[42] reading sessions (Rachel, Literacy Lead)

Similarly, Karen (Teacher) stated that parents are included in their child's target setting. This emphasises that parents are entitled to be consulted and participate in decisions

[42] Drop Everything and Read (DEAR).

concerning their children; there is a shared responsibility between parents and the school to exchange ideas as equals. Claudia (DHT) explained how parents are regularly informed of how they can support their child at home; she referred to a recent meeting that was arranged specifically for Year 2 and then Year 6 parents ahead of the SATs examinations. Claudia reflected how this inspires a productive partnership between parents and the school, with the child's learning and development at the centre.

A further theme which emerged related to ensuring parent views are heard and listened to. Claudia (DHT) described how parents are regularly sent questionnaires in order to ascertain their views on current school practice; thoughts and concerns are addressed, and adjustments are made where appropriate. Regularly communicating with parents also meant that they are kept informed about what is happening day-to-day, instilling that sense of connection to the school.

The school is devoting extra attention to parental engagement, and there is an espoused partnership of mutual respect and open communication between the parents and the school. Through such practices to promote parental involvement and engagement, it is hoped that educational partnership will strengthen, and produce an improved outcome for the child. Collectively, these practices promote a sentiment of 'belonging' for the parents. For the 'hard to reach' families, it is evident that additional effort and creativity is required. This links to the next subcategory: *recognising and responding to family circumstance.* If school leaders are aware of the individual circumstances of the families that they serve, they are more able to respond to their needs and to encourage a more cohesive and collaborative relationship.

4.3.3.2 Recognising and responding to family circumstance

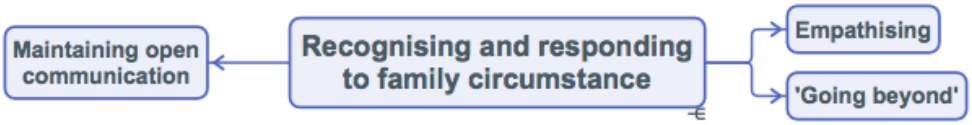

Figure 15. Recognising and responding to family circumstance

Analysis revealed the following interlinking practices and influences that constitute *recognising and responding to family circumstance*: 'empathising', 'going beyond' and 'maintaining open communication'. These practices contribute to the school's capacity to reach and connect with its families.

A number of participants implied a sense of empathy with regards to the home circumstances of some of their children. There was an understanding of how this may impact upon a parent's capacity – and a child's capacity – to engage fully with the school. Katie (Family Worker) referred to her understanding that "a lot of the parents have had a bad school life" and stated that they "do need someone that understands". Similarly, Claudia (DHT) referred to the fact that "some of our children… have challenges in their lives" and described how the role of the school is to say "actually, you do belong and you can and you will grow". Karen (Teacher) described how her role is to help those children who are facing difficulty and to gain a better understanding of them and their needs. Katie (Family Worker) captured the practice of "[putting] yourself in that situation".

A further empathising factor related to the opening of the nursery, which is on the same site as the school. As well as the incentive to "get families younger" (Shona, HT), there was recognition that this provision would support those families who have younger children: "it's nice to see the parents drop their children off and then go straight there

instead of having to rush off" (Katie, Family Worker). In addition, there is a before and an after-school provision to support those families with work commitments: "we've got breakfast club and after school club which is really good for the children because they are not going to a child minder, they're still in the same environment, you know they belong here" (Katie, Family Worker).

Further practice enactments at St Francis' School constituted the in-vivo subcategory 'going beyond'. In the interview with Karen (Teacher) she stated that: "I've seen the leadership team will do extraordinary things – go beyond – visiting their… *home,* you know… '[child] hasn't turned up today, why is that?' so, they will go to their house". Practices included: providing practical support for parents that extend beyond the school gates; visiting the home environment when concerns arise, as Karen recalled; and simply making time for families as and when required. In the following extract Katie describes how she supports the families:

> The parents might come from a different school or different area- so I help [them] to get to know the area- it could be like a GP or a dentist or any courses that are going on in the area or anything to do with the school… just questions that they might have or… forms to fill in… I usually have quite a few parents, quite often EAL parents, or parents that don't read themselves so they would come in, I'd allocate them a time that we could use the computer room, we'd do it on a computer, maybe set up an email account with them… I think for the children to see that as well that someone is helping *their* mum you know that that is really important (Katie, Family Worker)

Katie is inferring that by helping the parents, the child's sense of value and belonging within the school is enhanced.

The final contributory practice enactment within this subcategory, 'recognising and responding to family circumstances' was concerned with maintaining open communication with the families. Karen (Teacher) described how she frequently communicates with parents. Karen stated that this enables her to maintain an understanding of the wider contextual factors that may be impacting upon a child's life. Karen added that this open line of communication is also helpful in terms of knowing when to "step back".

Katie (Family Worker) described the importance of communicating with families in a transparent and non-judgemental manner. Katie asserted that this is achieved by having laid the groundwork of trust and mutual respect. This relational foundation enables you as a practitioner to explain the educational expectations and make explicit the ramifications of, for example, poor attendance:

> Sometimes people will think 92% is good… so you have to explain that to them… how much they're missing out on… and that they will eventually fall down… they are missing out on 10% of school every year… it's a lot of schooling, it's a lot of work that they are missing (Katie, Family Worker)

4.3.3.3 Connecting with the community[43]

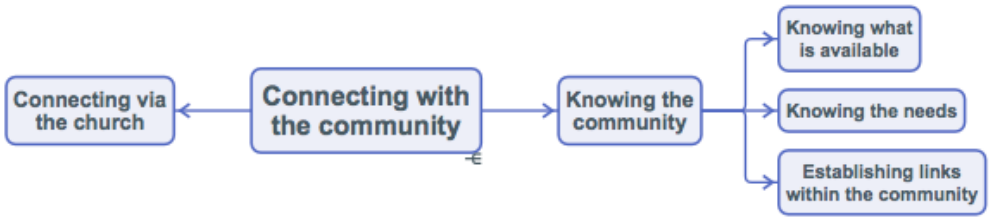

Figure 16. Connecting with the community

A further factor contributing to the conceptual category of *reaching families,* related to the influences and practices supporting the school's connection to the community; St Francis' School was described as a 'community school' by a number of participants due to its perceived links with the community. As illustrated in figure 16, this subcategory consisted of the following influential factors: 'knowing the community' and 'connecting via the church'.

Katie (Family Worker) summarised the importance of knowing the community: "I think it's down to… knowing the needs within the community, and knowing what is available". Katie described a number of services that are available to parents within the local community and stated that as part of her role she would often signpost parents to such services. Katie explained the importance of establishing "good links with the community"; working closely with health and social care agencies to enable her to support families proactively, particularly with regards to new arrivals to the community. Katie is describing the importance of locating and integrating community resources in order to strengthen the support provided to children and their families.

[43] Community refers to the immediate local environment of the school.

As St Francis' School is a Catholic school, a theme of connecting with the community via the church emerged through data analysis. The school is located in close proximity to the church, which has served the local community since its consecration in 1950. There is a strong relationship between the school and the parish and it was reported that the priest is very supportive of the school, and regularly visits the classrooms. The school has open access to the church, and the parish is able to make use of the facilities within the school. Claudia (DHT) shared a sense of connection to the community, and described how this connection was strengthened by the links the school has with the church:

> There's the parish, people come to worship in the parish church… so it's all sort of connected in that way, you might get invited to a child's first holy communion which is… a privilege really… we have a family mass on Sunday and… the children are there with their families (Claudia, DT)

Katie (Family Worker) described how through belonging to the church, the school is able to reach out further into the community. She described how every year, the children perform a carol service, which is often then brought to the local care home, once again strengthening the school's presence within the community.

4.3.4 (4) Transforming spaces into places

St Francis' School identifies as a 'place and belonging' school. The conceptual categories of: *a unified staff group, learner-centred practice* and *reaching families,* are all thought to contribute to creating a school where everyone feels that they belong; this conceptual category comprises of the practice enactments and influences that contribute to transforming the '*space'* of St Francis' School into *'a place'* of belonging. There are

three dimensions to this category: *having an identity, the physical environment,* and *"it's a feel".*

4.3.4.1 Having an identity

A key theme that emerged from the data related to the importance of establishing an 'identity'. This is an influencing factor contributing to the transformation of a 'space' into a 'place'. As illustrated in figure 17, this subcategory comprises of the influences and practices that are thought to contribute to St Francis' identity of a 'place and belonging school'. This includes practice enactments such as finding and using the language of 'belonging' and reflecting the community; the affective influence of feeling a personal sense of belonging to St Francis' School and the environmental influence of identifying as a 'small school'.

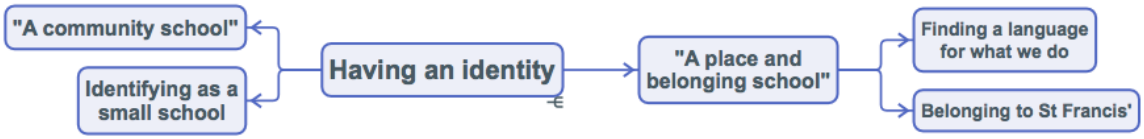

Figure 17. Having an identity

During the interview encounters with the school leaders, they both described their journey towards finding 'the language of belonging'. As referenced, they explained how they met with Professor Kathryn Riley, and contributed to a project exploring 'place and belonging'. Shona recalled her first meeting with Professor Riley:

> Kathryn came in and she started talking this language and I thought, but that's what we do… once you've got a language for it… and you're articulating, then it reinforces, because yes, we were doing things that were in our head, but suddenly there was a language for it (Shona, HT)

Likewise, Claudia stated that they were already committed to fostering a school of belonging before they found the language:

> I think we were that before we coined that phrase 'place and belonging'… several years ago I went to a seminar… and Professor Kathryn Riley was delivering one of the workshops there and it was at that point where that language of place and belonging really resonated with me because a lot of the things that she was saying I thought, well we do that in our school (Claudia, DHT).

From discussions with other participants, it was evident that the language of belonging was woven through the school; it was within the environment and within the vocabulary of the school community. I started each interview exploring what 'belonging' meant to the interviewee. A number of conceptual themes emerged through analysing the responses to this question:

- Being included and feeling "part of something" (Natalie, pupil)
- A feeling of acceptance: "When you are with people who accept you for who you are" (Amy, pupil)
- The importance of interpersonal relationships (e.g. friendships): "Everybody plays, everybody tells me what they feel and I'm like best friend for them" (Marcel, pupil)
- A feeling of safety and security: "you feel safe, safe and secure, and you've got people that will look after you" (Katie, Family Worker)

- A feeling of attachment: “it's about being a part of something, that you feel… an attachment to” (Rachel, Literacy Lead)
- Feeling free to be your whole self: “I can actually be every bit of me… I suppose it’s just freedom to be completely yourself” (Shona, HT)
- Knowing who you are: “It was very much about knowing who you are, being secure in your identity, being proud of where you come from and what you have to bring to the table” (Claudia, DHT).

During the interpretive analysis, I wondered whether the *language* of belonging was thought to be an important influencing factor in the pursuit of school belonging. I explored this further in the second interview encounter with Shona. She described how it is particularly important for the children to *feel* that they belong, and stated that without the language “we would still be very much who we are”. However, she did describe how the language of belonging has provided a point of connection to enable conversations that may be more ‘emotive’ in nature:

> It’s given us a platform to do other things, reach out, reach outside of the school… For example, Claudia and I were discussing… what we have to teach the children in terms of sex education and relationships, some of it might be quite contentious for some of our families… but we have to find a way to do this… if we are inclusive and we are who we say we are then… we welcome anyone… so I said to Claudia that we should do this through the vehicle of belonging so that then gave us something to hang this on (Shona, HT)

A further dimension contributing to this subcategory of identity formation, is related to feeling a sense of belonging to St Francis' School. Claudia (DHT) and Shona (HT) described how a few years ago, alongside the Year 6 class group at the time, they changed the school uniform. Shona stated that "this was probably part of raising expectations, and the profile of the school". Similarly, Claudia stated the uniform creates a "corporate identity in terms of belonging, we belong to St Francis' school, we are proud of who we are, this is what we stand for".

Katie reflected how the school provides safety and structure for the children, it is a place where they belong:

> It's structured, it's a routine that they need, and that they just fall into - they come through the gate and a lot of the heaviness that's going on outside, gets lifted, and they walk through the gate and here I am… I belong here today… and this is part of my world (Katie, Family Worker)

Some participants described St Francis' School as a "community school". Karen (Teacher), Shona (HT) and Penny (TA) identify the school as a community school in the sense that it is reflective of the community: "it's like a melting pot of… society" (Shona, HT). A further identifying theme that emerged related to the fact that St Francis' School is a small school. Katie (Family Worker) shared her belief that "because we are a small school, it's quite easy to make the environment a belonging place"; and, along a similar vein, Shona (HT) reflected how being small lends itself to the school community feeling like a family. How the physical environment influences belonging is discussed further in the next section.

4.3.4.2 The physical environment

Figure 18. The physical environment

The physical environment of St Francis' School was also thought to promote sentiments of belonging. Claudia (DHT) stated that the "building *facilitates* belonging". Shona (HT) articulated the distinction between spaces and places; Shona described the process of "turning the spaces [in the school] into places where people can feel comfortable". Shona (HT) described how they converted spaces by using colour, artwork and positive phrases as illustrated in figure 19:

Figure 19. Image of 'a positive phrase' on the wall of St Francis' School

> The library we converted that space… we had an artist in because we wanted it to be… a place that people… wanted to be in, that it was comfortable, the school council worked with her and they talked through their ideas, there are lots… of

> images and art work, and there are also lots of positive phrases… so we've done that throughout different parts of the school (Shona, HT)

Karen (Teacher) stated that the learning environment has been created for the children; it was "all about the children… inside and outside". She described how the environment was 'creative' and interactive, with many "colourful and welcoming" areas. Similarly, Katie (Family Worker) described how there is always somewhere for the children to go. Referencing the small size of St Francis' School, Katie (Family Worker) described how it permits them to "have photos of the children" on the walls, and display their work – which means you are able to *see* the children in the environment.

4.3.4.3 "It's a feel"

Figure 20. "It's a feel"

The final influencing factor contributing to the establishment of a *place* of belonging is more affective in nature and less tangible. A number of participants referred to the 'feeling' of St Francis' School. Rachel (Literacy Lead) simply stated: "it's a feel". She described how 'the feel' is not necessarily something you could "see on paper"; you could "look at the work the children have been producing… but that's not going to give you the sense of… how everyone's relating to each other on a day-to-day basis". Rachel described how there is a real "personal" feeling to the school.

As referenced above, it was felt that it was the people who bring the "heart and soul" (Claudia, DHT) to a place. Claudia stated that "we've been very deliberate in creating the

feeling that we want to be perceived in this school"; the intention was always to "create a place that people wanted to be in" (Shona, HT). When discussing where Marcel (pupil) felt comfortable in the school, he stated "I get to feel comfortable everywhere". Claudia (DHT) described how in order for the children to feel comfortable within the school, they need to feel safe and secure and they need to feel cared for. Rachel (Literacy Lead), Marcel (pupil) and Penny (TA) referred to the caring ethos of St Francis' School, and how this sense of thought about and cared for contributes to the 'feeling' of the school.

When discussing further *how* this feeling was created, Claudia explained that it was in the interactions:

> It is how people are spoken to, how people are greeted, how people are encouraged… even the colours we choose for walls… just the whole environment, we're… strategic about it (Claudia, DHT)

4.4 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the findings of the current study. The four interrelated conceptual categories which emerged through CGT analysis:

- A unified staff group;
- Learner-centred practice: "it's all about the children;
- Reaching families
- Transforming spaces into places

Each category comprised of the influences and practices that were thought to promote belonging in St Francis' School. In the next chapter, the findings will be discussed in the light of extant theoretical frameworks and existing literature.

Chapter 5: Discussion

"Theorising means stopping, pondering and thinking afresh"

(Charmaz, 2014, p. 244)

5.1 Chapter overview

In this closing chapter, the findings of the study are discussed; the chapter is split into two parts. In order to provide further examination of the influences and practices that are thought to promote belonging in St Francis' School, part one will draw upon extant theoretical frameworks, which resonate with the findings of the current study. The research literature will also be consulted to consider some of the key propellants thought to promote school belonging. Following the review of literature, the final theoretical framework entitled: 'Keeping to our path: a shared commitment to the promotion of school belonging through organised and transformative child-centred practices, which integrate environmental, relational and cultural influences' will be discussed. Part two will consider the value of the research, implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

5.2 Part one: linking the emerging theory with existing theoretical frameworks and empirical literature

Part one considers the findings of the second review of the literature which, as is consistent with the Constructivist Grounded Theory method, was conducted following data analysis. The preliminary literature review described in chapter two provided an account of the empirical literature relating to the outcomes that are associated with feeling a sense of belonging in school, and which helped to provide a rationale for the current study. The aim of the second literature review was to develop theoretically some

of the key conceptual findings that were constructed during analysis. Charmaz (2014) stated that "the literature review and theoretical framework can serve as valuable sources of comparison and analysis" (p.305) allowing the researcher to compare the literature with the data, codes and categories constructed. As such, the purpose of the second review was to determine theoretical correspondence with prevailing theoretical frameworks, psychological concepts and empirical literature. The tentative theory is comprised of four interrelated categories, which encompass the influences and practices thought to promote school belonging at St Francis' School: *a unified staff group; learner-centred practice: "it's all about the children"; reaching families;* and *transforming spaces into places.*

5.2.1 Search strategy

A database search was conducted in April 2019 to access literature from PsycINFO, Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection, Education Source, ERIC, PEP Archive and Google Scholar. Publications included in the references of selected papers were also considered. Search terms were defined based on further reading and subsequent hypothetical formulations relating to the conceptual categories that emerged.[44]

5.2.2 A unified staff group

A unified staff group is the first of the four conceptual categories that emerged through analysis. This category encompasses the practice enactments and influences that contribute to the establishment of *a unified staff group*; a formative influence thought to promote school belonging at St Francis' School. This category comprises of organised

[44] The reader is directed to Appendix W for search terms.

and transformative leadership practices that create fertile grounds for collegial practice, as well as a climate of mutual respect.

As referenced in the story of St Francis' School (detailed in section 4.2), the leaders had a strong sense of collaborative agency and a purposeful desire to transform teaching and learning practices in order to become a place of belonging for all pupils. There were certain practices that appeared to 'hold together', organise and preserve the 'ways of working' within the setting. The literature was consulted in order to further explore transformational leadership practice, particularly with regards to school improvement. It was hoped that the review of the literature would offer further understanding of how a unified staff group is established, and how the practice enactments at St Francis' School might be orchestrated and sustained. I will be drawing upon the work Etienne Wenger (1998) who presented the *Communities of Practice* (CoP) theory, and the model of *Transformational Leadership* (Duke and Leithwood, 1994).

5.2.2.1 Leading practices: transformational leadership

Leadership refers to "activities tied to the core work of the organization that are designed by organizational members to influence the motivation, knowledge, affect, and practices of other organizational members" (Spillane, 2005, p. 384). The Education Development Trust conducted a review addressing leadership in the context of school improvement (Day and Sammons, 2016). Within this review the authors drew upon the model of *transformational leadership;* this model was further explored in the literature.

The features of transformational leadership include: developing a shared vision for the school, maintaining a school culture that is supportive of the vision, designing a strategic

plan of the work required to achieve the vision, and nurturing the staff group's capacity and commitment to the vision (Duke & Leithwood, 1994). In a later conceptualisation of transformational leadership, Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) added 'managerial structures' – ensuring high standards and expectations of teaching and learning by including instructional support when necessary, and establishing and maintaining the engagement of parents and the wider community – which the authors perceive as fundamental to organisational stability. The model is grounded in understanding the *needs* of the school and the staff. The leaders create a climate where the staff group is continuously learning and have the opportunity to share their learning with each other (Hallinger, 2003); it is the *people* within the school that effect transformative change (Leithwood, 1994).

Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) conducted a study examining the effects of transformational leadership on organisational conditions and student engagement in school. Survey data was collected from 1,762 teachers and 9,941 students in a district in Canada. Two instruments were developed: 'The Organisational Conditions and School Leadership Survey', was used to measure organisational conditions[45] and transformational leadership, and 'The Student Engagement and Family Culture Survey' was used to measure student engagement with school[46] and their family's educational culture.[47] The internal reliability scores of these measures were deemed acceptable (.74 – .95). The correlational findings of the study indicated that transformational leadership had strong effects on organisational conditions (.80), which in turn had strong direct effects on classroom conditions (.62). Transformational leadership had indirect effects on student

[45] i.e. the *school* conditions, which included: proposed goals, school planning and policies, and organisational values, and the *classroom* conditions, which included: the instructional approach adopted, curriculum content etc.
[46] i.e. their participation in school activities and their sense of belonging to the school.
[47] which was used in place of socioeconomic status, and was concerned with the family's beliefs and assumptions about education and employment.

participation (.07) and identification (.07), although the effect was weak. Family educational culture had the strongest relationship with student participation (.88) and identification with school (.87), which illustrates the importance of finding opportunities to engage parents.

Jackson (2000), a headteacher in a secondary school in Bedfordshire, provided an account of his involvement in the Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA) school improvement project. Jackson (2000) criticised transformational leadership for being unsustainable. In order to sustain improvement and development, Jackson (2000) proposed a diffuse leadership model that was applied in his school. He stated that the model was "opportunistic, flexible, responsive and context specific" (p. 70). The author acknowledged that there is no discreet set of competencies and proficiencies to their model of leadership, which increases sentiments of uncertainty and ambiguity. He concludes that the qualities are not located in one person but are the characteristics of *leadership* across persons (Jackson, 2000). The leadership practice was dynamic, collaborative and interactive. There must be opportunities to question assumptions and experiment. In short, Jackson (2000) explained that the leadership was "built tight on values, but loose on freedom to act" (p. 71). The practice of leading is not linked to experience or status; it is deemed collaborative and available to all. Jackson (2000) explained that the teaching staff are thus motivated by seeing their expertise valued, and by being offered opportunities to share knowledge and lead.

This conceptualisation of educational leadership emphasises the shared commitment and shared responsibility of achieving the best possible outcomes for children. It links to the next theoretical framework considered in this review: *Communities of Practice.*

5.2.2.2 Communities of Practice

A contributory factor influencing the establishment of a unified staff group at St Francis' School was the sense that there was a shared purpose that was meaningful and relevant to each member of the school community: providing "the best possible education" (Claudia) for every child. There was a climate of respect and trust amongst the staff within the school that propelled the creation of a safe, collegial and supportive professional learning environment. By interacting together through this common interest, individuals were able to learn from each other and collaboratively contribute to the continued evolution of the educational practice (Wenger, 1998). As a collaborative community, members developed trusting relationships and customary ways of working (Wenger, 1998).

This establishment of a unified staff group resonates with the concept of a 'Community of Practice' (CoP). Wenger (1998) defined a CoP as a self-governed learning partnership among people who share the challenges and interest of a particular endeavour. Wenger (1998) identified three features of the practices of a 'community': mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire. These practices involve a shared repertoire of "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice." (Wenger, 1998, p. 83).

In order to further examine the theory of CoP, the literature was once again consulted. Some of the literature retrieved focused on their use with the professional development of teachers (Hadar and Brody, 2010; Patton and Parker, 2017). CoPs create spaces where practitioners can safely learn from and with one another (Hadar and Brody, 2010). CoPs provide a learning environment that is meaningful, purposeful and relevant to each

individual member (Patton and Parker, 2017). At St Francis' School, there was a climate of collegiality. A number of participants described how they felt able to seek help and learn from each other; knowledge was shared, and the school community worked together. Expertise was valued, but no voice was favoured over another.

Patton and Parker (2017) explored Physical Education teachers' understanding of how participating in a CoP enhanced their professional practice.[48] Analysis revealed that participating in the CoP allowed the educators to engage with like-minded people. The CoPs propelled professional growth and enabled some participants to take risks with their teaching practice; they were places where thoughts and practice could be explored in a safe but challenging way. The members of the CoP extended knowledge, and were considered complementary and interdependent (Patton and Parker, 2017). In this way, "the practices of a particular community are constantly being shifted, renegotiated and reinvented" (Paechter, 2003, p. 71). It was also found that the sense of belonging bred within the CoPs enhanced the participants' feelings of self-efficacy and confidence. There was a sentiment of purpose within the group, and a shared commitment to the CoP and its endeavour (Patton and Parker, 2017).

At the centre of practice for each member of the 'CoP' at St Francis' School was the children. In the following section, the learner-centred practices shall be discussed. These practices and influences comprise the second conceptual category contributing to this interpretive theory of the influences and practices thought to promote school belonging.

[48] Participants included 36 teachers, representing nine CoPs in North America, Europe, South-East Asia and Scandinavia.

5.2.3 Learner-centred practice: "it's all about the children"

Roffey (2013) states that educational professionals have a responsibility to ensure every child has equal access to education. A key learner-centred practice at St Francis' School was interpreted as 'being culturally responsive'. Inclusive practice was promoted, difference was attended to, and diversity was valued. Prior research was reviewed in order to explore the contributing practices and influences comprising this category. Concepts explored included: inclusive practice, the 'creative curriculum' and reflective practice.

5.2.3.1 Inclusive practice

Inclusion is a ubiquitous term within the fields of education and has become "part of formative education dialogue, policy and practice" (Gibson, 2009, p. 12), and is applicable to every child in the classroom (Corbett, 2001). At St Francis' School, there was an espoused commitment to authentic inclusive practice. As well as providing a flexible and differentiated learning curriculum to ensure equitable access and opportunity, 'being culturally responsive' was a particularly important inclusive practice enactment. Practices such as holding cultural celebrations, ensuring the curriculum reflected the diversity of the school community, and ensuring all the children could "see themselves" (Shona) in positions of authority, demonstrated that difference and diversity was recognised and valued.

Schnacher et al (2018) conducted a study examining two approaches to cultural diversity in the classroom: 'equality and inclusion' and 'cultural pluralism.'[49] Schnacher et al

[49] The 'equality and inclusion' approach aims to overcome prejudice and discrimination by promoting positive 'intergroup contact', and the 'cultural pluralism' approach seeks to embrace and promote learning through difference and diversity (Schnacher et al, 2018).

(2018) sought to investigate the effects of perceived classroom climate on school belonging among young adolescent students from both immigrant and non-immigrant backgrounds. Schnacher et al (2018) stated that although 'inclusion and equality' and 'cultural plurality' are related, they are distinct approaches. The authors reflected upon previous research and cautioned that too much emphasis on 'equality' (i.e. treating everybody the same) may resemble a "colour-blind approach" (Schnacher et al, 2018, p.3) and preclude the valuable learning through difference. As such, the authors hypothesised that an approach which promotes both 'cultural plurality' (i.e. focusing on individuals connecting with their heritage) *and* 'inclusion and equality' could promote school belonging and learner outcomes. The researchers applied a multilevel analysis in order to test their hypothesis. 'Equality and inclusion' and 'cultural pluralism' were both found to positively predict school belonging, which was then associated with academic attainment, improved self-concept and life satisfaction.

The leaders of St Francis' School sensitively emphasised the importance of the children "seeing themselves" in positions of authority and within the curriculum, and that they valued the learning acquired through difference. Shona (HT) articulated that the growing diversity within the school informed their leading practices. Particular attention was paid to the learning outcomes and "expectations for black children". Gray, Hope and Matthews (2018) presented an article *Black and Belonging at School: A Case for Interpersonal, Instructional, and Institutional Opportunity Structures*. The authors stated that the school and classroom environment can either fulfil or inhibit a student's sense of belonging.

In order to describe how schools can promote belonging, Gray et al (2018) introduced the terms 'interpersonal opportunity structure' (educators actively facilitate the development of interpersonal relationships); 'instructional opportunity structure' (educators engage students in learning activities that recognise and reinforce their cultural meaning systems); and 'institutional opportunity structure' (educators collaborate with students and ensure structural barriers that devalue minority populations in the school are eliminated). Gray et al (2018) reinforced the importance of these 'opportunity structures' by drawing upon a recent review of empirical research on belonging conducted by Walton and Brady (2017). The authors of this review described the necessity to facilitate conditions – 'opportunity structures' – that mitigate students' concerns of whether there will be anyone with whom they can connect, whether the setting is a place they *want* to belong to, and whether the people in the setting will value them as individuals. Gray et al (2018) stated that culturally relevant pedagogy functions as an instructional opportunity for belonging. Black students in cultural affirming classrooms are given the opportunity to explore their heritage in a context that legitimises and values their culture; it enables students to see themselves and to take pride in their connection to people (Gray et al, 2018). Failure to acknowledge the diversity within a school community risks the perpetuation of societal inequality and othering; the sentiment of who belongs and who does not (Gray et al, 2018).

Roffey (2013) articulated the difference between inclusive and exclusive belonging. Exclusive belonging occurs "when only those who 'fit' in the group are seen as worthy of membership" (Roffey and Boyle, 2018, p. 8). In contrast, inclusive belonging advocates welcoming others, valuing diversity and ensuring equitable access. Inclusive school communities are characterised by a shared vision and purpose that is meaningful to all

students (Roffey, 2013). Teachers must therefore ensure the curriculum is reflective of all, not just "the majority culture" (Roffey and Boyle, 2018, p. 11). This requires an open and curious attitude to commonalities and difference. Within a school context, this could be achieved by school staff establishing connections with the parent community (Roffey and Boyle, 2018).

5.2.3.2 Creative practice: the 'creative curriculum'

The 'creative curriculum' at St Francis' School was a further learner-centred practice. The importance of maintaining "really high expectations" (Claudia, DHT) of the children was instilled amongst the school community, and the curriculum and its delivery were transformed. Importance was placed upon devising a broad and balanced curriculum that was "relevant" (Shona, HT) to the children; there was an emphasis on teaching the 'whole child' and finding individual talents.

The National College for School Leadership conducted a report into the creative curriculum of four schools in England. Burgess (2007) conducted an exploratory study over a period of six months. Four case-study schools were selected based upon their broad and balanced curriculums. The head teachers of the schools were interviewed, informal discussions were held with members of staff and students and classroom observations were conducted. Burgess (2007) concluded that the four different schools interpreted the creative curriculum in distinct ways. However, commonalities were uncovered:

- Each school was child-centred; the children were thought of as individuals, and there was a clear commitment to inclusive practice. Furthermore, relationships were considered the cornerstone of successful learning in each of the schools.
- The process of learning skills before content was favoured. The children needed to be equipped with these skills so they could then apply them to different contexts.
- There was an agreement that time should be given to consolidating learning, and depth of exploration was encouraged. A further important factor was allowing time to celebrate and reflect upon the work completed.
- The curriculum was viewed as dynamic and changeable. Staff were confident to try new pedagogical approaches and to adapt old processes.

5.2.3.4 Reflective practice: providing targeted support

Providing targeted intervention to enable each child access to the educational learning opportunities was deemed an instrumental practice enactment at St Francis' School and was thought to promote school belonging. The inclusive perspective at St Francis' School shifts the focus from a within-child deficit perspective, to a focus on relational and environmental factors. Overcoming learning barriers is a central feature of inclusive, and a key government priority (Equality Act, 2010; SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years, 2014). However, Vedder et al (2006) stated that there is "an abundance of studies [that] show… immigrant youth in the Western world benefit insufficiently from schools" (p.419).

At St Francis' School it was noted that there were high rates of mobility. Furthermore, they have a high proportion of children with EAL (56%). There is a specialist teacher

employed to support children with EAL at St Francis' School. Children are assessed upon arrival in order to establish their English-language proficiency. Support is then tailored to meet their individual needs. Biggart, O'Hare and Connolly (2013) conducted a large-scale quantitative study with primary-aged children in Northern Ireland. The researchers examined sense of school belonging and exclusion amongst Irish traveller, Asian and European students in comparison to their white settled peers. The findings indicated that all three ethnic minority groups experienced significantly lower levels of belonging and higher levels of exclusion than the white settled population. Whilst this study's generalisability is limited due to the specific demographics of the context,[50] it raises key questions regarding the sentiments of belonging for ethnic minority groups.

Hulusi and Oland (2010) presented a case study of a 16-year-old boy who was a new arrival to the UK from Afghanistan. The authors noted that his sense of belonging to school improved when he was able to establish friendships with the support of school staff. I interviewed two pupils at St Francis' School who were recent arrivals, and spoke EAL. Both of whom reflected that their sense of belonging to the school was enhanced by the support they received to learn English from members of staff and peers.

More specific guidance regarding support for 'International New Arrivals' (INA) was presented by Cartmell and Bond (2015). The authors conducted a qualitative study examining what the concept of belonging meant to INAs in order to provide informed advice regarding what schools can do to promote sentiments of belonging for these

[50] The study was conducted in a largely white region of Northern Ireland; the ethnic population is considerably smaller than those found in urban areas.

pupils. Five INA pupils from two secondary schools participated in semi-structured interviews. Key themes which emerged from the data included:

1. The importance of receiving ongoing support to develop English language skills from teachers and peers
2. Feeling understood and valued as part of the school community
3. Having opportunities to develop positive friendships
4. Feeling cultural and religious differences are acknowledged and accepted.

5.2.4 Reaching families

In this section, the theoretical literature was consulted in order to examine further the conceptual category: *reaching families,* a further constellation of practices thought to promote school belonging. In order to reach the families of the school community, members of staff considered the broader system within which the child belongs, and worked in a systemically informed manner. In this section, the theoretical lenses of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and the Transformative Leadership Theory will be considered.

5.2.4.1 Systemic practice

Shona (Head Teacher) stated the importance of *attending* to the changing landscape of the school and adapting practice in response. Kemmis et al (2014) stated that actions and activities are shaped by the *practice landscape.* Hence, the landscape of the school enables and constrains the practices occurring within the school. Likewise, the *practice traditions* of a society or profession enable and constrain the ways people behave. As such, the influences of the broader system (the families, neighbourhoods, organisations and occupations) must be considered.

Briefly revisiting Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

As introduced in Chapter One, ecological systems theory is a theory of environmental connectedness, which asserts that these environments impact upon the growth of an individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued, "the ecological environment is conceived as extending far beyond the immediate situation directly affecting the developing person—the objects to which he responds or the people with whom he interacts on a face-to-face basis" (p. 7). Bronfenbrenner (1979) described four interrelated systems that affect a child's development. The first of which is the microsystem that includes the individual's family, school and peer group. These microsystems interact and interrelate forming the mesosystem. The exosystem is the environment in which the individual is not actively involved, but decisions made within this system have implications for the individual. For instance, the local community, the parental work setting and extended family and friends. Finally, Bronfenbrenner defined the macrosystem as the system that encompasses the individual's wider environment. This includes cultural, social and political influences, and economic and ideological trends.

Allen, Vella-Brodrick and Waters (2016) presented a conceptual framework of school belonging based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. Allen et al (2016) were interested in examining the various 'layers' that affect a student's sense of belonging. Using evidence from previous research,[51] the authors developed a framework that included evidence-based strategies that secondary schools could use to promote school belonging. Allen et al (2016) concluded that in order to promote school belonging, intervention should be provided at multiple levels.

[51] The research used to inform the strategies was largely quantitative.

At St Francis' School engaging and involving parents was seen as an important practice enactment to promote school belonging. Parental involvement and engagement have long been considered an important factor contributing to student achievement (Henderson and Mapp, 2002). Giles (2006) conducted a study examining the leadership practices of principals in three elementary schools in America. Giles (2006) investigated the extent to which the practices relating to parental involvement, did indeed impact upon student learning. Interviews were conducted with each principal, and members of teaching and support staff.

A grounded theory method of analysis was employed (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Giles (2006) concluded that a transformational leadership approach (described above) helped to create "the enabling organizational conditions that foster the involvement, engagement, and empowerment of parents" (p. 279). Giles (2006) acknowledged that, whilst the ability of the principals to act in transformational ways was hindered by both internal and external factors, they remained fully committed to their cause. The leaders attempted to create environments that felt safe and nurturing for all members of the school community. High standards were expected; the leaders were particularly demanding of those teachers who did not apply the preferred pedagogical approach. Although they were keen to offer support to those who were willing to accept it. Parents were seen as "equal partners, simultaneously involved, engaged, and empowered in the sometimes contentious reculturing of their schools" (Giles, 2006, p. 278).

Transformative Leadership Theory

A further theoretical framework consulted was the *Transformative Leadership Theory* (Shields, 2010; Avant, 2011), which considers justice, democracy and equitable practice. Quantz et al. (1991) posited that schools can often "confirm and legitimate some cultures while disconfirming and delegitimating others" (p. 98). Shields (2010) stated that a primary task of an educational leader is to ask critical questions about the practices of schooling; they should possess "a critical consciousness about social justice" (McKenzie et al, 2008, p. 128). Adopting a critical approach lays the groundwork for a school that is more inclusive, accessible and equitable for all students (Shields, 2010).

Shields (2010) applied transformative leadership practice directly to the work of school leaders. She described how transformative leadership has the potential to "offer a more inclusive, equitable, and deeply democratic conception of education" (p. 559) whereby learning and development is maximised for every student (McKenzie et al, 2008). Transformative leaders look beyond the school and examine larger societal inequalities within which it is embedded (Shields, 2011). Leadership that both transforms and empowers is central to the notion of transformative leadership (Shields, 2010).

There is little empirical research examining the effect of transformative leadership in 'real-life' school settings in America. In order to address this paucity of research, Shields (2010) presented the efforts of two school leaders who engaged in elements of practice consistent with the principles of transformative leadership. Each leader served a school whose population was rapidly diversifying. Both schools served a predominantly white middle-class demographic but, at the time of writing the report, increasingly larger groups

of African American, Latino, and multi-ethnic families were moving into the area, many of whom qualified for free school meals.

One of the leaders emphasised the importance of examining "all the facets of student's experiences to ensure a level playing field" (Shields, 2010, p. 575). The leader described how she would ensure the 'background information' was known about each child in the school, and then discuss with members of staff their role and responsibility to promote the growth and development of every child. The leader acknowledged that she experienced some challenge changing current practices, and observed that teaching staff needed time to overcome feelings of 'within-child' thinking, and to recognise the holistic nature of teaching and learning. This need to change deep-rooted practice was seen as a motivational challenge to be met by both leaders. The conversations and critical questioning led to new and creative practices. There was a shared rejection of 'within-child' deficit thinking, and teachers were empowered to work proactively. Children were flexibly grouped for specific tasks, teaching staff worked alongside parents, staff meetings became CPD[52] opportunities, and efforts were made to unite groups of students by implementing school-wide cultural celebrations.

Shield's (2010) commented that it was the "careful and consistent deconstruction of old knowledge frameworks that perpetuated deficit-thinking and inequity" (p. 576) and its replacement with inclusive and transformative thinking. Situations were instead considered holistically as opposed to rigidly abiding to stringent rules. The leadership practices in both schools resulted in changed pedagogical practices. Building strong and

[52] Continuing Professional Development.

positive relationships was viewed as a bedrock for effectual practice. These positive relationships supported the efficient identification of what each child needs to succeed.

As described above, at St Francis' School there is a shared commitment to being an inclusive environment where every child has equal opportunity to thrive. There is a recognition of the diverse contextual circumstances of each child, and practices are employed to target and lessen inequalities.

5.2.5 Transforming spaces into places

The final conceptual category of the tentative theory of the influences and practices thought to promote belonging in St Francis' School relates to the practice of transforming spaces into places. In this section, the notion of a 'secure base' will be discussed in reference to the theme of safety and security that emerged through analysis, as well as the concept of 'organisational identity'.

5.2.5.1 The school as a 'secure base'

Children are only able to learn if they feel safe and secure within the learning environment (Bloom, 1995). Being a place of safety and security was thought to influence children's sense of belonging at St Francis' School. Goodenow (1992) described how in order for individuals to feel comfortable and safe enough to learn and explore, they need to feel *connected* to their school environment. If young people have a sense of feeling valued and accepted, they have a greater psychological capacity to explore new settings and adjust both socially and academically (Faircloth and Hamm, 2005). This notion of needing to feel comfortable, connected and safe seems congruent with Bowlby's (1988) notion of a 'secure base', a key feature of Attachment Theory

(Bowlby, 1969). Geddes (2006) states that Attachment Theory describes the "significant experiences of the infant from birth in the context of a relationship with a significant other" (p. 38). A meaningful bond – an 'attachment' – develops between infant and carer as a result of the experience of a present and reliable care giver; a secure base. This affectual experience of being "held, noticed, understood and reassured" (Geddes, 2006, p. 38) is critical to the infant's early sense of safety and security, and emotional development.

Geddes (2006) described ways in which a school can become a 'secure base'. They need to be places of respect and kindness; they need to be safe and adequately supervised; absence must be noticed and responded to; and the pupils need to feel 'known' and held in mind. Similarly, Bergin and Bergin (2009) outlined 12 recommendations to create a school climate that promotes school bonding[53] described in table 2.

Table 2. Bergin and Bergin's (2009, p.156) recommendations

Teacher behaviours	**Organisational recommendations**
Sensitive and warm interactions	Extra-curricular opportunities
High expectations of pupils	Consistent school-wide interventions
Promote independence and autonomy	'Small schools'
Promote prosocial behaviours amongst pupils	Continuity of people and place
Interventions which focus on relationships	Supported transitions
Non-coercive discipline	Minimal transitions

[53] Bergin and Bergin (2009) described school bonding as "a sense of belonging at school and having a network of relationships with peers and teachers" (p. 156).

5.2.5.2 Organisational identity

Albert and Whetten (1985) defined organisational identity as that which members believe to be central, enduring and distinctive about their organisation. Hatch and Schultz (2002) stated that the concepts of culture and identity are closely connected in the literature. An organisation's identity is closely aligned with the organisational traditions (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991). Hatch and Schultz (2002) proposed a theoretical model of organisational identity that connects: identity, culture and image.

Hatch and Schultz (2002) draw upon George H. Mead's (1934) conceptualisation of the self in order to theorise organisational identity. Mead (1967) proposed that the self is formed of two parts, the 'me' – the part of the self that is learned through social experience and activity – and the 'I' – that acts and responds within the context of the 'me'. Hatch and Schulz (2002) stated that the organisational 'me' is formed in response to how others view the organisation. It is the *culture* of an organisation that aligns with Mead's (1967) analogy of 'I'.

Organisational identity guides behaviour; it creates a psychological bond between employees and organisations and allows consistency and coordination (Yilmaz and Turgut, 2016). This assertion suggests that people will behave in ways that align with the organisation which thus maintains the organisation's identity. St Francis' School was identified as a "place and belonging school" (Claudia, DHT) a school where "everybody is welcome" (Natalie, pupil) and everybody is free to be every bit of themselves. There are high expectations for teaching and learning, and participants shared a sense of pride and emotional attachment to the school.

5.3 The interpretive theory

The current research sought to explore the influences and practices thought to promote school belonging in a primary school context. The aim of the study was to contribute to the field of research into school belonging. Specifically, it was hoped that the study might assist the work of educational professionals by offering an understanding about *how* belonging can be fostered in schools. The research question was: *What are the influences and practices that are thought to promote a sense of belonging for children and young people in a primary school context?*

The CGT analysis of the interview data lead to the construction of four conceptual categories:

- A unified staff group
- Learner-centred practice: "it's all about the children"
- Reaching families
- Transforming spaces into places.

These four categories account for the influences and practices that are thought to promote school belonging at St Francis' School. By considering extant theoretical frameworks and existing literature alongside the findings of this study, the grounded theory: 'Keeping to our path: a shared commitment to the promotion of school belonging through organised and transformative child-centred practices, which integrate environmental, relational and cultural influences' emerged and accounts for *how* school belonging was promoted at St Francis' School. Figure 21 is illustrative of the final CGT, which was constructed following the second literature review; this review enabled refinement of its theoretical conceptualisation.

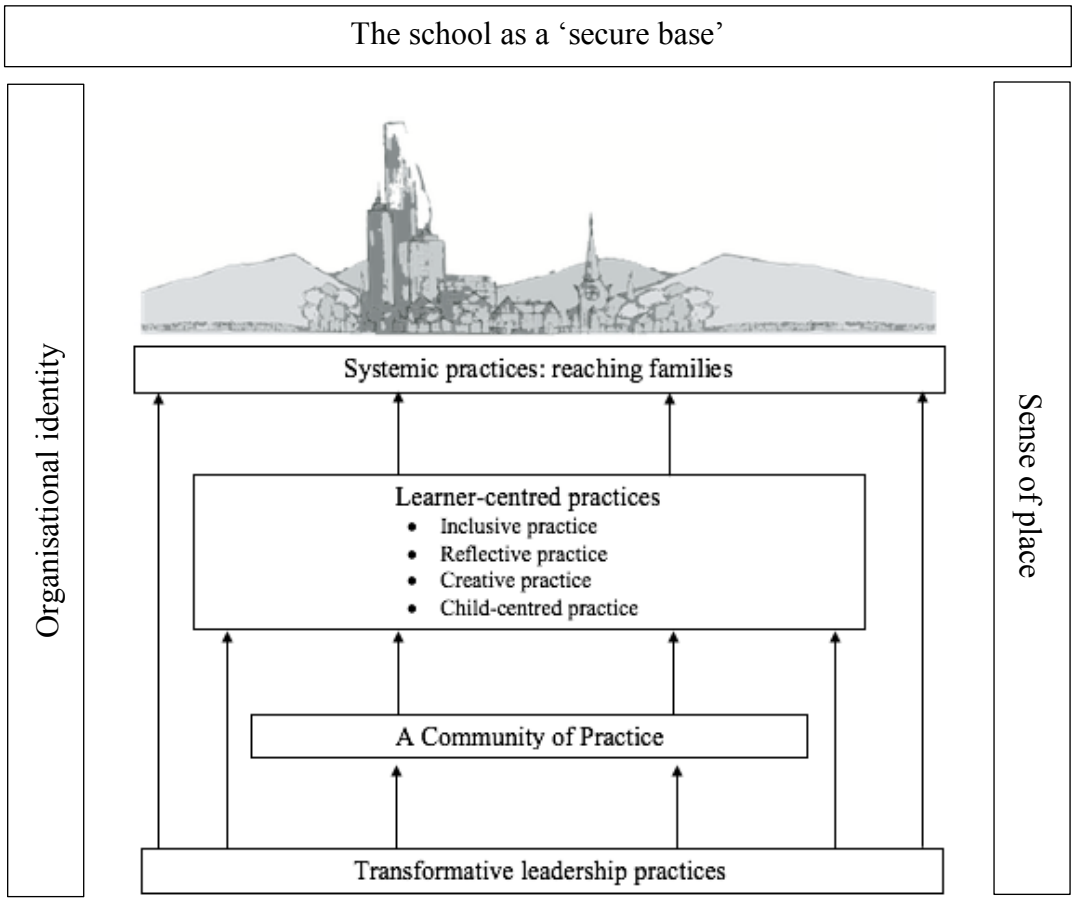

Figure 21. Final Constructivist Grounded Theory

This CGT proposes that transformative leadership practices – which incorporate collaborative agency and impetus to transform the teaching and leadership practices – facilitated the promotion of school belonging. The school leaders learned from prior experience of the school and developed a strategic and creative plan of action to transform the school's reputation. The practices of leading at St Francis' School resonate with Duke and Leithwood (1994) and Leithwood and Jantzi's (2000) conceptualisation of *transformational leadership*. They were committed to their vision for the school, they 'stuck to their path' and maintained high expectations of all members of the school community. The leaders ensured ongoing opportunities for professional development and

growth. They ensured whole school consistency through ongoing monitoring and evaluation of practice, and through the provision of feedback to the workforce. Relational influences were also uncovered: the leadership promoted a climate of collegiality through using the language of shared responsibility and collaboration, thus providing opportunities for shared decision making. Furthermore, each member of staff was valued for the contributions they made to the collective endeavour. The staff group were mobilised and motivated by seeing their expertise valued (Jackson, 2000). The wellbeing of the staff group was held in mind creating a sense of mutual respect and care. Jackson's (2000) collaborative approach to leadership that is "tight on values, but loose on freedom to act" (p. 71) also resonated with the leading practices at St Francis' School.

The leadership practices lay fertile ground for the establishment of a *unified staff group* who work in a collegiate manner in the pursuit of a shared purpose; they are a 'community of practice'. The school leaders are members of the community of practice and together adopt a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998) of learner-centred and systemic practices that are meaningful, purposeful and relevant to each member of the community (Patton and Parker, 2017).

The learner-centred approach was underpinned by a commitment to inclusion. These influential practices were interpreted as being culturally responsive; the school community was reflected within the culturally relevant curriculum (Gray et al, 2018) and within the staff group; difference was explored and celebrated. This resonated with the 'cultural plurality' approach discussed by Schnacher et al (2018). Practising reflectively was also understood as an inclusive learner-centred practice enactment at St Francis' School. These reflective practices involved responding to individual needs in a timely

manner and providing opportunities for all children to 'find their talent'. There was a focus on promoting independent and curious learners who felt excited, motivated and safe to learn. A key feature of targeted support at St Francis' School related to the specialist provision delivered to children with EAL. Specialist teaching was provided to enable children to develop the necessary language skills to engage with the social and learning opportunities available to them within their school environment.

Developing and implementing a creative curriculum was deemed a further instrumental factor promoting belonging. There was permission to practise creatively and a commitment to making learning meaningful and relevant to each child. This involved reflecting the diverse cultural heritage within the school and ensuring that the 'whole child' was taught; restorative justice was a whole-school approach which supported children's social and emotional growth and understanding and SEAL was a permanent feature of the school curriculum.

The CoP at St Francis' School were also informed by systemic thinking, and intervention was targeted at multiple levels of the child's environment (Allen et al, 2016). There was an awareness of individual family circumstances, and effort was made to create a "level playing field" (Shields, 2010, p. 575) for all members of the school community. The CoP possessed the "critical consciousness" regarding social justice referenced by McKenzie et al (2008, p. 128). Ongoing efforts were made to establish and maintain the involvement and engagement of parents in order to foster parental sense of belonging within the school; they were regarded as equal partners (Giles, 2006). There was regular communication between the home and school environment, and school staff made a conscious effort to be seen promoting a sense of approachability. A further systemic

factor related to the efforts made to link with the community the school serves. Connections were made via the parish church, and via social care, health care and adult learning providers within the community.

Collectively, these organised and intentional learner-centred practices have engendered the *feeling* of St Francis' School; they have helped to shape the school's organisational identity as well as its physical environment. Together, they have facilitated the transformation of the *space* of St Francis' School into a *place* of safety and security, a *place* of meaningful and inclusive learning and development, a *place* of belonging.

5.4 Part two: research quality and implications for practice

In this section, the implications of this study and its findings will be discussed in relation to both the field of educational research and Educational Psychology practice. The section continues by reflecting upon the limitations of this study and revisiting issues of trustworthiness. Recommendations for future research are outlined, before finally describing how the findings of the study will be disseminated.

5.4.1 Research implications

The present study contributes to our understanding of the influences and practices thought to promote belonging in a primary school context. This contribution is pertinent when considering the growing concern regarding the emotional wellbeing of children and young people (*The Good Childhood Report,* 2018), and timely in terms of the current socio-political landscape of division, complexity and uncertainty (Leonard et al, 2011; Riley, 2017). The impact schools have on the lives of young people should not be underestimated; schools must be places of safety, security and *belonging* (Riley, 2017).

As described in chapter two, there is a significant body of quantitative research that indicates the positive implications and outcomes that are associated with experiencing a sense of school belonging (e.g. McMahon et al, 2009; Goodenow and Grady, 1993; Merrin et al, 2015). This study extends the research area by providing a qualitative exploration of how schools might strengthen their pupils' sense of belonging. A single case-study approach was adopted whereby the perspectives and practices of members of a school community in London – who have an espoused commitment to this endeavour – could be explored. Yin (1994) argued that single case studies permit the researcher to elucidate a unique or exceptional case or to reveal inaccessible data.

It is hoped that this study has offered a contribution to the paucity of research examining *how* primary schools in the UK might promote belonging. It makes an original contribution to existing research by proposing a conceptual model of the influences and practices that are thought to promote school belonging, and offers an interpretive grounded theory: 'Keeping to our path: a shared commitment to the promotion of school belonging through organised and transformative child-centred practices which integrate environmental, relational and cultural influences.' The current study provides a qualitative exploration and a *holistic* understanding of the *combined* influences and practices that are thought to promote school belonging.

5.4.2 Practice implications

This section will discuss the key practice implications, based on the study, for school leaders, members of school staff and Educational Psychologists (EPs).

5.4.2.1 Practice implications for school leaders and school staff

Seeing holistically

When considering the influences and practices that emerged through analysis in a piecemeal and fragmented manner (i.e. 'engaging parents', 'being culturally responsive' or 'targeting intervention'), there is a strong body of empirical research that supports such discrete practices in schools. However, the findings of this study propose the significance of the interrelated, complimentary and *organised* nature of such practices and influences, which *together* foster sentiments of school belonging.

According to the findings of this study, school leaders and members of school staff must continuously reflect upon their practice in each of the four conceptual spheres. They must monitor and evaluate the quality of instruction and curriculum content, ensure every aspect of a child's development is attended to, and remain curious about the impact of individual, family and community factors (Allen et al, 2016; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). School leaders must nurture the capacity of their staff group to practise in ways reflective of their vision for the school, instil a sense of 'shared responsibility' and autonomy, and find opportunities to show the staff their expertise is valued and respected. The workforce must endeavour to root the child in a school community that values and responds to their culture and heritage, and efforts must be made to engage with families and to connect with local health and social services. Staff should recognise the realities within the lives of some of their children, but help them understand that these barriers need not limit them. By generating a school identity of belonging, children will feel safe and secure to learn in the knowledge that they are valued for who they are and what they can contribute.

Generating a shared vision of belonging

Features of both *transformative* and *transformational* leadership were prominent in St Francis' School. They appeared to support the promotion of a respectful and equitable school climate, which incorporated inclusive and creative child-centred practices. The principles of *transformational* leadership may be particularly relevant to schools that require improvement.

At an organisational level, the findings of this study imply that schools should work to facilitate belonging at a whole school level. As illustrated in the narrative of St Francis' School, this can be achieved through changes to policy, pedagogy and curriculum content. A key finding related to the need for a clear vision and strategy; the *vision* for St Francis' School was underpinned by the sentiment of belonging. In order to promote belonging, schools must have a clear vision that is explicated to all members of the school community and there must be a strategic plan of action, which must be operationalised. This transparent practice facilitates consistency and limits within-school discrepancy. At St Francis' School, consistency was propelled through regular opportunities for training and open discussion, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. Furthermore, the school leaders tactfully employed individuals who shared the underpinning values and overarching vision for the school. This supported the establishment of a *unified staff group* at St Francis' School, a 'Community of Practice' (Wenger, 1998) that held a common purpose and commitment.

Knowing and reflecting the community

Considering the features of *transformative leadership,* which focuses on issues of social justice and equitable practice (Shields, 2010), the findings of this study advocate that

school leaders look beyond the school gates; in order to examine the needs, the values and the motivations of the neighbourhood and the wider community. London has always been considered a 'transitory' city; a city where people move in and move out (Riley, 2010). As such, its communities are ever-changing. Socioeconomic conditions are localised and community-specific (Riley, 2010), which highlights the importance of schools continuously observing and responding to the community they serve.

The leaders of St Francis' School noticed that the diversity of the community was not reflected within their school, reinforcing the notion of what Claudia (DHT) referred to as the 'insiders' and the 'outsiders'. Over time, the school leaders set about transforming the school community and the curriculum to ensure it was more reflective of the community's diversity. A practice implication would be to curate opportunities to celebrate difference and to increase the sense of 'fellow feeling' (Roosevelt, 1904).
A further implication for educational professionals is to ensure that children "see themselves" (Lorna, HT) in positions of authority and within the curriculum they study. This practice enactment is believed to strengthen sentiments of belonging. A practice implication in response to this finding would be for schools to ensure they are employing members of staff from BME communities. In 2016, DfE figures indicated that, of the 510,000 state-funded teachers, only 68,000 were drawn from an ethnic minority background, which implies that this is a nationwide priority.

Forging partnerships

Ensuring the school is reflective of the community is also thought to instil a parental sense of belonging by promoting sentiments of accessibility and inclusion. At St Francis' School, this was thought to propel the development of trusting relationships; a

prerequisite for the establishment of effective partnerships (Frederickson, Dunsmuir, Lang and Monsen, 2004). Certain practice enactments were thought to support the development of trusting relationships, these included: staff being seen and available, maintaining open and transparent communication, and listening and responding to parents' voices. In extension, finding opportunities to engage parents was deemed an important practice enactment. For example, holding family assemblies and involving parents in the decisions made regarding their child's learning was thought to affirm the sense of "equal partnership" (Claudia, DHT).

A further finding of this study denotes the importance of school staff being *proactive* in engaging the 'hard-to-reach' families. Practices might include building social capital by holding informal coffee mornings for the parents of new starters and offering practical support to new arrivals to the community.

5.4.2.2 Practice implications for Educational Psychologists

According to Farrell et al (2006), there are five key functions of EP practice: consultation, assessment, intervention, training and research. These functions occur at three levels: (a) at the level of the individual child, (b) at a group level (i.e. groups of children/ staff) and (c) at the organisational level (Fallon et al., 2010; Farrell et al., 2006). However, it is recognised within the profession that the extent to which EPs are able to perform each of the five functions, across the three levels of practice, varies considerably (Boyle and Lauchlan, 2009).

Nevertheless, the implications of EP practice based upon the findings of this study affirm the importance of EPs working across the three levels. For this reason, the practice

implications will be discussed at the individual, group and organisational level (see table 3 on the following page). Some of the implications for practice for EPs relate to the implementation of the aforementioned practice implications for professionals in schools.

Table 3. Implications for EP practice at an individual, group and organisational level

Individual	**Group**	**Organisation**
▪ Supporting the identification of individual strengths and needs; advise upon intervention and support ▪ Sharing psychological knowledge: supporting school staff to consider the contextual factors that may be influencing a child's development, as well as the emotional aspects of learning ▪ EPs are well placed to advocate for the voice of the child	▪ Facilitate work discussion groups[54] with the intention to increase staff capacity to *think* about the children and *reflect* upon their practice ▪ Facilitate the development of a CoP with the staff group, based upon the vision of the school ▪ Staff training/ parent groups – through the application of psychological theory:	▪ Whole school policy development (behaviour policy etc.) that is informed by the concept of belonging ▪ Support regarding the development of a vision that prioritises the concept of belonging ▪ Curriculum development – supporting the implementation of a social-emotional learning curriculum/ a 'creative curriculum'

[54] Work discussion groups have been proposed as a model of intervention for supporting teachers in their work (Jackson, 2008).

▪ Supporting home-school collaboration through consultation ▪ Supporting pupils who perhaps experience increased challenges, establishing a sense of belonging (children who have experienced a managed move, looked after children, INAs).	- describe the importance of belonging and, conversely, the implications of not belonging - Attachment theory training, with particular reference to the notion of a secure base ▪ Facilitate groups for children – social skills groups, emotional wellbeing.	▪ Supporting senior leaders to 'think outside the box' with regards to current budgetary constraints (e.g. solution circles, soft systems methodology).

5.4.3 Trustworthiness and limitations of the research

5.4.3.1 Research design and sampling

This study sought to explore the influences and practices thought to promote a sense of belonging in a primary school context. A case-study approach was adopted, and the views and experiences of members of a primary school community in London were sought through semi-structured interviews. Adopting a case-study approach, and employing a GTM (Charmaz, 2014) offered breadth and depth of insight. The CGT methodology adopted enabled the co-construction of an interpretive theoretical framework of *how* belonging was fostered in St Francis' School, which was the primary aim of this study. A single case-study approach using CGT was therefore considered an appropriate method to employ.

Conversely, some of the limitations of this study are a consequence of the research design. A frequent criticism of case-study exploration is that it is difficult to reach a generalisable conclusion based on a single case design. However, the intention was not to provide 'generalisable' findings as it is acknowledged that each school is a unique social entity. Instead, the findings are hoped to be descriptive and informative (Giles, 2006). The school site was described in detail and the story of the school was offered. It was hoped that this would enable the examination of "the extent to which the study may or may not have applicability beyond the specific context in which the data was generated" (Willig, 2013, p. 170).

It is acknowledged that the sample size is considered small and, in extension, all of the adult participants were female. Obtaining a larger and more diverse sample would have strengthened the findings of the study. However, in accordance with the relativist

ontology, multiple perspectives were sought and rich, insightful and considered thoughts and experiences were shared during the interview encounters. This adds to the credibility and depth of the current study. A further sample limitation relates to the participant recruitment process. It was agreed that Shona (HT) and Claudia (DHT) would present the study to members of school staff and seek expressions of interest. I would then meet with the potential participant prior to commencing the interview to discuss the study in more detail and ascertain informed consent. Due to the fact that I did not recruit the participants independently, there is the risk that selection bias occurred. However, theoretical sampling methods were employed and participants were recruited based upon prior interview responses which, to some extent, mitigates the risk of selection bias.

As discussed in chapter 3, purposeful sampling methods were employed to recruit the primary school site. The studied school had historically been involved in a place and belonging project with University College London. They were thus familiar with the language of belonging and were committed to promoting school belonging. It was therefore assumed that members of St Francis' School community would be well placed to comment upon the matters of interest to this study (Cohen et al., 2007), and were consequently deemed an appropriate study site and sample. It is important to state at this juncture that the purpose of the study was not to ascertain whether every pupil at St Francis' School was indeed experiencing a positive sense of belonging; the intention was to explore the influences and practices *thought* to promote belonging in this particular school setting. The purpose of the research was to develop an interpretive theory that could be transferred and applied to other primary school settings. However, it is acknowledged that this could be a limitation of the study.

Theoretical sampling is a key principle of the GTM (Birks & Mills, 2015) whereby new data is actively sought in order to develop, refine and elaborate the emerging analytical categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Tweed and Charmaz, 2012). As referenced above, theoretical sampling methods were employed in this study. Interview questions were adapted for later interviews and participants were sought based on prior participant responses. However, parental engagement emerged as a factor thought to influence school belonging. It would have been helpful to seek the thoughts and experiences of parents. Furthermore, seeking the thoughts and experiences from an 'independent' member of the school community, such as a school governor, may have provided further insight and strengthened the findings.

A further principle of the GTM is theoretical sufficiency described in section 3.7.4. When reflecting upon the emerging findings during analysis, it was felt that exploring further the language of belonging in day-to-day practice, the creative curriculum practices, and the 'feel' of St Francis' School would have enabled the findings of the study to be more theoretically sufficient. In reflection, this might have been achieved through additional interviews with new/existing participants and by incorporating an ethnographic[55] element to the study.

5.4.3.2 Trustworthiness

A frequent criticism of qualitative research is the risk of researcher bias due to the inherent subjective nature of analysis. Yin (1984) stated that "too many times, the case study investigator has been sloppy, and has allowed equivocal evidence or biased views

[55] Ethnographic research "seeks to capture, interpret and explain how a group, organisation or community live, experience and make sense of their lives and the world" (Robson, 2011, p. 79). The ethnographic approach supports the research to understand the "shared cultural meanings of behaviour, actions, events and contexts of a group" (Robson, 2011, p. 144).

to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions" (p. 21). Grounded theory is an inductive method in which a theory emerges from the data, however, critics argue that data analysis is always theoretically informed because it is guided by the questions posed by the researcher. As Dey (1999, p. 104) states: "even if we accept the proposition that categories are discovered, what we discover will depend in some degree on what we are looking for". However, the key principles of the GTM – the constant comparison method, theoretical sampling and memo writing – mitigate the risk of researcher bias by offering transparency and rigour. Furthermore, my supervisor and a course colleague randomly reviewed a selection of the focused codes that emerged through analysis in order to promote 'fidelity' of the categories constructed. I also drew upon Yardley's (2008) four principles of validity of qualitative research: sensitivity to context; commitment and rigour; coherence and transparency; and impact and importance – these are discussed in detail in chapter three. Nevertheless, whilst these remedial measures were adopted to address issues of trustworthiness and transparency, I was relying upon participants accurately reporting their thoughts and experiences. It is acknowledged that participants' answers may have been given to 'conform' to my expectations as a researcher and Trainee Educational Psychologist.

Over the nine-month period I developed a positive relationship with the leaders of St Francis' School; this rapport was supportive of the research process. On reflection, however, at times I felt I did not explore 'assumed shared language' or practice in enough detail. I contemplated whether this was due to "over rapport", which perhaps "restricted [my] vision" as a researcher (Hong and Duff, 2002, p. 194). It is acknowledged that this positive rapport established with the school leaders may have hindered further exploration, although it is felt that establishing positive relationships with the interview

respondents allows the researcher to access that person's story more fully (Ceglowski, 2000).

5.4.4 Future research

The findings of this study have implications for the direction of future research. This study employed a single case-study approach and thus accounts for the influences and practices thought to promote belonging in St Francis' School. Additional insight could be gained by conducting similar qualitative studies in other primary schools. This exploration could be extended by including larger primary school settings, schools that are situated in more rural areas and secondary school contexts.

Future research could focus upon exploring and discussing the findings of this study with other school leaders and educational professionals. For instance, focus groups and semi-structured interviews could be used to further explore the findings. This would not be with the intention to 'verify' the findings of this study, but perhaps to provide a vehicle to open up further exploration and discussion on how educational practitioners might promote sentiments of school belonging. Whilst I acknowledge that the present study was a context-specific exploratory study that took place at a particular point in time, it is felt that the findings have potential for wider use. The conceptual model that emerged through analysis could be applied to other settings through deductive methods to consider fit and enable further development and refinement.

The limitations of this study offer scope for future research. A key affective influence of school belonging related to 'the feel' of St Francis' School. Whilst it was theorised that the *accumulation* of the influences and practices that emerged through analysis contributed to this 'feeling', an ethnographic approach may provide further insight and practice implications.

In extension, the engagement of parents emerged as an important practice enactment at St Francis' School thought to promote school belonging and prior research indicated that a family's educational culture[56] had the strongest statistical effect on student participation in school (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2000). As such, future research that includes a parental perspective regarding the influences and practices thought to promote school belonging would be valuable to the field of study.

5.4.5 Disseminating findings

As agreed in the initial stages of this research, the findings of this study will be shared with the adult participants who kindly agreed to take part in the study. An informal presentation and discussion of the findings will be shared and the conceptualisation of the grounded theory (displayed in section 4.3, figure 6) will be distributed. Participants will be invited to share their thoughts and reactions to the conceptual findings presented.

The findings of this study will also be shared with my colleagues at the EPS where I am on professional placement. This will enable further discussion regarding the implications for practice and may present opportunity for additional dissemination (e.g. via training or open discussion). Finally, the findings of this study will be shared with Professor Riley who continues to conduct pioneering research and development work within the field of place and belonging. Opportunities to present the findings at relevant conferences and/ or established working groups will be explored. Finally, I will aim to publish the findings of this study in a professional journal in due course.

[56] A family's beliefs and assumptions about education and employment.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore the influences and practices that are thought to promote a sense of belonging in a primary school context. The findings of this research add to the body of knowledge on school belonging by offering a conceptual interpretation of *how* sentiments of belonging could be nurtured in a primary school setting.

The experiences and perspectives of members of a school community in London were gathered through semi-structured interviews. The interview encounters were then analysed following a Constructivist Grounded Theory methodology. The findings of the study supported the assertion that belonging is a multidimensional concept (Allen and Boyle, 2018; Shochet et al, 2011; Allen et al, 2016). As such, the promotion of school belonging necessitates a multidimensional approach. The influences and practices that emerged through analysis formed four conceptual categories: *a unified staff group; learner-centred practice; reaching families;* and *transforming spaces into places.* However, in the effort to promote school belonging, they are most meaningful and effectual when considered and employed *collectively,* and with intention and purpose.

In order to promote school belonging, the interpretive theory, which endeavoured to capture the conceptual framework, emphasised the need to operate in an 'organised and intentional' manner. As such, it became apparent that the school leaders had a particular role to play in creating fertile grounds for the practices that engender belonging to flourish. Within the school setting, a 'creative' and 'inclusive' curriculum was established that was considered broad and balanced, and reflective of the school community. Targeted support was provided to account for individual circumstances, and the voice of the child was heard and acted upon. Creating this mutual commitment, and climate of

collegiality and respect, enabled the establishment of a unified staff group – a 'Community of Practice' – with shared values, practice, and purpose. The leadership practices at St Francis' School resonated with transformative and transformational leadership theories.

The interpretive theory reaffirmed the understanding that individuals exist within complex systems (McKenzie and Smead, 2018; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). At St Francis' School practices were systematically employed to extend and reach beyond the school gates; family circumstance, culture, and community factors were considered, and efforts were made to establish trusting and meaningful relationships to firmly embed the school within its community.

It is understood that the findings of this study are site-based and thus the data collected is localised. Nevertheless, by providing an insight of how school belonging was promoted, in the context where the practice occurs and with the individuals involved in the practice, it is hoped that this study will provide a touchstone for others employed within the field of education. It is hoped the findings will have relevance for intervention, organisation, policy and practice. Schools have a "unique and influential impact" on the lives of young people (Kia-Keating and Ellis, 2007, p. 30). It is my belief that belonging is an important and encompassing psychological construct with far-reaching effects, and that schools have a duty to ensure they are places where every individual feels they belong. The concept of belonging is particularly pertinent in society today, and I believe it to be an expedient mechanism for promoting cohesion, compassion and 'fellow-feeling' (Roosevelt, 1899).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Appraisal tool used for critiquing empirical research (Holland and Rees, 2010)

Framework for critiquing qualitative research articles

Aspect	Questions
Focus	What topic is the concern of this article? Is this an important topic? The focus here will be broader than that of quantitative research and may emphasise experience of a condition or situation.
Background	How does the researcher argue that the topic is worthwhile? How widespread or big a problem is it? Is the seriousness of the topic reinforced by the previous studies? Is there a thorough review of the literature outlining current knowledge on this topic? The background may make the qualitative approach a logical choice.
Aim	What is the statement of the aim of the data collection? This usually begins with the word 'to' and may concentrate on an exploration of a situation, e.g. 'The aim of this study is to explore the lived experience of chronic illness.
Methodology or Broad approach	Within a broad qualitative approach is it phenomenological, ethnographic, grounded theory, or broad qualitative design? Does this match the statement of the aim?
Tool of data collection	What was the method used to collect the data? Had this tool been used in previous studies of this type? A qualitative tool will not be piloted to check accuracy but may be used firstly on a small scale to give the researcher experience of its use in this situation. There may be mention of credibility where the researcher attempts to give clear details on the circumstances and environment in which data gathering took place. The descriptions of such things as individual interviews may be extensive to allow you to feel almost as though you were there. Do you feel this tool worked well or might an alternative have been more effective?
Method of data analysis and presentation	This is one of the most important steps in qualitative approach where the researcher's understanding emerges inductively from the data and their interpretation of what is going on with those involved. To make sense of large amounts of text the researcher may mention specific systems for analysing the data either in the form of computer programs such as NUDIST and NVivo, or systems designed by other qualitative analysts such as Colaizzi or Van Manon. There may be reference to immersion in the data where the researcher reads over and over the details of what people have said or done. Codes to categorised themes may be mentioned and illustrations of the way this was done may be presented to form an 'audit trial' to allow you to follow the way the researcher managed the data from transcript to coded themes. The data will be in the form of observed descriptions or verbal comments and statements from those involved. These may be quite powerful in their description of feelings and emotions where the researcher is attempting to provide evidence of 'credibility' so we can believe in the accuracy of the findings and the interpretation of them.
Sample	Here the numbers of participants will be low, perhaps under 10 and often not more than 20. Data collection may have stopped once 'saturation' was reached, that is, where no new categories emerged from the findings. Were there inclusion and exclusion criteria stated? Were these reasonable given the research question and the nature of the sample? Do the selection criteria limit to whom the results may apply? What method was used to select who got into the study (the sampling strategy)? Is this appropriate for this research question and approach? Does the sample suffer from any kind of bias?
Ethical considerations	Did an ethics committee (LREC, or in US an Institutional Review Board 'IRB') approve the study? Was informed consent gained and mention made of confidentiality? Could the study be said to be ethically rigorous?

Framework for critiquing quantitative research articles

Aspect	Questions
Focus	What topic is the concern of this article? Can you identify measurable 'variables' in the title or researcher's statement concerning their main interest? Is this an important topic for research?
Background	How does the researcher argue that the topic is worthwhile? How widespread or big a problem is it? Is the seriousness of the topic reinforced by the previous studies? Is there a thorough review of the literature outlining current knowledge on this topic? Are the key variables defined and an attempt made to consider how they can be measured? E.g. definitions of 'pain' or 'anxiety' and descriptions of scales frequently used to measure them.
Aim	What is the statement of the aim of the data collection? This usually begins with the word 'to', e.g. 'The aim of this study is 'to examine/determine/ establish/compare/etc'. If it is a randomised control trial there may be a hypothesis.
Methodology or Broad approach	Within a quantitative approach, is it a survey, experimental (RCT), or correlation study? Does seem suitable given the aim of the study?
Tool of data collection	What was the method used to collect the data? Had this been used in previous studies and so may be regarded as reliable or accurate? If not, was it piloted? Is there any mention of reliability or validity? Is there a rationale given for the choice of tool? Could an alternative tool have been considered?
Method of data analysis and presentation	Is the method of processing and analysing the results described in the methods section, such as statistical process through SPSS computer analysis, and are the results clearly presented in the results/findings section? Does the researcher clearly explain any statistical techniques or methods of presentation such as tables, graphs, pie charts?
Sample	On how many people, events, or things are the results based? If questionnaires were used, what was the response rate? If it was a randomised control trial, what was the dropout rate? Is either of these likely to have an impact on the results? Were there inclusion and exclusion criteria stated? Were these reasonable given the research question and the nature of the sample? Do they limit to whom the results may apply? What method was used to select who were included in the study (the sampling strategy)? Does the sample suffer from any kind of bias?
Ethical considerations	Did an ethics committee (LREC, or in US an Institutional Review Board 'IRB') approve the study? Was informed consent gained and mention made of confidentiality? Could the study be said to be ethically rigorous?
Main Findings	What did they find in answer to their aim? What were the large results that relate to the aim of the study?
Conclusion and Recommendations	Did they give a clear answer to their aim? If they stated a hypothesis, did they say if this was supported or rejected? Were clear recommendations made (who should do what, how, now)?
Overall strengths and limitations	What would you say were the aspects of the study they did well? What aspects were less successful? Did they acknowledge any limitations to the study?
Application to practice	How do the results relate to practice? Should any changes be considered?

Appendix B: Search terms and inclusion/ exclusion criteria

	Search terms[57]	No. studies retrieved	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	No. of relevant studies (online search)	No. of included articles (post-screening of abstracts and removal of duplicates).	No. of relevant studies retrieved through snowballing.	Total no. articles included in review.
Concept	AB Belonging* OR AB sense of school belonging* OR AB school belonging* OR AB sense of belonging* OR AB school membership OR AB school connect*	**5876**	Papers focused on the concept of *school* belonging (or derivatives thereof).	The concept of *school* belonging is not the primary focus of the study.	**84**	**17**	**5**	**22**
Population	N/A		School age children attending a mainstream setting (6-18)	Not school age.				
Context	AB school* OR AB education* OR AB primary school OR AB secondary school		Research conducted within mainstream educational settings (e.g. primary/ secondary school).	Research conducted in settings other than mainstream primary/ secondary educational settings.				
Outcome	AB outcome OR AB impact OR AB effect OR AB affect OR AB influence		Any positive or negative outcome associated with feeling a sense of school belonging.	Outcomes associated with other factors, or improved school belonging described as outcome of another intervention.				
			Papers written in the English language.					
			Academic journal article.					
			Empirical Study					
			Subject: 'Belonging'/ 'Membership'					

[57] The search terms were entered as presented in the table, and were combined using the 'AND' operation.

Summary table of reasons for exclusion

Reason for exclusion	**No. of articles**
An improved sense of school belonging described as outcome of another intervention/ environmental factor	20
School belonging not the focus of the study	30
Not school age	5
Development of school belonging scale	2
Conceptualising belonging/ perceptions of school belonging	4
Measuring school belonging of certain groups of population	4
Duplicate	2
Total no. of excluded articles	67

Appendix C: Details of the critiqued papers included in the preliminary literature review

Study			**Overview/ aims**	**Sample**	**Design, methodology and analysis method**	**Results**	**Limitations**
Author(s) and year	*Title*	*Country*					
Maurizi, L. K., Ceballo, R., Epstein, N. Q., & Cortina, K. S. (2013).	Does neighbourhood belonging matter? Examining school and neighbourhood belonging as protective factors for Latino adolescents. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 83(2–3), 323–334.	USA	This study explores Latino adolescent students' sense of school and neighbourhood belonging. The researchers examined how belonging in both contexts was related to adolescents' academic and psychological functioning.	Participants consisted of 202 Latino adolescents living in low-income, urban communities in America. The participants were in the ninth grade, with an average age of 14.5 years.	Quantitative study <u>Measure of belonging:</u> Ten questions assessed adolescents' sense of school belonging. Five questions were adapted by from Goodenow's PSSMS[58] (1993). Four additional questions were taken from Anderman's (2003) study on school belonging (Cronbach's alpha: .85). A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to compare students at each of the three schools in their perception of support,	School belonging and neighbourhood belonging were significantly and positively correlated ($r = .32$, $p < .001$). The analysis indicated that increased teacher support (.48, $p < .001$) and school peer support (.40, $p < .001$) were related to a greater sense of school belonging. School belonging was positively associated with higher scores on all academic indicators. School and neighbourhood belonging were	The correlational analysis of the study means we cannot speak about the directionality of relations found. The relation between academic achievement and school belonging may be reciprocal, and adolescents who are functioning better and who are more prosocial may feel more connected to their schools. The study relied exclusively on self-report measures that might inflate some of

[58] Psychological Sense of School Belonging Scale (Goodenow, 1993b) is an 18-item scale assesses students' feelings of being an important part of their school and feelings of acceptance, value, inclusion, and connections with school, teachers, and peers. Responses are based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "1" (not at all true) to "5" (completely true).

					extracurricular involvement, and feelings of belonging. In the second stage, structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis was conducted to examine factors associated with school and neighbourhood belonging and the relationship with several academic and psychological outcomes.	associated with better psychological functioning indicated by lower reported levels of depression.	the associations due to common method bias.
Demanet, J., & Van Houtte, M. (2012).	School belonging and school misconduct: The differing role of teacher and peer attachment. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 41(4), 499–514.	Belgium	The researchers test the effect of 'school cohesion' and students' feelings of peer attachment, perceived teacher support and general school belonging on school misconduct.	The sample consisted of 11,872 students across 85 Flemish schools. The majority of students were 15 or 17 years old.	Quantitative study Measure of belonging: 18-item *Psychological Sense of School Belonging Scale* (Goodenow, 1993) Multi-level analyses were performed. During analyses the researchers controlled for school level variables (school sector, SES composition, and ethnic composition) and individual level	The findings of the study showed that perceived teacher support (-0.170; $p < 0.001$) and general school belonging (-0.096; $p < 0.001$) are significantly negatively related to school misconduct. Results showed that *individual* feelings of bonding with peers, teachers and school were associated with school misconduct, as opposed to *overall*	The results of the study were correlational so causal claims cannot be made. The data is based on self-reports for the individual measures; the correlations could be inflated.

					variables (SES, gender and ethnicity).	school cohesion. Results also showed that higher perceived teacher support and school belonging related to less school misconduct.	
McMahon, S. D., Wernsman, J., & Rose, D. S. (2009).	The relation of classroom environment and school belonging to academic self-efficacy among urban fourth- and fifth-grade students. The Elementary School Journal, 109(3), 267–281.	USA	We examined classroom climate (satisfaction, cohesion, friction, task difficulty, and competition) and school belonging in relation to language arts and math and science self-efficacy.	Participants included142 fourth and fifth grade students from two elementary schools in San Francisco, California. Participants were from diverse backgrounds.	Quantitative Belonging measure: Goodenow (1993b) PSSM Scale (.66) Pearson's correlational analysis. Regression analysis to test predictive nature of variables against self-efficacy.	Satisfaction, cohesion, and school belonging were significantly positively correlated. School belonging and language arts self-efficacy was significantly correlated with satisfaction, cohesion, and school belonging and negatively correlated with difficulty and friction. The results of the study indicated an interconnected relationship between sense of school belonging and the classroom environment.	The findings are correlational. Self-report instruments were used. Minimally acceptable internal consistency. Teachers were present when students rated their classroom environment. The analysis procedure and the results section were a little difficult to follow.

						Sense of school belonging is likely to influence an individual's engagement with learning, which may then lead to positive classroom perceptions. Similarly, students who feel they have a cohesive class also feel a sense of belonging to their school. School belonging was found to be the most important contextual predictor of improved language arts self-efficacy ($\beta = .19$, $p < .05$).	
Kuperminc, G. P., Darnell, A. J., & Alvarez-Jimenez, A. (2008).	Parent involvement in the academic adjustment of Latino middle and high school youth: Teacher expectations and school belonging as mediators. Journal of Adolescence, 31(4), 469–483.	USA	A Path Model based on Social Capital was analysed. The authors hypothesised: • Higher levels of parent involvement would be	195 Latino middle school (13.8 years) students and 129 Latino high school students (16.8) Participants were largely immigrants to America from Mexico, Central	Quantitative study Belonging measure: The PSSM scale (Goodenow, 1993) was used to assess school belonging. The path models were analysed using multi-	Parent involvement was positively correlated with school belonging and academic competence for middle and high school students. The correlation between school belonging and teacher expectations was positive and	The findings are correlational. The study relied upon single informants completing the measures. The findings would have been strengthened if the views of parents and teachers were also obtained.

			associated with more positive teacher expectations for students' academic attainment. • Higher levels of parental involvement would contribute to more positive youth perceptions of school belonging. • Positive teacher expectations and school belonging would contribute to higher achievement and more positive perceptions of academic competence.	America, South America and the Caribbean.	group analysis (EQS 6.0 program). Covariance matrices were analysed for the high school and middle school samples separately.	significant, and both of these mediators had significant correlations with school grades and academic competence. Associations of parent involvement with academic adjustment were *mediated* by teacher expectations and school belonging; parent involvement contributed to more positive perceptions of school belonging, which in turn contributed to more positive perceptions of perceived academic competence and higher grades (for both middle and high school students).	Although the belonging measure was internally consistent (.79-.82), it was not as strong for the academic competence and parental involvement measure which may affect the results.

McMahon, S. D., Parnes, A. L., Keys, C. B., & Viola, J. J. (2008).	School belonging among low-income urban youth with disabilities: Testing a theoretical model. Psychology in the Schools, 45(5), 387–401.	USA	The authors examined the impact of school belonging on academic and psychological outcomes among adolescents with disabilities. They tested a Path Model in which a students' school stressors (which include peer and staff influences) and resources (teacher support and empathy) lead to school belonging, which lead to school satisfaction and academic self-efficacy, which in turn lead to anxiety and depression. They hypothesised: • School belonging will be positively	136 students aged between 11 and 20. They were demographically representative of the larger student body. Most of the participants had a disability, and had recently experienced a transition to a different school due to the closure of a specialist provision.	Quantitative study Belonging measure: The PSSM scale (Goodenow, 1993) was used to assess school belonging. Cronbach's alpha = 0.88. Covariance matrices for analysis were constructed to test the authors' Path Model.	'Fit statistics' suggest the model is a good fit with the data (p = .33); school stressors and resources were associated with school belonging, which in turn was associated with academic self-efficacy, school satisfaction, and depression.	This study relied on cross-sectional self-report data. The proposed model does not indicate causality, and its generalisability beyond the study sample is arguably limited. Some of the interviews were conducted by the teachers, which may have affected responses.

			associated with academic self-efficacy and school satisfaction and negatively associated with anxiety and depression. • Academic self-efficacy will be negatively associated with anxiety, while school satisfaction will be negatively associated with depression.				
Kia-Keating M, & Ellis BH. (2007).	Belonging and connection to school in resettlement: young refugees, school belonging, and psychosocial adjustment. Clinical Child Psychology &	USA	The authors examined the relationship between exposure to adversities, school belonging, and mental health amongst Somali refugees who had resettled in America.	76 Somali refugees aged between 12–19 who had resettled in Boston, Massachusetts or Portland, Maine.	Quantitative Belonging measure: PSSM scale (Goodenow, 1993) Cronbach's alphas ranged from .71 to .88 Mental health was assessed using two measures of negative	School belonging had significant main effects with depression and self- efficacy; higher sense of school belonging was associated with lower depression and higher self-efficacy; more than one-quarter of the variation in self-	The correlational nature of this study limits the interpretation of the findings; they do not imply causality and the direction of any relationships between

	Psychiatry, 12(1), 29–43.			A sample size of 76 adolescents (this was calculated as being necessary for a power of .80).	psychological adjustment, assessing Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression symptom severity, and one measure of positive psychological adjustment, assessing individuals' sense of self-efficacy. The interviewer administered all structured questionnaires verbally. Pearson's Correlation were conducted and then Hierarchical Regression Analyses were conducted to determine the moderating effect of school belonging on the relationship between exposure to adversities and psychological adjustment.	efficacy was explained by a sense of school belonging. Higher levels of sense of school belonging, significantly correlated with lower levels of symptoms of PTSD and depression and higher levels of self-efficacy. However, the hypothesis that school belonging would moderate the effect of exposure to adversities on PTSD was not supported.	two variables is unknown. The non-significant findings in the study may relate to insufficient statistical power; a larger sample size would strengthen the study. The word of mouth approach to participant recruitment may have limited who heard about the study.
Sánchez, B., Colón, Y., &	The role of sense of school belonging and	USA	The researchers examined the relationships	143 12th-grade students who were	Quantitative Belonging measure:	School belonging was positively related to intrinsic value for	Sample bias: the participants included in the study were

Esparza, P. (2005).	gender in the academic adjustment of Latino adolescents. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 34(6), 619–628.		between sense of belonging, gender, and academic outcomes amongst Latino adolescents. The researchers hypothesised: (a) females will have more positive academic out-comes than males, (b) females will report a greater sense of belonging than males, (c) a greater sense of belonging will predict more positive academic outcomes, and (d) there will be gender differences in the relationships between sense of belonging and academic outcomes.	representative of the larger student body: 42% identified themselves as Mexican, 39% as Puerto Rican, 9% as Other Latino (e.g., Nicaraguan, Cuban), and 6% as bi-ethnic Latinos (e.g., Puerto Rican and Mexican; Salvadorian and Mexican).	Goodenow's (1993b) Psychological Sense of School Membership scale (PSSM) Bivariate Pearson correlational analysis was conducted. The analysis for males and females was conducted separately. Regression analyses were conducted to explore the predictive nature of a sense of belonging.	English (.73, $p < .01$) and expectancy for success in English (.24, $p < .05$) amongst female participants, although not for male participants. A sense of belonging was significantly correlated with absenteeism (-.39, $p < .01$) and their educational expectations (.37, $p < .01$) amongst males; the same was not found for the female participants. A sense of belonging significantly predicted absenteeism ($\beta = .19$, $p < .05$), expectancy for success and intrinsic value for English and academic effort ($\beta = .35$, $p < .001$) amongst the participants. However, a sense of belonging did not significantly predict GPA, educational aspirations, and education expectations.	deemed the 'better' students; different results may have occurred if a wider sample of participants were used. This raises questions regarding external validity. The results were correlational; thus, we cannot assume that a sense of school belonging caused an increase in academic motivation.

						Furthermore, no significant gender differences in the relationship between sense of belonging and academic outcomes were found.	
Goodenow, C., & Grady, K. E. (1993).	The relationship of school belonging and friends' values to academic motivation among urban adolescent students. Journal of Experimental Education, 62(1), 60–71.	USA	The research aim was to examine the effect of school belonging and friends' values on academic motivation and effort.	301 young people in grades 7-9 participated in the research. Participants were recruited from two junior high schools in America. The schools served a large Hispanic and African American population.	Quantitative study Belonging measure: PSSM scale (Goodenow, 1993b) Cronbach's Alpha .80 Motivation was measured via two scales based upon the expectancy-value theory of motivation. One of the scales contains five items measuring students' expectancy of success in school work; the other scale contains six items about the intrinsic value, interest and importance that students attribute to school work (Cronbach's Alpha: .72 and .81 respectively). The researchers also	The findings indicated that school belonging significantly correlated with expectancy of success ($r = .35$, $< .001$); value ($r = .46$, $p < .001$); general school motivation ($r = .42$, $p < .001$); and effort ($r = .12$, $< .05$) when 'friends' value' was controlled for.	Correlational findings – the relationship between school belonging and motivation is likely to be reciprocal in nature. The authors relied upon self-reports. There was a high rate of absence at the schools where participants were recruited from, which raises questions regarding equity of access to participate.

					administered the School Motivation Scale (Cronbach's Alpha: .61). Specific 'items' were developed to measure 'effort' and 'friends' values.' Correlational analyses were conducted.		
Drolet, M., Arcand, I., Ducharme, D., & Leblanc, R. (2013).	The sense of school belonging and implementation of a prevention program: Toward healthier interpersonal relationships among early adolescents. Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal, 30(6), 535–551.	Canada	The researchers sought to examine the impact of an American educational programme: 'Lions Quest'. The programme was designed to prevent and delay adolescents engaging in alcohol and drug abuse by supporting the development of social skills and competencies. They were guided by the following research questions:	26 students aged between 12 and 14 participated in the study. The participants took part in the study voluntarily. All students were born in Canada and self-identified as either Francophone, bilingual, Canadian or Caucasian. This demographic is typical of the population of the bilingual region of Eastern Ontario.	Qualitative study Data was collected via semi-structured interviews. The interviews were transcribed and imported in the N-Vivo 8 program for coding into themes and categories (Huberman and Miles, 1991).	The researchers concluded that both teachers and pupil participants' perceived school belonging contributed to the achievement of the programme (i.e. a growth in the individual's capacity for self-assertion and conflict resolution; an increase in self-confidence, and development of interpersonal skills).	Due to the small sample size, claims of generalisability must be treated with caution. Furthermore, the impact of the intervention over time is unknown. The procedure of analysis was considered brief; it was noted that inductive and deductive methods of analysis would be employed, but this was not described.

			How did the 12-to 14-year-old teens perceive the sense of school belonging? How do these sentiments contribute to Lions Quest objectives of risk prevention and promoting social skills?	In addition, five teachers who overviewed the implementation of the Lions Quest program participated in the study.			
McNeely, C., & Falci, C. (2004).	School connectedness and the transition into and out of health-risk behavior among adolescents: A comparison of social belonging and teacher support. Journal of School Health, 74, 284–292.	USA	The authors conducted research investigating the influence of school connectedness on adolescent health-risk behaviours (i.e. cigarette smoking, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, suicidal ideation).	Data was gathered from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Mental Health (Add Health). A stratified sample of 80 high schools were selected to participate. All students in grades 7-11 were asked to complete an in-school	Quantitative study. Belonging measure: Add Health includes 6 items that tap into 'connection' to school. 3 items were developed by Bollen and Hoyle to measure social belonging (α = .78) and the other 3 items asked about the students' perceptions of their teachers (α = .63). The authors used a multinomial logistic	Social belonging alone had no effect on the initiation or cessation of health risk behaviours, with the exception of marijuana use. When the variables of school connectedness were added, social belonging was found to be a significant risk factor for the initiation of cigarette smoking and alcohol misuse (i.e. regular episodes of getting drunk). Teacher support was	The measures are limited to certain 'dimensions' of school belonging (i.e. students' perception of their teachers and social belonging). In extension, the internal consistency for the 'students' perception of their teachers' was questionable; this impacts the reliability of the findings. One cannot assume a causal relationship between support of

				questionnaire. 13, 570 adolescents participated in total.	regression to model the probability of engagement with 6 health-risk behaviours.	found to be a significant protective factor for the initiation of cigarette smoking, alcohol misuse, suicidal ideation and both the transitioning into and out of violent behaviour. In summary, their findings suggested that adolescents who perceive their teachers to be fair and supportive are less likely to engage in health-risk behaviours. However, simply enjoying school and feeling a part of the school, which the researchers described as social belonging did not mitigate their engagement with health-risk behaviours.	teachers and health risk behaviours.
Roeser, R., Midgley, C., & Urdan, T. C. (1996).	Perception of the school psychological environment and early adolescents' psychological and behavioral	USA	The authors examined the mediating role of personal achievement goals and feelings of school belonging in the relationship	296 8th-grade middle school students The school is located within a primarily white working-class	Quantitative Measure of belonging: Patterns of adaptive learning (Midgley et al, 1996). The scale consisted of 4 items (a= .76). It assessed	Students' feelings of school belonging had positive effects on academic self-efficacy (β.17, p <.05) Feelings of belonging were negatively	The correlational nature of these findings; it is likely that many of these relations are reciprocal over time.

	functioning in school: The mediating role of goals and belonging. Journal of Educational Psychology, 88, 408–422.		between perceptions of the school environment and school-related beliefs, affect, and achievement.	area. The sample was 87% White.	whether students felt that they were important, that they mattered, and that they belonged in their middle school. Bivariate correlations and Sequential regression analyses were conducted.	associated with self-consciousness in school. Feelings of school belonging (β.45, $p < .01$) had significant positive effects on positive school affect. Positive teacher-student relationships predicted positive school-related affect; this was mediated through feelings of school belonging. Academic efficacy and school belonging were positively related to final grades.	The study relies upon self-reports; furthermore, the study did not examine the relationship between school policies and practices and students' perceptions, which would have provided stronger implications for practice.
Shochet, I. M., Dadds, M. R., Ham, D., & Montague, R. (2006).	School connectedness is an underemphasized parameter in adolescent mental health: Results of a community prediction study. Journal of	Australia	The authors were responding to the need to examine the strength of the prediction of school connectedness on future depressive symptoms and anxiety symptoms as well as future	2,022 12-14-year-old students (999 boys and 1,023 girls) measured at 2 time points (12 months apart) The sample was representative of	Quantitative Belonging measure: PSSM scale (Goodenow, 1993) Cronbach's alpha was .89 The Children's Depression Inventory, the adolescent self-	The findings indicated a significant correlation between school connectedness and concurrent symptoms of depression and anxiety for both males and females.	The self-report nature of the measures limits this study. The authors reported a slight overrepresentation of participants "on the more pathological end of the spectrum" (p. 178) in the attrition

	Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 35, 170–179.		general functioning. They predicted: • School connectedness would correlate negatively with concurrent and future self-report symptoms of depression and anxiety and overall functioning • School connectedness would predict depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms, and general functioning 1 year later.	the larger population.	report version of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and the Spence Children's Anxiety Scale were also used. All of which had good internal consistency.	Significant results were found indicating the predictive nature (i.e. one year later) of school connectedness for depressive symptoms for both boys and girls, as well as anxiety symptoms for girls, but not for boys.	group which may have affected the findings.
Goodenow, C. (1993a).	Classroom belonging among early adolescent students:	New England, USA	The study had 3 purposes: investigate the association	353 pupils, aged 11 - 15, attending a suburban middle	Quantitative study Measure of belonging: 'The Student Opinion	Belonging was found to link significantly with expectancy for success and intrinsic	The findings are correlational, and the data is based upon self-reports;

	Relationships to motivation and achievement. Journal of Early Adolescence, 13, 21 – 43.		between perceived classroom belonging and support and the expectancy and value dimensions of motivation. The researchers' hypotheses were: belonging and support would be positively associated with students' expectation for success, students; assessment of a subject's importance, intrinsic interest and value which together would be positively related to effort and achievement.	school in New England.	Questionnaire' which tapped into the students' motivation and the socioemotional quality of the class, particularly with regards to their sense of belonging and personal support from the teachers. Class Belonging and Support Scale was the primary measure used to assess belonging; this scale was developed for the study (Cronbach's .93) Two scales were used to measure motivation (Cronbach's alpha: .90 and .88) The scale to measure teacher support was low (Cronbach's alpha: .52) – this scale was not used throughout analyses due to weak reliability.	interest and values in both zero order correlations and multiple regression analyses. A further finding was that belonging and support explained one third of the variation in students' expectation for success.	information from other sources would have strengthened the findings. Although the scale has strong internal consistency, it was developed for this study and had therefore not be used previously.

					Correlational and multiple regression analyses employed.		
Loukas, A., Suzuki, R., & Horton, K. D. (2006).	Examining school connectedness as a mediator of school climate effects. Journal of Research on Adolescence, 16, 491 – 502.	USA	The researchers aimed to examine the role of school connectedness as a mediator of the effects of student-perceived friction, cohesion, competition among students, and overall satisfaction with classes. Hypothesis: school connectedness would account for the relations between all four aspects of perceived school climate and subsequent conduct problems and depressive symptoms assessed one year later.	489 10-14-year olds attending three middle schools in Texas. 51% were female; 77.2% European American, 16.2% Latino, 2.5% African American, and the remainder reported another ethnicity.	Quantitative study Belonging measure: Five items adapted from National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health by Resnick et al. (1997) (a = .75) Various measures used to assess cohesion (a = .70), competition (a = .68), friction (a = .70) and satisfaction (a = .57). The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, Meltzer, & Bailey, 1998) was used to assess adolescent conduct problems (a = .66) The 27-item Children's Depressive Inventory (CDI; Kovacs, 1985) was used to measure	School connectedness was found to significantly mediate the relations between perceived friction (.02, p < .05), cohesion (-.03, p < .01) and overall satisfaction with classes (- .04, p .01). Significant findings were also reported regarding the two stability paths; school connectedness was predictive of conduct problems one year later, but not depressive symptoms.	All measures were based on adolescent self-reports; although there was a 1-year lag, the effects of shared method variance may have inflated the results. Research with parent, teacher regarding adjustment should be conducted. The assessments of school climate were limited to a single dimension (interactions among students); assessing other aspects of the school's climate including would strengthen findings and implications for practice.

					adolescent depressive symptoms (*a* = .91) Zero order correlational analyses were conducted. Path analyses were conducted to examine the predictive nature of school belonging.		
Begen, F. M., & Turner-Cobb, J. M. (2012).	The need to belong and symptoms of acute physical health in early adolescence. Journal of Health Psychology, 17(6), 907–916.	England	The researchers examined the impact of domain-specific belonging on acute physical symptoms and mood in adolescents. Hypothesis: belonging levels would be associated with physical health symptoms and mood. Perceived belonging within different domains ('home', 'school', and 'community')	159 11-14-year-olds in England. No further demographics provided.	Quantitative study 21-item symptoms checklist from Cohen-Hoberman Inventory of physical symptoms (CHIPS) (Cohen & Hoberman, 1983). Items included: 'headache', and 'feeling weak all over' (α=.88) 'Positive and Negative Affect Schedule' (PANAS) (Watson, Clark, and Tellegen, 1988) used to measure mood (α=.83)	Analyses indicated that higher levels of inclusive belonging were associated with fewer physical health symptoms. Self-esteem was found to mediate the relationship between inclusive belonging and physical symptoms. Higher levels of overall perceived belonging were also associated with higher reported positive affect ($R^2 = .107$, $p < .001$). The relationship was	Correlational findings Self-report Generalisability beyond this sample is limited. Physical symptoms and mood were conceptualised as separate outcome variables. However, the authors acknowledged that this was not to imply that mood and physical health acted independently of one other.

			would have both separable and cumulative impact on health symptoms and mood. Self-esteem would impact belonging which would then impact upon health and mood outcomes.		Belonging measure: PSSM scale (Goodenow, 1993b) α=.89 Bollen and Hoyle's (1990) 6- item 'Perceived Cohesion Scale (PCS)' was used to measure community belonging (α=.90). 'Family Cohesion Scale (FCS)' measured participants' perceived belonging within the home environment (α=.72) Inclusive belongingness was measured by combining scores from the PSSM, PCS, and FCS, to obtain a 'total belongingness score'. Questionnaire booklets were completed, they were administered by the regular class teacher under the guidance of the	mediated by self-esteem. Domain specific belongingness variables revealed 'school' belongingness to be specifically associated with positive affect (β=.282; p=.002).	

					researcher. All sections were read aloud to ensure participant understanding. An age-appropriate debrief sheet was also provided. Hierarchical regression and mediation analyses were conducted.		
Merrin, G. J., Hong, J. S., & Espelage, D. L. (2015).	Are the risk and protective factors similar for gang-involved, pressured-to-join, and non-gang-involved youth? A social-ecological analysis. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 85(6), 522–535.	USA	The researchers examined the risk and protective factors for gang involvement in subgroups of youth (i.e. current or former gang members, youth who resisted gang membership, and nongang youth). Hypothesis: (a) youth who have resisted gang membership and non-gang	17,366 middle and high from school districts in a large Midwestern county participated. Participation was voluntary. The majority of participants were white (74.4%). 625 participants identified as being current or	Quantitative study Data was collected via a self-reporting online survey. Belonging measure: Six items were included to assess school belonging (alpha: .86). Single item measures were used to assess: abuse at home, family gang involvement, teacher fairness and	School context variables: fair treatment from teachers, presence of an adult at school, and school belonging significantly predicted gang membership status. Youth who perceived fair treatment from teachers and other adults were 1.75 times more likely to not be involved in a gang. Youth who reported presence of an adult at school had 1.34 times	The sample comprises of youth living in suburban and rural areas – the results are geographically limited. The concurrent nature of this study limits the possibility to make causal claims and temporal order of effects. Future studies should consider longitudinal effects.

			members have a greater number of protective factors (b) Younger, female, and White youth, and those with support and love at home, feel a sense of school belonging in school and safety in neighbourhood, having dependable relationships adults in school are more likely to resist gang membership (Cronbach's alpha: good with the exception of the delinquency measure which was .60)	former gang members, 973 had been asked or felt pressurised to join a gang but resisted and 15,768 identified as non-gang members.	support, and adult support. Multinomial logistic regression analysis was performed, using SPSS 22.	more likely of non-involvement. Likewise, a '1-unit' increase in school belonging was associated with a 2x higher odds of being un-involved in a gang.	Single item indicators do not provide a nuanced understanding of the construct. Self-reports used.

Anderman, E. M. (2002).	School effects on psychological outcomes during adolescence. Journal of Educational Psychology, 94(4), 795–809.	USA	Two investigations were conducted: Study 1 was an examination of school-level differences in perceived school belonging (i.e. characteristics of schools that might be predictive of a perceived sense of belonging). In Study 2, the relations between belonging and psychological outcomes were examined.	58,653 students from 132 schools (48.8% male, 51.2% female) participated. The sample is diverse and representative. Participants were in grades 7-12. Schools were divided among urban (32.6%), suburban (54.7%), and rural (12.8%) locations. 22.7% of the schools were small sized (1–400 students), 45.3% were medium sized (401–1,000), and 32.0% were large sized (1,001–4,000)	Belonging measure: The researchers developed their own scale to measure school belonging (α .78); other scales were used to measure depression, optimism, self-concept and social rejection and were similarly deemed reliable. Large scale survey: Data gathered from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health was used to examine the relations of perceived school belonging to various psychological outcomes.	Multilevel regression analyses were conducted. Results revealed: perceived individual school belonging was related negatively and significantly ($p < .01$) to depression (r ¬– .28), social rejection (r –.27), school problems (r –.34), and absenteeism (r –.13). Aggregated school belonging (i.e. schools where many children report a sense of school belonging) was found to relate positively to social rejection.	Belonging measure had not been used in previous studies; other measures may have yielded greater insights. The student-level data were self-reported. Because the data is correlational, it is possible that belonging could be a *consequence* of the psychological variables as opposed to a protective factor against those outcomes.
Uwah, C. J.,	School belonging,	USA	Study purpose: examine the	40 male African American high	Quantitative study	The PSSM scale, the GFB subscale, and the	Correlational results.

McMahon, H. G., & Furlow, C. F. (2008).	educational aspirations, and academic self-efficacy among African American male high school students: Implications for school counselors. Professional School Counseling, 11(5), 296–305.		relationship between perceptions of school belonging, academic self-efficacy, and educational aspirations among a sample of African American male high school students. • Study hypotheses: Perceptions of school belonging would be positively related to academic self-efficacy among a sample of African American male students. • Measures of perceptions of school belonging and indicators of	school students (mean age: 15.6) Approximately 80% of the student body received free or reduced school meals. 95.62% students were African American. The school was situated in a large South eastern city in America.	Belonging measure: PSSM scale (Goodenow, 1993b) Cronbach's Alpha .81 For the purposes of the study, the authors incorporated two additional measures into the PSSM: The Perceived Likeness and Inclusion (PLI, alpha: .66), Feeling Encouraged to Participate (FEP, alpha: .66), and General Feelings of Belonging (GFB, alpha: .63). Academic self-efficacy was measured via: School Ability Self-Concept Index that has previously been used by Jonson-Reid et al. (2005) (alpha: .74) Data was collected via questionnaires. Pearson's correlation and regression	PLI subscale were not significantly correlated with Academic Self-Efficacy scores. Academic self-efficacy scores and FEP scores ($r = .42$, $p < .001$), and also between academic self-efficacy scores and educational aspirations ($r = .39$, $p < .05$) were significantly correlated. Of the four predictors (educational aspirations, PLI scores, FEP scores, and GFB scores) only the FEP subscale (β .39, $p < .05$) and educational aspirations (β .33, $p < .05$) significantly predicted academic self-efficacy.	The Perceived Likeness and Inclusion (PLI, alpha: .66), Feeling Encouraged to Participate (FEP, alpha: .66), and General Feelings of Belonging (GFB, alpha: .73) had not been used in previous studies. In extension, the internal consistency ratings of PLI and FEP were questionable. Sample limitations: The school from which the sample population was obtained is largely African American and it was composed of only first- and second-year high school students. The authors relied upon self-reports.

			educational aspirations would positively predict academic self-efficacy scores.		analyses were conducted.		
Vera, E. M., Polanin, J. R., Polanin, M., & Carr, A. L. (2018)	Keeping Latina/o students in school: Factors related to academic intentions of students at risk for school dropout. *Journal of Latina/o Psychology*, *6*(1), 34.	USA	The study examined the relationships between academic self-efficacy, academic motivation, social support, school belonging, home-school dissonance, and academic intentions.	762 Mexican American 9th graders, aged between 13–15, attending a Midwestern public school. Participants demographic: 84% self-identify as Latina/o (the majority of whom are Mexican American), 10% as Black, 4.5% as White, and .5% as Other.	Quantitative study Measure of belonging: PSSB (Goodenow, 1993) (Cronbach's alpha: .78). Academic intentions: five items that directly probed participants' perceived intentions to graduate from high school and attend college. Academic self-efficacy: five items from the 'Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey' Academic motivation: 'Academic Motivation	The school belonging was the strongest significant predictor of self-efficacy, followed by the family support variable. These variables were significant also predictors of academic motivation.	Cross sectional design in just one school. Self-reports Only 9th graders included Generalisability limited beyond current sample.

					Scale' (Goodenow & Grady, 1993) Social support was measured with 'The Vaux Social Support Record' Home-school dissonance, was measured with a scale from the 'Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey' Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)		
Frehill, N., & Dunsmuir, S. M. (2015).	The Influence of Sense of School Belonging on Traveller Students' Secondary School Completion. Educational and Child Psychology, 32(2), 10-21	Ireland	The researchers examined sense of belonging and absenteeism amongst traveller and non-traveller community in Ireland. • Do Traveller and non-Traveller students differ in their sense of school belonging and	37 traveller and 41 non-traveller secondary school students participated in the study. 13-15 years of age. Three secondary schools within western Ireland in areas of highest Traveller population.	Quantitative Questionnaires completed in the home, school and community settings. Belonging measure: The Belonging Scale (Frederickson & Baxter, 2007), the School Connectedness Scale (Resnick et al., 1997) and the Sense of School Community Scale (Battistich,	Results re. 3rd research question: Multiple regression was used to examine the impact of the independent variables on students' absenteeism (dependent variable) Findings: MANOVA to examine whether sense of school belonging predicted absenteeism; the model achieved statistical significance	Sampling limitations: the schools that agreed to take part may have been adopting traveller inclusive practices; they were 'settled' travellers; they were in a traditional traveller community – high numbers of travellers - representative sample? Self-report method of data collection: discrepancy identified between teacher and

			levels of absenteeism? • Are there differences between the sense of belonging of Traveller and non- Traveller students within schools? • **Is there a relationship between school variables, background variables and sense of belonging and absenteeism?**		Schaps & Wilson, 2004). Questionnaires administered to teachers who worked directly with the participating Traveller students: The Affective Engagement Perspective Scale used to assess teachers' perspectives on Traveller students sense of school community, connectedness and belonging. Good internal consistency for all measures. ANOVA and *t*-tests conducted.	(F=5.857, p<.05) and R square of .192 indicated that 19.2% of the variation in school absenteeism could be accounted for by sense of school belonging. Sense of school community was found to be a significant predictor of school absenteeism (β=.–.3, p<.05) Mother's education (β= –.275, p<. 05) and group membership (β= –.526, p<.05) also predicted absenteeism. In final model which included all variables, sense of school community was not a significant predictor of absenteeism – only mother's education.	traveller students' responses; family members present when completing questionnaires – response bias?
Gillen-O'Neel, C., & Fuligni, A. (2013).	A longitudinal study of school belonging and academic	USA	Longitudinal study investigating how school belonging changes over high	572 participants from 3 high schools. Beginning in 9th	Quantitative study Belonging measure: items from Tyler's	Over the four years of high school, girls' school belonging	Correlational Self-report

	motivation across high school. Child development, 84(2), 678-692.		school years and how it is associated with academic achievement and motivation. Research question: How is school belonging associated with academic values?	grade (age 13.9) through 10th, 11th, and 12th grade. 210 Latino heritage 246 Asian heritage 116 European heritage	work on institutional engagement (Tyler & Degoey, 1995) were revised to assess school belonging. Good internal consistency (alphas= .86–.89) Intrinsic value of school: items adapted from Eccles (1993) "highly correlated with each other" Belief regarding importance/ utility of school, also adapted from Eccles (1993) – good internal consistency (alphas: .77-.82) Self-report questionnaires completed and academic grades collected at end of each year. Multilevel analyses conducted.	declined, whereas boys remained stable Correlational results indicated no within-person association between school belonging and GPA (β= .04, p = .273). However, results did indicate positive within-person associations between school belonging and intrinsic value of school and between school belonging and utility value of school.	Sample only drawn from three schools.

Fong Lam, U., Chen, W. W., Zhang, J., & Liang, T. (2015).	It feels good to learn where I belong: School belonging, academic emotions, and academic achievement in adolescents. School Psychology International, 36(4), 393-409.	China	The authors examined the relationships between school belonging, academic emotions, and academic achievement in adolescents in Macau.	406 junior high school students (13.9 years old) Most students in these schools come from "middle-class families". 15 schools represented (3 were all girls' schools)	Quantitative Belonging measure: Chinese version of the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) Cronbach's alpha was 0.85. The Adolescent Academic Emotions[59] Scale was used to measure students' emotional experiences in academic situations developed in China by Dong & Yu (2007) Students' self-reported grade point averages (GPAs) were used as the index of academic	School belonging was found to relate to academic achievement through the mediators of positive activating emotions and negative deactivating emotions. School belonging was positively associated with positive activating emotions ($\beta = .38$, $p < 0.001$) and positive deactivating emotions ($\beta = .39$, $p < 0.001$) and negatively associated with negative deactivating emotions ($\beta = .20$, $p<0.001$).	Self-reports used to gather data. Sampling limitations: study did not capture a representative set of schools and students across different school backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses. Correlational: The results only indicate that the relationship between school belonging and academic attainment was mediated by academic emotions.

[59] The scale includes 72 items rated on a five-point Likert scale covering two dimensions: Arousal and valence. "These two dimensions give four categories of academic emotion: Positive activating emotions (sample item: 'I am proud of working faster than other students'), positive deactivating emotions (sample item: 'My academic performance is relatively stable. I feel comfortable and relaxed'), negative activating emotions (sample item: 'I feel anxious before examinations'), and negative deactivating emotions (sample item: 'I feel helpless about study'). The scale covers 13 academic emotions: Pride, happiness, hope, satisfaction, calmness, relief, anxiety, shame, anger, boredom, hopelessness, depression, and fatigue. High scores indicate a higher level of emotion." (Fong Lam, Chem, Zhang and Liang, 2015, p. 398).

					achievement in junior high school. The relationships between school belonging, academic emotions, and academic achievement were investigated using a path analysis.		

Appendix D: Search terms and inclusion criteria for 'scoping' literature review

Search terms[60]	No. of studies retrieved	Inclusion criteria	No. of included articles
AB belonging* OR AB school belonging* OR AB sense of belonging AND AB school membership OR AB school connect* OR AB sense of school belonging*	55	• Published between 1998 and 2019 • School age • UK and Ireland	4
AB promot* OR AB support* OR AB encourag* OR AB develop* OR AB foster* AB factor* OR AB process* OR AB mechanism* OR AB characteris*			
AB school* OR AB education* OR AB primary school OR AB secondary school			

[60] The search terms were entered as presented in the table, and were combined using the 'AND' operation.

Appendix E: Recruitment letter for the Head Teacher

The Tavistock and Portman NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

Dear [Head Teacher],

As a doctoral student on the Child, Community and Educational Psychology programme at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, and currently on placement at [placement borough], I am conducting research into the influences and practices that are thought to promote a sense of belonging for children and young people in primary school.

Inside each of us is a deep desire to be rooted and to belong. Schools are one of the few social institutions which can create that sense of place and belonging for children and young people. There is research to suggest that school belonging impacts positively on areas such as academic attainment, attendance, and emotional wellbeing. However, if the reverse is true, an individual's motivation to attend school and engage with the process of learning is negatively affected, having implications for their future outcomes.

Place and belonging matter to all individuals. Education policies around the world stress the need for more *inclusive* schools, yet it seems we need to move beyond inclusive 'ideas', towards more practical implementation at a whole school level, in order to foster a sense of *belonging* for all children and young people.

Participation in this study would involve me meeting with a small number of pupils in year 6, as well as some members of the school community (for example, yourself, the school SENCo, support staff, teaching staff, school governors etc.) within the school environment. The individual meeting with the pupils would involve a short discussion on their experiences of school belonging. The meeting with members of the school community would involve an individual interview (lasting approximately 45 minutes) where we would discuss what factors and processes they believe have promoted a sense of school belonging for children in your school.

I have attached an information sheet which provides further details of the research study. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about this research project. I am available to chat either over the phone [contact number] or via email [email address]

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this letter and for considering taking part in this research.

Sinéad Walker

Educational Psychologist in Training

Appendix F: Recruitment letter for parents of year 6 pupils

The Tavistock and Portman NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

Dear Parent/ Carer,

As a doctoral student on the Child, Community and Educational Psychology programme at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, and currently on placement at the [placement borough], I am conducting research into the influences and practices that are thought to promote a sense of belonging for children in the primary school where your child attends.

As well as talking to members of school staff about what factors they believe support a sense of school belonging for children and young people, I am also hoping to gain the voices of children and young people. I am looking for volunteers (from children in Year 6) to participate in this research study.

Inside each of us is a deep desire to be rooted and to belong. Schools are one of the few social institutions which can create that sense of place and belonging for children and young people. There is research to suggest that school belonging impacts positively on areas such as academic attainment, attendance, and emotional wellbeing. However, if the reverse is true, an individual's motivation to attend school and engage with the process of learning can be negatively affected, having implications for their future outcomes.

Place and belonging matter to all individuals. Education policies around the world stress the need for more *inclusive* schools, yet it seems we need to move beyond inclusive 'ideas', towards more practical implementation at a whole school level, in order to foster a sense of *belonging* for all children and young people.

I am looking for children who are currently in Year 6. Participation is entirely voluntary; this will not be an assessment of any kind but simply an opportunity for your child to share their experiences. Voluntary participation would involve one brief meeting with myself (lasting approximately 30 minutes) in a quiet room in the school where we would discuss their views and experiences of school belonging through conversation, and perhaps through the sharing of objects or artwork if that would help with the exploration.

If a large number of interested individuals come forward, the researcher will need to select participants on a 'first come, first served' basis. If your child is not selected to take part, you will be informed within fourteen days of your expression of interest. However, I hope to speak to as many young people as is possible.

I have attached an information sheet which provides further details of the research study, as well as an information sheet and letter for your child. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about this research project. I am available to chat either over the phone [XXXX] or via email [XXXX].

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this letter and for considering sharing this information with your child, who might be interested in participating.

Sinead Walker, Educational Psychologist in Training

Appendix G: Information sheet for adults

Title: A constructivist grounded theory of the influences and practices that are thought to promote a sense of belonging in a primary school context.

You are invited to participate in a research study designed to explore the influences and practices that are thought to promote a sense of school belonging for children and young people. Before deciding whether or not to take part in this study, it is important for you to understand the reasons why this research is being conducted and what participation would entail.

I am a student on the Child, Community and Educational Psychology Professional Doctorate programme at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, under whom the research is organised and supervised. Please do not hesitate to contact me if anything is unclear to you or if you would like further information.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to explore the influences and practices that are thought to promote a sense of school belonging for children and young people. It is hoped that the insights derived from this research may assist the work of Educational Psychologists, and other professionals, by providing a deeper and informed understanding of what factors promote a sense of school belonging.

Why have I been invited to take part in the study?

You have been invited to take part in this study because it is believed that your views and experiences could contribute to a better understanding on what influences and practices are thought to promote a sense of school belonging for children and young people.

Do I have to take part in this study?

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is up to you whether you wish to participate or not, and it is not linked to the Educational Psychology service provided to your child or school. If you decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form to give your permission to participate.

What will participation entail?

If you decide to take part in this study you will then be invited to meet with me, the researcher, on an individual basis. I will ask you some questions relating to the influences and practices you feel promote belonging for the children and young people at your school.

Can I change my mind about taking part?

You have the right to withdraw at any time up until the point of data transcription and analysis, which is anticipated to take place at the end of the autumn term, 2018. If you decide to withdraw from the research, you do not need to give a reason for your decision.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

By participating in this research, you will be making a valuable contribution to the knowledge base and understanding of school belonging. Furthermore, the findings of this research shall be shared with educational professionals to promote better understanding the concept of school belonging.

Are there any risks for taking part in the research?

There are no foreseeable negative consequences to you taking part in this research. Sometimes, however, the process of reflecting upon experiences may cause some unease or upset. In the case that any sensitive topics arise during the course of the interview, the researcher will be available to discuss this after the meeting.

Will the discussions be kept confidential?

Yes, all information shared by you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to the information. I am also bound by the Data Protection Act and I am not allowed to give away any of your personal information. All written records will be anonymised (i.e. your data will be referred to by a pseudonym, and all identifying details will be changed). Once the research study is completed, your data will be kept anonymously for 3-5 years and will then be destroyed.

What will happen with the findings of the research?

The results of this study will be published in the form of a research thesis and may also be published in journal articles. A summary of the research findings can be sent to you, and to the other participants of the study. If you would like to discuss the findings with the researcher, a meeting can be organised.

Has this study been ethically approved?

Ethical approval for this research has been sought and approved by the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundations Trust Research Ethics Committee. Permission for this research has been sought from the Principal Educational Psychologist of XXXX.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of the researcher, or any other aspect of this research project, you can contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk).

Appendix H: Consent form for parents

Title: A constructivist grounded theory of the influences and practices that are thought to promote a sense of belonging in a primary school context.

The Tavistock and Portman NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

I have the read the information sheet relating to the above programme of research in which my child has been asked to participate, and I have been given a copy to keep. The research has been explained to me and my child, and I understand the procedures in which my child will be involved. I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about the information I have been given.

☐ Please tick box

I am participating voluntarily, and I give permission for my child's interview to be audio-recoded, and for the researcher to use quotations from my child's interview in the research report, maintaining anonymity.

☐ Please tick box

I understand that my child can withdraw from the study, at any time, either prior to commencement, or whilst he/she is participating. I also understand that my child can withdraw permission to use his/her interview before data transcription and analysis (end of autumn term, 2018), without disadvantage to me or my child.

☐ Please tick box

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by anonymising my child's identity, and other identifiable features.

☐ Please tick box

Child's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS) ……..

Parent/ Carer's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS) ……..

Parent/Carer's Signature ……..

Date: ……..

Researcher's Signature……

Appendix I: Simplified recruitment letter for year 6 pupils

Dear Year 6 Pupil,

We all like to feel like we are valued and accepted, like we 'belong'. Schools are one of the important places where we like to feel that we belong, and that we are respected for who we are. There is lots of research which says that school belonging has a positive impact on our learning, our attendance at school, and how we feel about ourselves.

Having a sense of 'school belonging' is important for all pupils. 'Belonging' can mean different things for different people, but it is often described as:

"That feeling of being somewhere where you feel confident that you will be accepted and valued for who you are"

Do you feel this way when you are at your school? If so, I would be very interested in hearing from you!

This research will be looking at what things help make school a place where everyone feels like they belong. I will be talking to some adults and teachers in your school. I am also interested in hearing from Year 6 Pupils about their experiences of school belonging as it is important to hear everybody's opinion.

I am looking for children who are currently in Year 6 to give their views. It is completely up to you whether you would like to take part or not. If you did decide to take part, we would meet together once (for approximately 30 minutes) in a quiet place in your school to discuss your experiences of school belonging. You could draw pictures, or bring objects, images or books to help explain your views.

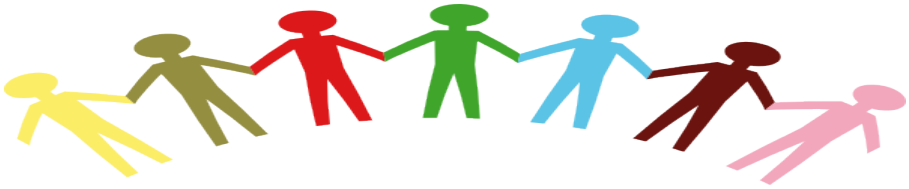
If lots of people say they would like to take part, I will have to select people on a first come, first served basis, but I hope to gather as many people's views as possible.

I have attached an information sheet which gives you some more details about the research. We could also meet face-to-face to talk about the research – if that would be helpful for you, you can ask your parents to request that.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this letter, and for considering taking part in this research.

Sinead Walker
Educational Psychologist in Training

Appendix J: Simplified information sheet for year 6 pupils



My name is Sinéad, and I am learning to be a psychologist and a researcher. I want to carry out some research in your school to find out what things help children feel like they are valued and accepted, like they 'belong' in school.

I am looking for pupils who are in Year 6 to volunteer to take part in this research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part in this study, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done in your school, and what taking part would mean.

Please take time to read the information below and talk to other people, like your parents, siblings or teachers, if you think that would be helpful.

The title of my research is: A constructivist grounded theory of the influences and practices that are thought to promote a sense of belonging in a primary school context

What does 'belonging' mean?

'Belonging' can mean different things for different people, but it is often described as *"that feeling of being somewhere where you feel confident that you will be accepted and valued for who you are"*

Why are you doing this research?

I want to understand more about what things help make school a place where everyone feels like they belong. Having a sense of 'school belonging' is important for all pupils; it can help with their learning, their motivation to attend school, and their happiness.

Why have I been asked to take part in the study?

I am looking for children who are currently in Year 6 to volunteer to give their views about what helps make school a place where everyone feels like they belong. You have been invited to take part in this study because you could help the adults better understand what makes school a place where everyone feels like they belong. It is important to hear as many views and opinions as possible!

Do I have to take part in this study?

No! It is entirely up to you whether you want to take part in this research or not ☺

What will I have to do if I do take part?

If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to meet with the researcher (me) in a quiet place in your school to talk about your experiences of school belonging.

What if I change my mind about taking part?

You can change your mind at any time up until the end of the autumn term. Just tell me, or your teachers, or your parents if you don't want to take part any more.

Will what I say remain confidential?

Yes, all the information you share with me will remain confidential. Only me and my supervisor will be able to see the information, and no one will know who has said what. I will only have to share something with an adult in your school if you say something that makes me feel worried about your safety.

What good might come from taking part?

It is hoped that you may find sharing your experiences helpful and enjoyable. Also, by participating in this research, you will be making a valued contribution to the understanding of school belonging, which will be helpful for the adults who work in schools, and for school pupils.

Are there any risks for taking part in the research?

It is possible that you might find some things difficult to share. Sometimes, talking about experiences can make us feel a bit upset. However, throughout the process, I will check-in with how you are feeling and we will have some time together after the meeting. You will not have to answer any questions that you do not want to.

What will happen once you have finished your research in my school?

The information that is found out from this study will be published in something called a research thesis. If you would like to talk to me about the findings, we can meet again!

You can contact me using the above contact details if you would like to know anything more or if you have any questions. We can also meet and have a chat if that would be helpful.

Thank you very much for the time you have taken to read this information and for considering taking part in this study.

Appendix K: Assent form for year 6 pupils

The Tavistock and Portman NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

Title of the Research: A constructivist grounded theory of the influences and practices that are thought to promote a sense of belonging in a primary school context

I have the read the information sheet about this research that I have been asked to take part in, and I have had the chance to ask questions if I wanted to. I understand why the research is being done, and I understand that I will be meeting with the researcher to answer some questions.

I understand that the things I say will remain confidential. I understand that things I say during the meetings will be audio-recorded, and may be used in the research write-up, maintaining anonymity. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to my information. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research has finished.

I voluntarily assent to taking part in the study and I understand that I have the right to withdraw from taking part at any time up until the point of data analysis (end of the autumn term, 2018).

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS) ……

Participant's Signature ……

Date.....

Researcher Name (BLOCK CAPITALS) ……

Researcher's Signature ……

Date: ……

Appendix L: Tentative interview schedule (initial interviews)

Introduction:

Thank you again for agreeing to talk to me…

Introduce topic: we are going to be talking about school belonging, with a focus on exploring how schools can foster a sense of belonging for pupils. The concept of belonging itself has received quite a lot of research interest, but *less* so on how we can foster that sense of belonging in our schools –

- Could you confirm your role in the school?
- How long have you been [role] at St Francis' School?
  - *Explore history of school*
- Can you tell me a bit about what it has been like being [role] in this school?
- So, if we think of the concept of 'belonging' in general terms, I'm curious about what comes to mind for you?
- Could you talk me through what 'school belonging' means to you?
  - *Why is having a sense of school belonging important?*
  - *What might it help with?*
- Do you feel like the pupils in this school have a sense of belonging, in the way that you have described?
  - *What makes you feel that way? (line of questioning may alter at this point)*
  - *How does this show or manifest in the pupils?*
- What do you think helps make this school a place where pupils feel like they belong?

- *Why do you think this?*
- *How can this be achieved?*

- What do *you* do in your role of [role] to support the promotion of school belonging?

- What do other adults do in the school to promote belonging?

  - *What might the pupils do to promote belonging for one another?*

- Do you think St Francis' School is different to other schools in the way that belonging is promoted?

  - *If so, why, in what ways?*

- What would you like other teachers/education professionals to know about School Belonging?

- Is there anything else you would like to tell me? Do you have any questions?

Appendix M: Interview transcript (Claudia, Deputy Head Teacher)

Key:
(.) = Slight pause
(…) = Longer pause
(H) = Sigh
Italics = Emphasis

I Thank you very much for agreeing to meet with me

C That's no problem

I Could you just confirm your role in the school

C In the school, so (.) I have a number of roles in the school, I am the deputy head teacher, I am also the SENCO

I Ok

C I'm responsible for inclusion across the school and I also lead (.) religious education as this is a faith-based school so we have a separate inspection for RE, so I lead that side of things as well

I Ok, so you have lots of different roles

C Yeah, lots of different hats

I How long have you been here Claudia?

C I was originally seconded here in January 2009 for two terms (.) and then I was asked to stay-

I Yeah

C In a, in a sort of Assistant Head position (H) at the time that, the two terns lots of (H) really positive things happened so I was asked to stay and then I haven't left really – I became deputy

I So you have been here since 2009, coming up to 10 years (.) and have you noticed changes since you've been here?

C (LAUGH) It's a completely different school to the school that I, yeah, to the school that I came to, back in 2009 (H) it's obviously, there's been staffing changes (H) there's been (H) changes around ethos annnnd how the curriculum is (.) developed or has been developed (.) there have been changes (H) there are so many I just don't really know where to start

I Of course, so the ethos-

C Ethos, ok, so I mean obviously, it's always been a catholic school and I think that's been very important (H) to (.) the families that we serve (H) (…)so that in itself hasn't changed, but what's changed is the way the curriculum is delivered, the quality of the teaching has improved significantly (.) behaviour, behaviour was a huge concern (.) when

I, when I came here I was actually, that's why I was seconded here actually to (H) yeah support with that so you know, changes in policy and practice and developing (.) doing lots of different activities with staff and just to change mindsets and set expectation – that's really important, I think just in terms of the school's vision and the values, and making that very explicit and having (.) really high expectations of the children being consistent so my, one of the things I'd, I was actually working in another borough and (.) in, in a school for children with social and emotional difficulties, behavioural difficulties, it was a specialist provision for that so I brought those sorts of expertise to this school and just developed policy really and practice and, you know, I'm sure that Shona will say that (.) she wasn't the head teacher at the time, so she was, she was in a deputy role so we, we worked very closely together and I think that whole idea of, of shared vision and shared values and (H) (…) you know, Shona's love and passion for the school having been here for so many years before and (H) I think my, my sort of thinking that, yeah anything is possible and (.) not being prepared to accept that you know the school was failing and it would continue to fail (.) I'm very much an advocate of (.) valuing teachers, valuing staff (.) I think that's really important but actually setting, making the standards clear, you know I think whatever you do we should be excellent

I And, you spoke about (.) making it explicit, so making the shared vision that yourself and Shona had, making that explicit?

C Very much so, and transparent

I And, how did you make that vision explicit and transparent?

C So through the series of staff meetings (.) but also in terms of (H) accountability, you know that sort of evaluation, monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and actually (H) providing (.) support for individuals who, you know, are finding it quite challenging? (.) And then obviously (.) and in the end some decisions had to be made about staff who either were unable to or chose not to (H) change and that sounds quite harsh, but it's not in terms of (H) the, I always say it's not a dress rehearsal for the children, and this is it and we've got to provide the best possible education for them and so I think, you know, that's what Shona and I believe and so yeah, we had do whatever was necessary to make that happen

I Of course, so returning to the ethos you were speaking about and the (H) religious element of the school (H) can you talk a little bit more about that?

C Well (H) you know, I think we're surrounded by *that* I mean even the room that we are in, there's hand prints of the children on that wall and (H) it's about, the ethos being- it's a religious school in that sense of being a catholic school, but it is actually an *inclusive* school (H) so there are children and staff who have faith, different faiths, and no faith at all (H) but actually it's, it's very much about *values* you know, about being kind, being compassionate, being purposeful (.) having a vision of where you want to go and developing the tools and the skills to achieve that (H) so that's the ethos that I was talking about, we're underpinned by the faith in Jesus which is, it's very important in terms of the gospel values for the school (H) but actually (.) we're open to all faiths and no faiths, it's

about (H) you know, the, the values that we hold dear, you know, democracy and freedom and you know liberty and (H) respect, you know, it's that type of ethos

I And, how might you see that demonstrated day-to-day?

C Oh, in the way that the adults are with each other, the way that the adults interact with the children, the way the children interact with each other, it's sort of demonstrating that on a day-to-day basis

I Now obviously as you know, we're here to talk about belonging-

C Yeah sure

I School belonging, more specifically-

C Yeah

I I am curious really about what comes to mind for you when I say belonging?

C Well (…) I suppose, belonging (.) we, we are a place and belonging school and (…) but I think we were that before we coined that phrase 'place and belonging' so I, I several years ago I went to a seminar weekend for teachers and (.) Kathryn Riley, Professor Kathryn Riley was delivering one of the workshops there and it was at that point where that language of place and belonging really resonated with me because a lot of the things that she was saying I thought, well we do that in our school, you know so we, I made that connection with her and I said to her, you know I'm sure that Shona would really love to meet you because what you're talking about, I see that in our school every day (smiles) and so that's where that whole place and belonging-

I That language?

C Yeah, the language, you know came from but actually, for me, it was about before that, it was very much about knowing who you are, being secure in your identity, being proud of (H) where you come from and what you have to bring to the table, seeing yourself in the environment, seeing yourself in the curriculum, yeah that, that's very important because it wasn't like that before (H) so…

I Ok, seeing yourself, what do you mean by that?

C So I mean, for example, if we are looking at electricity in science as you know, that's taught as part of the national curriculum and (.) knowing about (H) electric circuits and what makes them work and all of that type of thing, you know we might introduce children ### the lightbulbs there and this is how it works and well, who invented the light bulb? And you'll get a name, you know Thomas Eddison, but you won't necessarily get the name Lewis Latimer who actually invented the filament in the light bulb, so it's actually bringing all of that history together (H) so that it's comprehensive, that it's whole and not just a part of that (H) it's about (.) yeah, obviously the children in the school come from very diverse backgrounds and so it's important that the curriculum reflects

that diversity (H) and, and is balanced and broad and so, so that's one of the big things in the school, about identity and belonging and being *visible*, yeah, that's really important, that's really important

I How do you feel as a school (H) you promote belonging (.) promote school belonging for your pupils?

C For our pupils, we, apart from the curriculum we give them a voice, we listen to them, they're able to make the voices heard through different forums so that might be head boy or head girl or school council (.) you know, house captains so, they complete sort of whole school questionnaires and we listen to what they have to say, but we don't *just* listen, we actually act on what they have to say so there's a value in what they say because they see changes (.) so for example, two years ago they wanted to change the school uniform and you know, so we've now got a great school uniform, much better than the one we had before and they were involved in that and that's very visible (.) that creates a sort of corporate identity in terms of belonging, we belong to St Francis' school, we are proud of who we are, this is what we stand for (.) I think, so pupil voice is really, really important – so seeing yourself in the curriculum, being taught the whole curriculum and pupil voice – those two things are really important, really important.

I And, how would you say your curriculum is maybe different or-

C I don't think it's necessarily different… but, well I haven't been to every school in the country, but what I do know is that (…) when I came here, the curriculum wasn't as broad and it wasn't as balanced so (.) you know, now we, we teach, we teach Spanish, all the children learn Spanish (.)from a specialist, we have a music specialist, we have an IT specialist (.) so I, all of these things are (.) part of the curriculum so

SCHOOL BELL

It should be taught, but it's, it's the content of that and we make sure we teach the national curriculum but we also add it things that make the curriculum more reflective of the children that are in the school (.) so for example (.) this month, well this month, I mean I know- it's black history month, our focus is Windrush and I'm sure that you've seen in media (.) what's happened in terms of Windrush, but we're not taking it from that perspective, so we're looking at things like, in year 6 they will be looking at immigration whereas in you know, a young class they might be looking at something like, you know going, starting somewhere new, you know, going on a journey-

I Yeah

C You know, there's a big boat in the back of the year 1 outdoor area so that could be the Windrush, you know and actually mirroring that in terms of you know, how do you feel when you go to a new class, when you have new friends- our school has got very high mobility so we have children coming in at different stages, what can you do to make them feel welcomed, so it's actually, using you know, we're using real life (.) representing it in really positive way– when our year 5s last year, they did (H) they did fashion around Bruce Oldfield, but this year they're going to be doing fashion but around the people who

came, you know how they were dressed, what they looked like, and what the fashion was like so they were very much 1950s, yeah fashion (smile) so they'll be doing, they'll be making, designing their own outfits- so it's making it relevant but in a really real context

I And it sounds like it runs throughout the school?

C Yeah, running it throughout the school so it's not just (.) you know, in terms of the curriculum, for *us*, you know, yes it's black history month, but actually (H) we're doing history that includes black people throughout the year so it's not like a, it's not like a big deal, we don't, you know, it would be great if we didn't have to have black history month in the scheme of things (LAUGH) but (.) we *do* and because we want to use the opportunity to *highlight* (.) you know, things that are really important in the history, that's important (H) yeah, so it's, yeah that's what we do…

I And, it sounds like it's very important to you yourself

C Yeah, yeah

I Why is school belonging important to you as an individual?

C (…) If you don't belong, I don't think you're able to grow – one of my favourite quotes is from one of Jamaica's national heroes, Marcus Garvey[61] and he said, he said that a tree (.) without, you know, if you don't know you're culture, if you don't know who you are, if you don't know your identity – I'm paraphrasing – you're like a tree without roots, I think that every human being is placed here to grow – we're not supposed to be stagnant, if you don't have a sense of belonging you can't put down any roots, and if you don't put down any roots you can't grow. That's it

I That quote really captures it for you?

C (LAUGH) Yeah, well, that's what I believe, I mean it's such a privilege to work with young people – it really is (.) and I take it as a privilege and an honour to do that, and I think, you know I have my own children, and so every day, when I work within this context, I do my very best to give my very best and so I hope that somewhere down the line, you know, my own children will experience that in their own lives – you know, growing up and going into school, interacting with people – it's really important to have that sense of belonging and I think where families aren't able to provide that for whatever reason, there are lots of reasons why families are challenged around- creating those you know, places where families, well where children feel secure, that's our responsibility as a school to provide that because if we don't then there's no safety net, there's no refuge, there's no place (.) you know, some of our children they have challenges in their lives, and we're here to say actually you do belong and (.) you can and you will grow, you know, and I say to the children that you are all smart, we just need to find out what it is,

[61] "A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots" (Marcus Garvey)

for some, you know, they will excel in maths and English, for others it will be art and design and music and, so (H) it's actually nurturing those gifts and those talents that they have – yep, very important

I And, would you say that your beliefs of belonging, do you feel it's changed over time?

C Not really, no, not at all – I mean it's how I was brought up, I mean I've been educated both in the UK and abroad, so I have a, I think I have a keen sense of what it means to move and to start again-

I Yeah

C Yeah, but I've always known, you know, who I am and history has always been very important in my family and (.) and education has always been very important as well (LAUGH) so I think, I think schools really do make a difference and they can make a difference-

I Absolutely

C And, I think if you're in education then you have to believe that in spite of all the things that are outside of your control, yeah, you have to believe that and being in education is a real privilege because you get to impact lives for generations

I And, did you feel you had that when you were in school-

C Yeah, absolutely-

I Throughout your schooling career, and your educational career?

C Yeah, definitely, definitely (H) but I think, I mean I've taught in high school as well as this phase, and (.) for me, my most (H) impactful times are in the primary phase, I think that's where I (.) understood what education was about, I understood what belonging was about-

I Why do you think the primary is-

C I just, I think, you know the word *primary*, I think it's the first stage and I think (.) I think in those formative years, I think you really do (.) develop into the person that you are going to be later (H) and (H) I think we could just have such huge impact at an earlier stage, you know I'm obviously a SENCO as well and an advocate of early intervention, you know this whole thing about emotional wellbeing, and putting things in place to enable young people to be well-rounded and secure, doing that early, you know, helping children to (.) balance their emotions, manage their feelings, teaching that very early, it's very important for later on-

I And, is that something that you, you do as a school then-

C Yeah, yeah, you're up in the inclusion suite, I'm sure you notice that things look slightly different on this side, so next door is the 'sunshine room' which the children named – a particular child who had quite challenging emotional difficulties, named that room the sunshine room and it's been called that ever since – it didn't look like that when she named it that, but we always wanted to develop it and make it a real *nurture* type provision so when you go in there, it's very calm, it's like a home-from-home (H) it's really lovely, so I will show you later (LAUGH)

I Thank you! So, it feels like, you know, the environment's really important?

C The environments really important, however, environment, you know the financial funding side is also important, and sometimes you're not able to do things that you want to do because of the constraints of finance, but it's, it's interesting that that room was named the sunshine room before we had it *developed* the way- yeah, so that actually indicates that it's *just* as much about the people (.) as it is about the environment - you can have a wonderful looking environment, but if it has no heart and it has no soul…

I So is it the people that bring the heart and the soul?

C Yeah, people make it (.) and that's when we go back to belonging because it's the people that create that and I think that the building *facilitates* that

I I see

C Yeah, that the environment facilitates that (H) but actually, it's like, it's like a church, we have our church building next door but actually at the end of the day it's just a building, if the people weren't there then-

I What is it-

C What is it, yeah! So, I guess it's the same with a school…

I And, do you feel, or how do you know that the pupils in the school have a sense of belonging – how do you is it shown- how does it manifest?

C How does it manifest itself – when you talk to them, when visitors come, especially – you choose some children and you say, alright you're responsible for showing our visitors around, take them wherever you'd like to take them and then when you're finished, come back here – and then after they have done their tours and they've gone everywhere (H) and when the children have gone, the adults will say - oh, they said this and they said that, and they said this and they said that, and it's- *they* are the adverts for the school, just by the questions that they were asked – you know, what do you like about being at St Francis', they'll talk about the teachers, the staff, how everyone makes them *feel*, that they are expected to work hard and do their best (.) and that they're cared for, they're *safe* – so it's, it's the things that they say that helps us I think to measure and evaluate how they see themselves as very important in the school (.) yeah, I think that's, they are the main things

I Just by speaking to them-

C Yeah! Just talk to them, just talk to them – I think you can tell so much by just speaking to children, they, they don't pretend (LAUGH) they just say it as it is really- yeah and sometimes, and they are not, and they won't say everything is always right, they'll say if this happens this is how you resolve it, so we have restorative justice, and sometimes you hear, if there was an argument or some sort of disagreement or dispute, you'll hear one child, sort of, you know *mediating* between to- "so what happened?" and "what do you think should happen now?" "so how did you feel when that happened?" (H) "oh, what do you think you should do next time?" so they model what we model for them and then you see them doing it and it's quite- So it can be quite entertaining! So, I say things to them like, ok so when we're walking through the school, I'll say things like – "thank you for walking" and they'll start walking! (LAUGH) because I've thanked them for walking rather than shouting "stop running!!" (LAUGH) you know, so-

I It's the simple-

C Very subtle, very subtle (.) things like (.) what else do I say to them? I say things like "thank you for walking" I'll say "oh, you're doing so well with that!" (LAUGH) so, you begin to articulate this sort of, self-fulfilling prophecy that is positive, and we don't actually, we don't advocate telling children to "shh, don't do that" at all, and that's something that you, we always have to remind each other because it's a very natural thing to do, but if you do that to an adult, that is perceived as "*gasp* she just told me to shh!" and "how dare he, or how dare she!" (.) so why would you do that to a child, you know, so "thank you for listening" or we use signals, you know I use a lot of brain gym stuff so if I've got a hall, 200 children in assembly I won't necessarily use my voice I will use signals, and they'll just join in with me (smile) you know, and then it's very calm and quiet, so it's using lots of different techniques, to enable them

I And, there's something about (.) the feeling of this school

C Yeah, that's good!

I And, the atmosphere, it's hard to articulate what that is – I wonder if you could help (LAUGH) I wonder what you think it might be?

C Umm, yeeeah (.) I mean you're not the first person to say this, many people who come here say exactly the same thing, oh this is a really lovely school, it just feels right, it feels different (H) and I *think* it's not something that we have achieved without strategic planning (LAUGH)

I Yeah

C Yeah, so we've been very deliberate in creating (…) the feeling that we want to be perceived in this school, so it's how people are spoken to, how people are greeted, how people are encouraged (H) (…) you know, it would be very unusual for a visitor to come in and just be sitting in reception without anybody making eye contact or saying, are you ok have you been seen to – we really promote that (.) and you know, even the colours we

choose for walls and, yeah, just that whole environment, yeah, we're quite sort of strategic about it-

I And, you've got some beautiful art work as well

C Yeah, mmm, same artist – you may have seen some going along that way (.) we've opened up our preschool in September, so if you go in there, you will see beautiful artwork as well, coming up the stairs

I Yeah

C So the quotes that have been selected, because you know, you never know what someone is going through as a private thing, and they walk along and they see a quote on the wall that just gives them that-

I That speaks to them-

C Yeah that just, lifts them up, so yeah, we've been strategic about that and very strategic about the curriculum, and standards you know, out standards are high (LAUGH)

I And, thinking about (.) the staff group, and how they have a sense of belonging-

KNOCKING AT THE DOOR

C Just excuse me a minute I'll see what the knocking is-

C OK, sorry – ok, yeah so, you were saying-

I Yeah, about the staff group, how- would they say that they felt they belonged do you think?

C Well, I think, I think they would and I've heard them say that, obviously they've been on this journey, you know with the institute of education with Professor Riley, so some of them have been involved in doing training and development about place and belonging so they are aware of the whole concept – we have new, I mean we've had a new member of staff, a new class teacher that has started and I think, you know she only stated in September so she would be a really good person to speak to in terms of how she feels, but I know, I know she loves it here (LAUGH) just because of what she said, just because of what she said, and (.) you know, we've had diff- you know different, if you talk to anyone, if you spoke to them, they would say whether they felt like they belonged, that's because again we give them a voice, we support the subject leaders, we support the different- today is national poetry day so our English subject leader you now, led that, organised that for the day with the classes, and assemblies, children delivering performance- poetry, so everything that is promoted, that's positive, you know everyone gets involved and everyone supports it-

I It's a whole school effort?

C Yeah definitely, so very *very* much a team, very much sort of, helping each other if there are difficulties, we try and support each other in that regard, so yeah, I think they would say that they belong here – staff, I mean we've got a range of staff that have been here, for (H) many, many years, a long time and we've got a very new member as well – I mean in the last sort of 3 years, we've had new people start but our, our teaching staff is very stable which is a really good thing

I And, do you feel that that is, that stability is important?

C I think it's *very* important, I mean we've also got teaching assistants who have been here for a very long time as well, and I think when, you know there are members of staff who came here, you know when they were children (smile) so (.) I think that stability thing is very important

I And, that consistency-

C Yeah, definitely, definitely, and there is the community – there's the parish, people come to worship in the parish church, first holy communions, so it's all sort of connected in that way, you know you might get invited to a child's first holy communion which is like, wow that's a privilege really (.) we have masses so we have a family mass on Sunday and (.) you know, the children are there with their families-

I So there's a real sense of community-

C Teachers will come, you know, even though they might not go to this particular parish church but they will once a month when they are able to they will come to support, and any events that are on, whether it's a summer fair, winter fair, they'll you know, they'll support, yeah, so that's good

I So it goes beyond the school gates –

C Oh yeah, definitely, definitely! It's great, I love it, it's a great school – it's a great school…

I And, what do you feel, I mean I think you spoke a little bit about it earlier– what might hinder, or get in the way or cause challenge to your, you know to what you're striving for here?

C I mean, I think finance is always a huge barrier (LAUGH) so that's one thing (…) yeah, I think political changes and developments that are (.) perhaps not done with real consultation? But, you know it's sort of imposed

I Mmhmm

C Yeah, and yeah, going back to the finance, just funding, things are becoming increasingly more expensive, you know, so we want the curriculum to continue to be creative and you know, that means that children go on trips to visit certain places (.) we've made quite strategic decisions about the types of trips that children go on so that, with the (.) climate

that we are in, so that if they need to go to somewhere up town, or we actually decided that, well we don't necessarily want them going on public transport because you know, as far as we're concerned it's safer if they are in a coach, and then we just take them to the place and get back on and come back, so you know the cost of transport then can become prohibitive so (.) I think funding (.) funding for children who have got additional needs (.) yeah, I think those types of things (…) but a lot of that is really outside of our control, so to speak

I Yes

C But whatever is in our control, then we would do what we need to do really (.) Yeah, I think those are the main barriers

I Yeah (H) and if I were to ask, what are the *main* things, practices, processes, that you do to promote belonging-

C That I do-

I Or, that the school does-

C Well I personal- well on a personal note, I try to practice what I preach really (H) I believe that I'm a good role model, so the way I behave, the way I interact with the children – I actually believe that you cannot (LAUGH) I think that the children learn from teachers that they like and respect

I Mmmhmm

C So I, I think it's really important to show the children that you care and that you like them and that they, and that you respect them and you treat them accordingly, so I think that I, I model that, so that you know, I, and that and so, I don't real- if I had to raise my voice it would have to be some dire emergency or something (LAUGH) You know, something really quite- yeah, I'm quite calm and level-headed and just dealing with the children in a very, sort of calm, with a calm persona, but that's very much who I am, part of my personality so (…) yeah, and then if there is, if there is a crisis or a challenge, actually dealing with that in a really methodical way and remaining calm, looking at options, thinking it through, and also relying on colleagues

I Yeah

C As a sounding board?

I I see

C I think that's really important, I think everyone here has a go-to person or two, I mean one or two (.) articulating, thinking, ideas, having that sort of, coaching-type mentality within the school, I think that's, that's how we function

I That kind of reflective practice

C Yeah, definitely, definitely, and food is good (smile)

I Food is good (LAUGH)

C Food is always good, food is always good-

I What is it about food?

C Well, the thing is, I think (.) you know, everyone's been working really hard all day and you have the staff meeting, if you have some nice refreshments at the staff meeting, and then it- and then you can get some work done, not having meetings that are sooo looong, that people are completely drained (LAUGH) after a long day in the classroom (H) I teach too, so I didn't tell you that at the beginning, so I tend to, we have pupil progress reviews every term and then at those we identify children that might need to be supported or extended because they're doing ever so well, and I'm generally allocated to upper key stage two for English so I would either be working with extension groups in particular classrooms, so that's another important way of demonstrating that you are not removed from the day-to-day business of teaching and learning, so if you're in a position where you are evaluating and giving feed-back, then you still have credibility and that authenticity surrounding that because people see you practice as well, I think that's really important

I Yeah, and (.) your curriculum I guess is another key area-

C Yeah, I mean things that we have developed to help all the children (.) so for example, we have a, we have an amazing spelling bee competition

I Ok

C And, yeah we're fourth, going into our fifth year and (.) it's just *amazing*, you know, not just the fact that everyone's involved, so there are knock-out stages, so everyone is involved in spelling bee, when you get to the last stages and (.) these children are just amazing – the adults couldn't do what they do, so it's setting the bar really high, and children rising to that challenges, and then you'll get your spelling bee champion in KS1 and you'll have your spelling bee champion in KS2 and when they hand over the cup the next year, they make their speech and they say what it was like to be the spelling bee champion for 2017, they give sort of advice and it's really really great, so that's one of the things that we do, so it's about excellence, it's about everybody having a go, some people aren't going to excel to those heights but everybody is involved

I And, for the children who don't get to those heights, or they're not – how are they held, and supported?

C They're supported because we have, like I said, the pupil progress reviews, so our provision (.) is not just around our more able, or our middle attainers or our low attainers, so our children who are attaining probably below expected, they will then get additional intervention, additional support from specialist teachers, so again, going back to funding,

you know, that's really important, you know and (.) if we're not able to fund that then that becomes a problem but fortunately we are still able to fund that at present so that's great (H) and then having other opportunities, we have choirs, we have a great choir, last-two weeks ago we hosted the deanery mass for the teachers, so all the catholic primary schools in the borough came here, our choir sang and it was, it was great, and they, you know, so in that choir you'll have some of the high flyers, but you'll also have children who, you know, they're not academically as able but they excel in singing and they have their platform, they have you know, that place where they can show what they can do

I Yeah

C And that can be appreciated for what it's worth as well – it's just providing opportunities for performance, because yeah, not everybody is going to be academically gifted, and we don't expect that, but we do expect everyone to do their best –

I Yeah

C Yeah, and we do expect that, definitely (LAUGH) so it's yeah, do your best

I And I guess, feeling as a child, feeling able to do your best, you need to feel that you are valued for who you are and you're- and you know that you belong in your school community-

C Yeah, yeah, I believe that's very true, and I think the real way to find out how the children really feel is just to talk to them, you know, just to talk to them to see what they have to say about this school (LAUGH) and, and they won't say that everything is perfect, I'm sure they won't, yeah I'm sure they won't, but there will be a real sense of, yeah, this is a really good school and we like it here (.) and (…) we, we buddy children so we might have new children coming from abroad and so we'll buddy them (.) with either English speaking children, but there will also be other children in the school who speak their home language, so we try and connect them together, we try and connect parents together – this week we had an EAL coffee morning, so again, it's about being strategic with that, so we're letting parents know that, yes (.) your child speaks English as and additional language, we value that, that's not a problem to us (.) we are very happy about that, and keeping that message going, and letting them know these are the types of things you can do at home to support, and these are the sort of things we are doing at school, you know we have an EAL specialist teacher who will work with children that have been identified with an initial assessment, and then they'll go on to have sessions (.) and with that teacher, and it's under constant review, so it's not just oh we'll do it this month, and then we don't do it next month, it's an ongoing way of working (H) over 60% of the children in this school speak English as an additional language anyway, so if they weren't doing well, we wouldn't be doing well (LAUGH)

I So it's about, including parents as well and-

C Oh definitely, definitely, definitely – we send questionnaires home and questionnaires for chil- parents who have children who have additional needs, they might be on the special needs register, we have a general questionnaire that goes out to all parents once a year

and depending on what the feedback is that we get, we may make certain adjustments and certain changes, Shona communicates with parents all the time via the newsletter, I do a half termly RE newsletter, so then parents know what is happening in that, in my subject for you know, this term and that's really important, yeah, so-

I And I'm hearing a lot about that kind of strategic approach- it feels really important to you know, having that strategic vision – knowing where you are going and actually working in a purposeful way and thinking this is where we are going, this is what we need to do-

C Definitely

I Having that in mind, not just thinking, it will come incidentally-

C No, no it's not just oh, we'll throw it all up in the air and see where it lands – that's not a good plan (LAUGH) it's important as a leader, I think it's very important to be strategic, and to have a vision of where you want to get to, and (.) you know, we have a school development plan, we have our self-evaluation form, subject leaders do their action plans (.) and they, you know, there are key actions, there are milestones identified by such-and-such a day, this is what needs to have been done in order to achieve that objective, it's not just airy fairy, you've got to, you've got to write the vision and make it plain, really – that's what you've got to do, you can't just sort of "oh it would be nice if we had this, or it would be nice if we had that" oh so, ok, that's great, how are we going to get there – so I think that's how we work as a school, and I think (H) yeah, it's paid dividends, yeah, definitely…

I (H) Gosh, I feel like we have covered a lot

C Yeah (LAUGH) that's good!

I Do you feel that we have missed anything- is there anything that you want to add?

C Not really, no, no, it's just been a pleasure talking to you

I Thank you

C And, I hope you get out of the interviews, what you need to propel your search so yeah!

I Thank you, Claudia.

30 L (H) When I first came, the school was it was, it was a small school, it was a one form entry and mainly (…) Irish catholic families, and (.) and there was diversity (…) but mostly Irish catholic families (.) and because I'm in the Parish Church as well, that would be reflected there in the school then I think over time it, it grew and expanded to two form entry and I suppose the, the diversity of ethnicity, and families coming from different parts of the world, almost kind of happened (.) because any change like that happens gradually and you don't always notice it, when you're in it (LAUGH) Yeah so, I think (.) yeah so it changed (.)yeah, almost without anybody paying any attention to the change and then, and then suddenly (H) we were two form of entry (H) and (.) yeah f from almost (.) and, and, and there was, yeah, there was lots of change, lots of diversity (H) the (.) the children I suppose didn't see anyone like them

31 I Mmm

32 L In positions, in positions of authority (H)

33 I Yeah, Okay, and you feel that, that is important?

34 L I think that's *really* important (.) and I suppose that even myself at the time (phone vibrates) didn't even think about that because (.) because you kind of, you, you just, you're busy getting on with your job, you're busy getting on with your job as being a class teacher and making sure that, you know that (phone vibrates) and you do think that (…) yeah, everyone is unique, everyone is different (…) yeah, but not really paying any attention to what makes them unique and different, and actually how important that is in the curriculum… (H) yeah so there were probably lots of good things happening, but there wasn't really a, there wasn't really a sort of strategic approach and a whole school approach which I think is really important (.) because you need consistency (.) and so that the children have the same (H), it doesn't have to be *exactly* the same in every class but there have to be certain things, the values, the expectations have to be consistent right through the school otherwise children just become (.) well *and* adults, become really confused

35 I So that whole school ethos is -

36 L It's key, yeah, it's key, absolutely, and I think when the school grew… and we hadn't really thought about (H) hadn't really thought about changes (H) behaviour then became (.) quite an issue, in fact it got, it got completely out of hand

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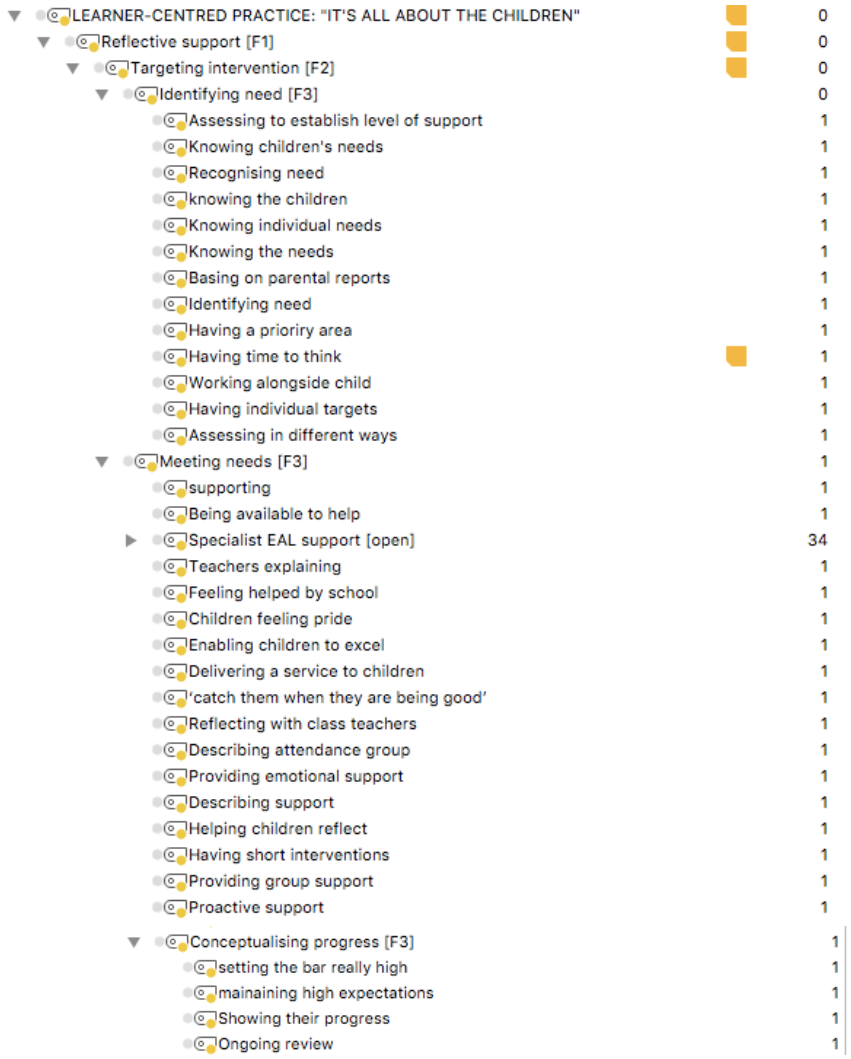
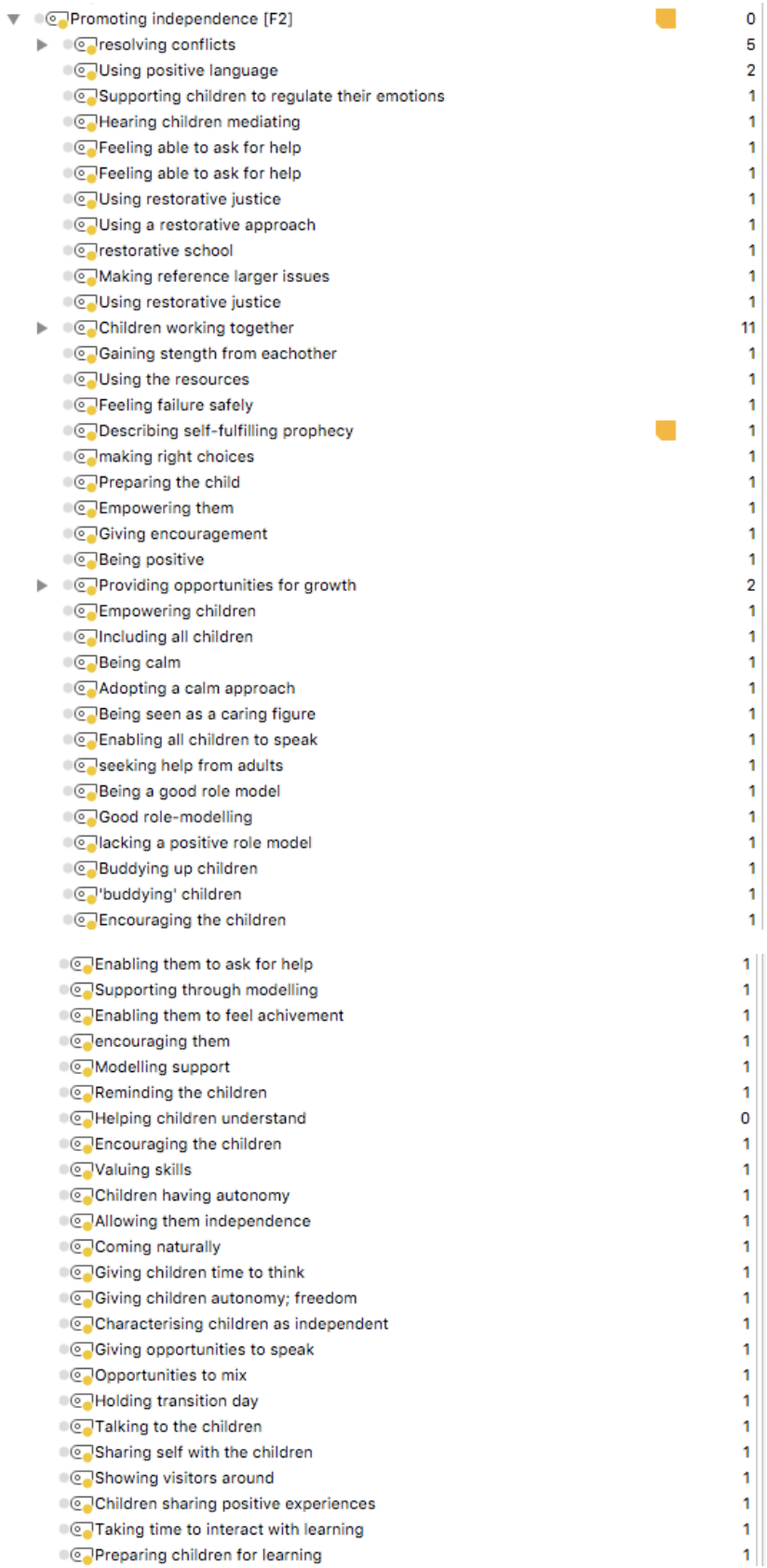
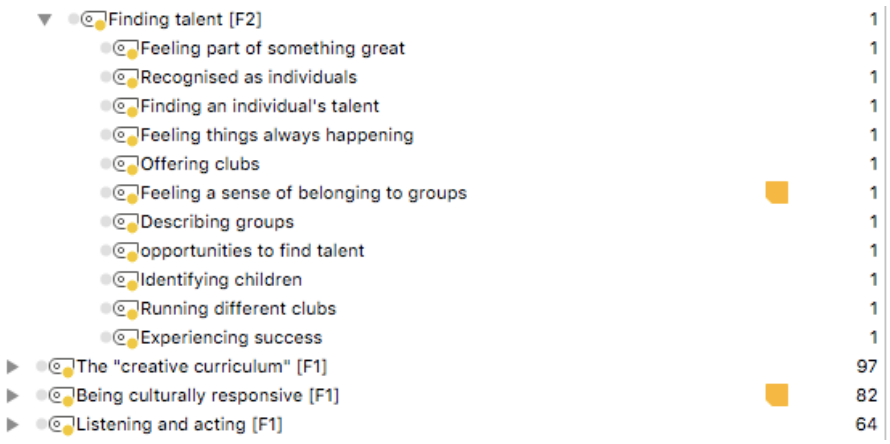
8 K Well the environment, the first thing that I noticed when I came here is the *environment* (H) it's stunning, it's all about the children inside and outside, so my first impression as you do when you visit a school is to walk around and have a feel of the school, that's important to me (H) and that's before this was confirmed, as a secure job, so my idea was just to look around and have a feel of the place (H) so I saw that outside, it was all about the children (H) getting them to interact with the environment in a large scale, so lots of schools do that, but not in the scale that this school does it – a high level of interaction, different sections in the playground (.) and each section has a theme, like (.) for example, a tree section, you know different stumps telling them information, asking them what do they think about trees, how do they identify trees, you know (H) really lovely to see that, in real detail and not just, you know, hop scotch and things like that- and *colourful* things and *creative* things outside (H) and then again it's reflected inside when I walked around the school – [Head Teacher] took the time, and she took the time to really take me around, and I know school head teachers do that (H) but I liked that it (H) she took the time and she spent time telling me the history, what it was like before when she came here and then she gave me a bit of a clip of what she envisaged, what she was gunna to do next as well

Appendix O: Illustration of the open codes that constructed the focused code category of ‘reflective support’




Promoting independence [F2] 0
resolving conflicts 5
Using positive language 2
Supporting children to regulate their emotions 1
Hearing children mediating 1
Feeling able to ask for help 1
Feeling able to ask for help 1
Using restorative justice 1
Using a restorative approach 1
restorative school 1
Making reference larger issues 1
Using restorative justice 1
Children working together 11
Gaining stength from eachother 1
Using the resources 1
Feeling failure safely 1
Describing self-fulfilling prophecy 1
making right choices 1
Preparing the child 1
Empowering them 1
Giving encouragement 1
Being positive 1
Providing opportunities for growth 2
Empowering children 1
Including all children 1
Being calm 1
Adopting a calm approach 1
Being seen as a caring figure 1
Enabling all children to speak 1
seeking help from adults 1
Being a good role model 1
Good role-modelling 1
lacking a positive role model 1
Buddying up children 1
'buddying' children 1
Encouraging the children 1
Enabling them to ask for help 1
Supporting through modelling 1
Enabling them to feel achivement 1
encouraging them 1
Modelling support 1
Reminding the children 1
Helping children understand 0
Encouraging the children 1
Valuing skills 1
Children having autonomy 1
Allowing them independence 1
Coming naturally 1
Giving children time to think 1
Giving children autonomy; freedom 1
Characterising children as independent 1
Giving opportunities to speak 1
Opportunities to mix 1
Holding transition day 1
Talking to the children 1
Sharing self with the children 1
Showing visitors around 1
Children sharing positive experiences 1
Taking time to interact with learning 1
Preparing children for learning 1


Finding talent [F2] 1
Feeling part of something great 1
Recognised as individuals 1
Finding an individual's talent 1
Feeling things always happening 1
Offering clubs 1
Feeling a sense of belonging to groups 1
Describing groups 1
opportunities to find talent 1
Identifying children 1
Running different clubs 1
Experiencing success 1
The "creative curriculum" [F1] 97
Being culturally responsive [F1] 82
Listening and acting [F1] 64

Appendix P: Examples of coded segments for the conceptual category, 'transforming spaces into places'

Code	Coded segments
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]	place and belonging school Claudia_Deputy Head/ SENCO: 32 - 32 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]	Started talking this language (H) and I thought, but that's what we do Shona_Head Teacher: 102 - 102 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\Conceptualising belonging \teachers support belonging	I feel comfortable being in those classrooms is because- it's just that the teachers who work teach us Amy_CH03: 72 - 72 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\Conceptualising belonging \Feeling accepted	when you are with people who accept you for who you are Amy_CH03: 22 - 22 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\Conceptualising belonging \Mutual responsibility	by the people who you work with, the people who are there (H) And you take a bit of responsibility as well I suppose you know, you feel (…) it matters, belonging. Rachel_Literacy/EAL Lead: 26 - 26 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\Conceptualising belonging \Showing respect	show respect Marcel_CH01: 84 - 84 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\Conceptualising belonging \Linking values and belonging	because we bring that ethos, (H) that Christian ethos, but it doesn't maaatter if you are Catholic, Christian, Muslim, Hindu (…) or no faith, you have the same respect and the same values Shona_Head Teacher: 70 - 70 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\Conceptualising belonging \Linking belonging and growth	if you don't belong, I don't think you're able to grow Claudia_Deputy Head/ SENCO: 48 - 48 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and	and that's when we go back to belonging because it's the people that create belonging Claudia_Deputy Head/ SENCO: 68 - 68 (0)

belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\Conceptualising belonging \People creating belonging	
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\Conceptualising belonging \Emphasising the importance of the people	that it's *just* as much about the people (.) as it is about the environment - you can have a wonderful looking environment, but it has no heart and it has no soul Claudia_Deputy Head/ SENCO: 66 - 66 (0) Yeah, that the environment facilitates that (H) but actually, it's like, it's like a church, we have our church building next door but actually at the end of the day it's just a building, if the people weren't there then- Claudia_Deputy Head/ SENCO: 70 - 70 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\Conceptualising belonging \being included	being included Natalie_CH02: 22 - 22 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\Conceptualising belonging \being a part of something	being a part of something Natalie_CH02: 20 - 20 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\Conceptualising belonging \knowing what they want	knowing what they want Karen_Teacher: 113 - 113 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\Conceptualising belonging \Describing structure	it's structured, but it's a routine that they need, and that they just fall into Katie_Family Worker: 28 - 28 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\Conceptualising belonging \Having relationships	you've got (.) you know, relationships Katie_Family Worker: 22 - 22 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F2]\Conceptualising belonging \Feeling safe	you feel safe Katie_Family Worker: 22 - 22 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a	getting involved Penny_TA: 42 - 42 (0)

language for what we do [F3]\Conceptualising belonging \getting involved	
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\Conceptualising belonging \Putting down roots	if you don't have a sense of belonging you can't put down any roots, and if you don't put down any roots you can't grow Claudia_Deputy Head/ SENCO: 48 - 48 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\Conceptualising belonging \Feeling permitted to be every bit of me	can actually be every bit of me Shona_Head Teacher: 70 - 70 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\Conceptualising belonging \feeling at home	feeling at home Shona_Head Teacher: 52 - 52 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\Conceptualising belonging \Belonging is a sense	It is - it's a *sense* Rachel_Literacy/EAL Lead: 28 - 28 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\Finding the language	doing things that were in our head (LAUGH), but suddenly there was a *language* for it Shona_Head Teacher: 102 - 102 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Finding a language for what we do [F3]\finding the language reinforces	once you've got a language for it then, and you're articulating- then it reinforces Shona_Head Teacher: 102 - 102 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Having friendships [F3]\having a best friend	X and X, X was my best friend in year three throughout the whole year of year three. Amy_CH03: 58 - 58 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Having friendships [F3]\Having friends	I'm friends with boys in my class and the girls in my class Amy_CH03: 28 - 28 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A place and belonging school" [F2]\Having	they've all got someone to connect to, Katie_Family Worker: 76 - 76 (0)

friendships [F3]\Having friendships	
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\Belonging to St Francis' [F2]\Liking St Francis'	I like this school Marcel_CH01: 18 - 18 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\Belonging to St Francis' [F2]\Changing the school uniform\Creating an identity	That creates a sort of corporate identity Claudia_Deputy Head/ SENCO: 38 - 38 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\Belonging to St Francis' [F2]\Having friendships [F3]\Having good friends	that I am more friends with Natalie_CH02: 40 - 40 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\Belonging to St Francis' [F2]\Having friendships [F3]\Having many friends	Because I have many friends Marcel_CH01: 36 - 36 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\Belonging to St Francis' [F2]\Having friendships [F3]\everybody will play with you	everybody will play with you Marcel_CH01: 88 - 88 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\Belonging to St Francis' [F2]\Sharing group work	groups that they belong to Katie_Family Worker: 78 - 78 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\Belonging to St Francis' [F2]\Displaying work	work that they have done, Katie_Family Worker: 78 - 78 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\Belonging to St Francis' [F2]\Feeling children are proud of their school	That integrity (.) you know that integrity (.) and they're proud of their school Shona_Head Teacher: 66 - 66 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\Belonging to St Francis' [F2]\Belonging embedded	when I came here I noticed, it's *embedded*, so belonging, it's been embedded Karen_Teacher: 6 - 6 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\Belonging to St Francis' [F2]\Feeling part of the school	"I belong here today, and you know, this is part of my world" sort of thing- Katie_Family Worker: 28 - 28 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\Belonging to St Francis' [F2]\Feeling lifted	through the gate and a lot of the heaviness that's going on outside, gets lifted Katie_Family Worker: 28 - 28 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\Belonging to St Francis' [F2]\Feeling part of a group	It means being able to be in a group where you feel a part of that group. Penny_TA: 22 - 22 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A community	everyone seems to know eachother, Katie_Family Worker: 36 - 36 (0)

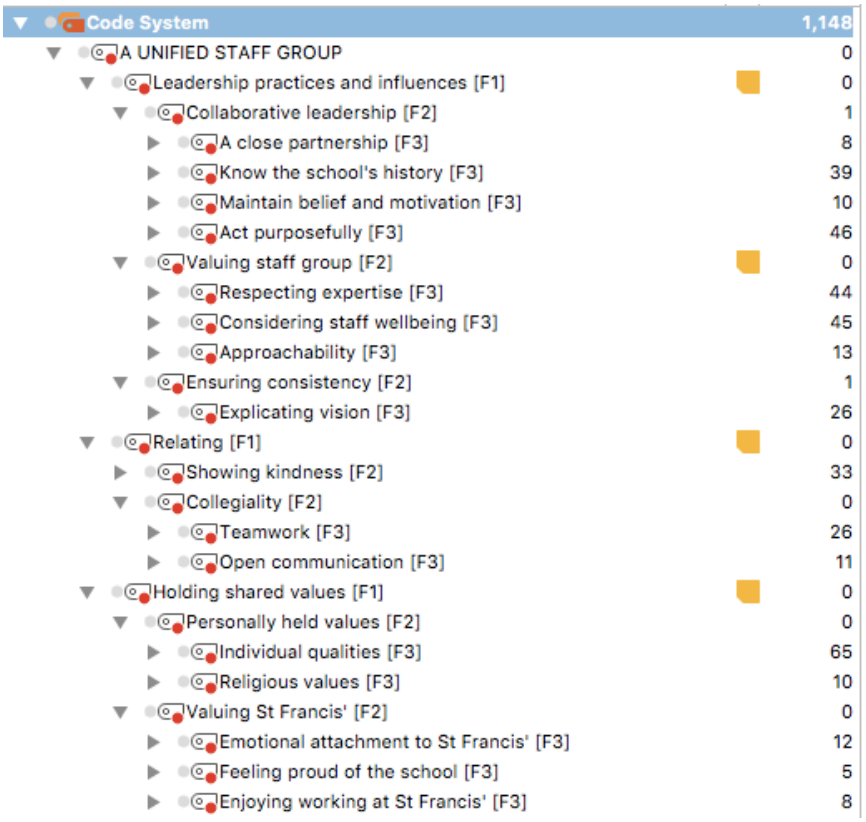
school" [F2]\Knowing eachother	
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A community school" [F2]\describing community school	it's very much a community Katie_Family Worker: 36 - 36 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A community school" [F2]\Describing a 'community school'	So, it's quite a community school, where parents are involved in their children's learning and development. Penny_TA: 83 - 83 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A community school" [F2]\School reflecting the community	reflective of the community Penny_TA: 71 - 71 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A community school" [F2]\School reflecting the community \reflecting the community	reflecting the community Karen_Teacher: 16 - 16 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\"A community school" [F2]\School reflecting the community \reflecting London	I always feel that the school reflects London, Shona_Head Teacher: 196 - 196 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\Identifying as small school [F2]\it is a small school	it is a small school Katie_Family Worker: 36 - 36 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\Having an identity [F1]\Identifying as small school [F2]\we're a small school	we're a small school Shona_Head Teacher: 66 - 66 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\The physical environment [F1]\belonging in classroom	in classrooms Amy_CH03: 70 - 70 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\The physical environment [F1]\Belonging in the playground	The playground (LAUGH) Marcel_CH01: 66 - 66 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\The physical environment [F1]\Having hand-prints of children	hand prints of the children Claudia_Deputy Head/ SENCO: 22 - 22 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\The physical environment [F1]\Putting photographs on walls	photos of the children Katie_Family Worker: 78 - 78 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\The physical environment [F1]\Referencing the Sunshine Room	We've got, this lovely sunshine room Rachel_Literacy/EAL Lead: 40 - 40 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\The physical environment [F1]\Characterising difference between spaces and places	difference between places and spaces Shona_Head Teacher: 102 - 102 (0)

TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\The physical environment [F1]\Belonging in the classroom	classroom Natalie_CH02: 38 - 38 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\The physical environment [F1]\Belonging in the playground	playground Natalie_CH02: 38 - 38 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\The physical environment [F1]\Being created for the child	it's created for the child Karen_Teacher: 50 - 50 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\The physical environment [F1]\it was all about the children	it was all about the children Karen_Teacher: 8 - 8 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\The physical environment [F1]\Building facilitating belonging	that and I think that the building *facilitates* that Claudia_Deputy Head/ SENCO: 68 - 68 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\The physical environment [F1]\learning a lot from "this place"\learning ethos	learning ethos Karen_Teacher: 30 - 30 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\The physical environment [F1]\selecting the quotes	So, the quotes that have been selected, Claudia_Deputy Head/ SENCO: 92 - 92 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\The physical environment [F1]\Interactive environment	getting them to interact with the environment in a large scale, so lots of schools do that, but not in the scale that this school does it – a high level of interaction, high level of different sections in the playground (.) and each section has a theme, like (.) for example, a tree section, you know different stumps telling them information, asking them what do they think about trees, old trees, how do they identify trees, you know (h) really lovely to see that, in real detail and not just, you know, hop scotch and things like that- Karen_Teacher: 8 - 8 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\The physical environment [F1]\it's all about the children inside and outside	it's all about the children inside and outside Karen_Teacher: 8 - 8 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\"It's a feel"[F1]\Experiencing the feeling	I think they would just need to come here (LAUGH) and see what's happening, I don't think it's something you could necessarily see on paper because I think if you just looked at, I mean obviously you could look at the work that the children have been producing, but that doesn't mean, that's not going to give you the sense of (…) how everyone's relating to each other on a day to day basis and what's going on in the classroom I suppose. Rachel_Literacy/EAL Lead: 116 - 116 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\"It's a feel"[F1]\It's a feel.	It's a feel. Rachel_Literacy/EAL Lead: 118 - 118 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\"It's a feel"[F1]\Loving and caring environment	loving and caring Penny_TA: 46 - 46 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\"It's a feel"[F1]\Caring ethos	Yeah, it's extremely caring Rachel_Literacy/EAL Lead: 100 - 100 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES	Like tell everybody to be his friend. He's new and if he doesn't know

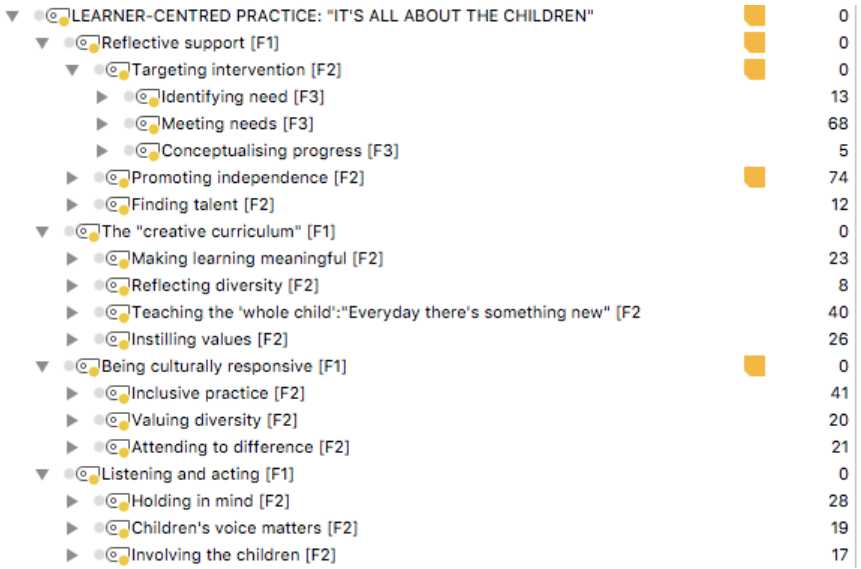
INTO PLACES\"It's a feel"[F1]\Making children feel welcome	English I would help him. Marcel_CH01: 74 - 74 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\"It's a feel"[F1]\making the places comfortable	we wanted it to be a place that people would just feel, yeah, that they wanted to be in (H) that it was comfortable, Shona_Head Teacher: 132 - 132 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\"It's a feel"[F1]\Seeing children feel comfortable	hat the children need to feel comfortable (H) and I saw that they could feel comfortable Karen_Teacher: 44 - 44 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\"It's a feel"[F1]\Recognising responsibility to be a place of security	that's our responsibility as a school to provide that because if we don't then there's no safety net, there's no refuge, there's no place (.) Claudia_Deputy Head/ SENCO: 50 - 50 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\"It's a feel"[F1]\Being a safe place	nurturing, safe environment Karen_Teacher: 86 - 86 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\"It's a feel"[F1]\Referencing interactions	it's how people are spoken to, how people are greeted, how people are encouraged (H) (…) Claudia_Deputy Head/ SENCO: 88 - 88 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\"It's a feel"[F1]\Feeling kindness from arrival\Being shown around the school	They showed me everywhere and they told me where is the library Marcel_CH01: 48 - 48 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\"It's a feel"[F1]\Having a feel for a school	school is to walk around and have a feel of the school, that's important to me Karen_Teacher: 8 - 8 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\"It's a feel"[F1]\it's just a happy place	it's just a happy place Katie_Family Worker: 64 - 64 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\"It's a feel"[F1]\Describing the feeling of the school	I mean you're not the first person to say this, many people who come here say exactly the same thing, oh this is a really lovely school, it just feels right, it feels different (H) and I Claudia_Deputy Head/ SENCO: 86 - 86 (0)
TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\"It's a feel"[F1]\Having a personal feeling	I've worked in a big school and it's, you don't get that personal feeling Rachel_Literacy/EAL Lead: 52 - 52 (0)

Appendix Q: MaxQDA screenshots of the conceptual categories

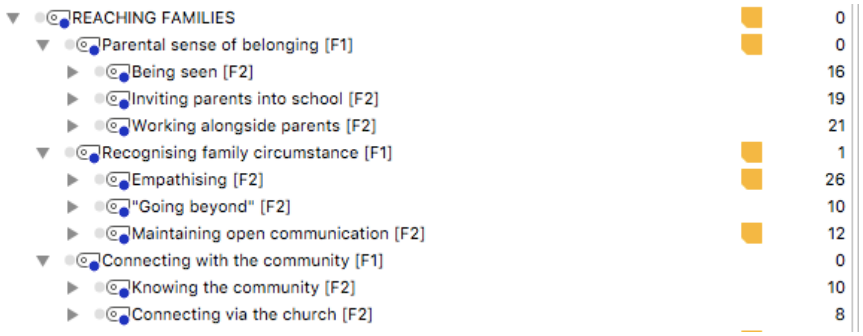
Conceptual category: A unified staff group



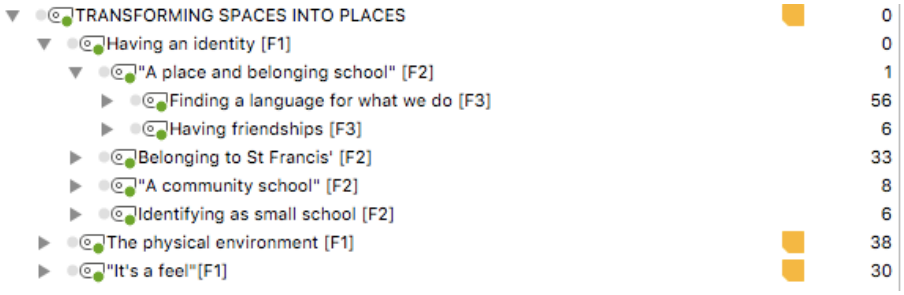
Conceptual category: Learner-centred practice



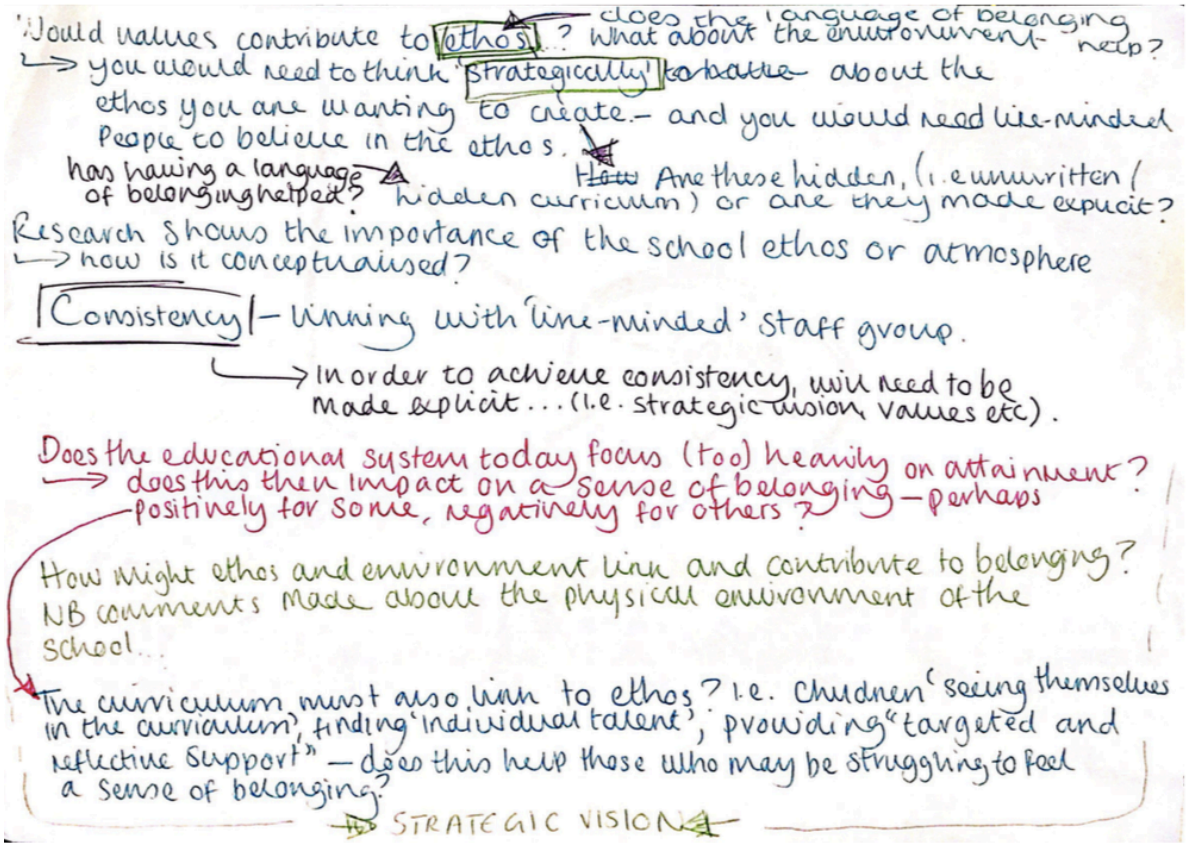
Conceptual category: Reaching families

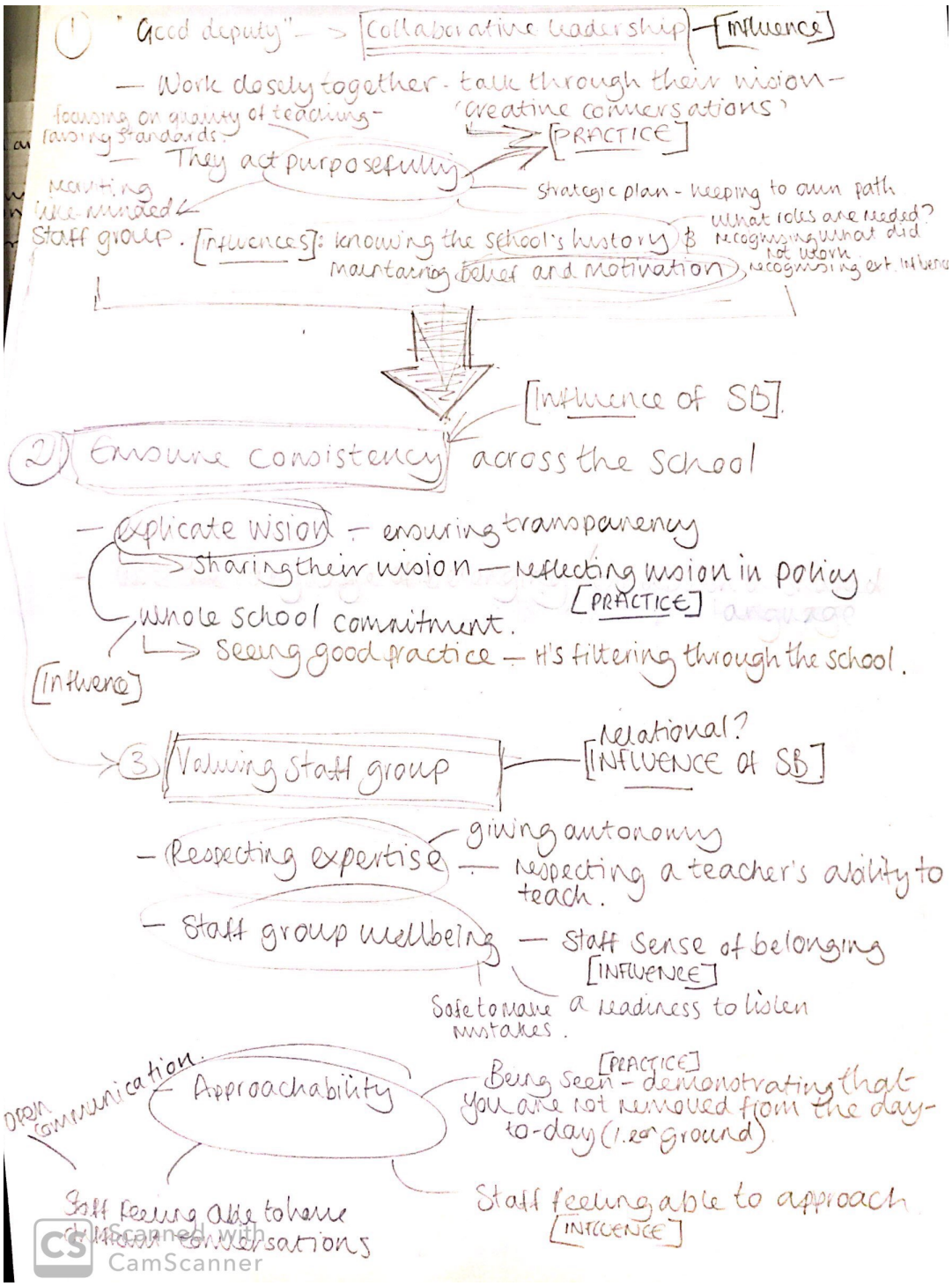


Conceptual category: Transforming spaces into places

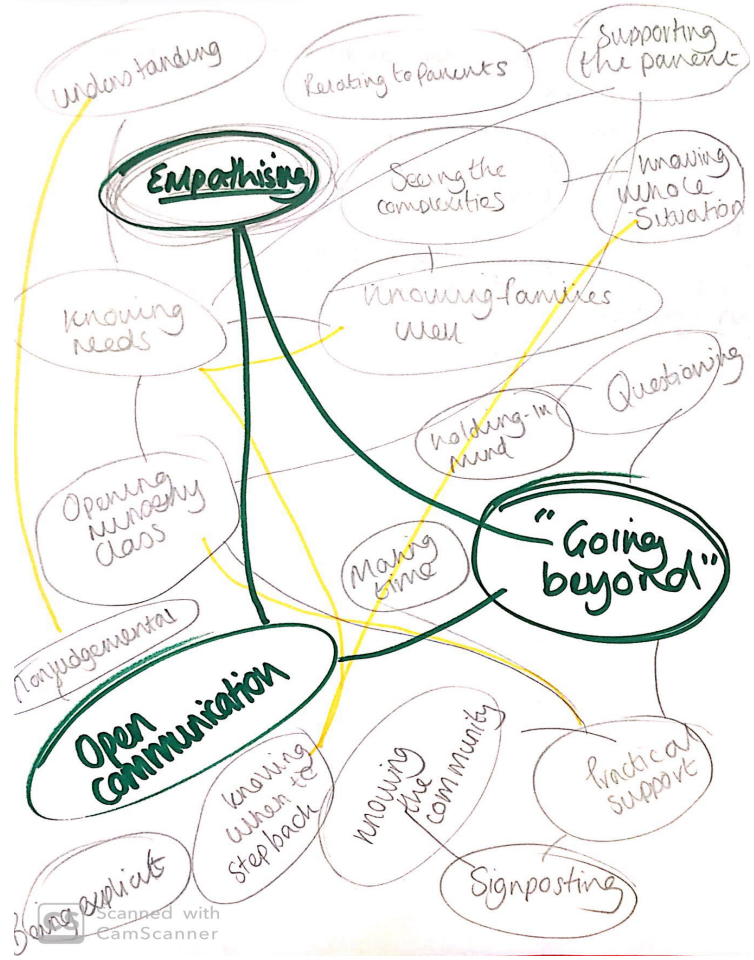


Appendix R: Examples of paper-recorded memos/ diagrams




1 "Good deputy" -> Collaborative leadership [Influence]
— Work closely together - talk through their vision - 'creative conversations'
[PRACTICE]
focusing on quality of teaching - raising standards
— They act purposefully
strategic plan - keeping to own path
recruiting like-minded staff group.
[Influences]: knowing the school's history & what roles are needed? recognising what did not work
maintaining belief and motivation, recognising ext. influence
[Influence of SB]
2 Ensure consistency across the school
— explicate vision - ensuring transparency
sharing their vision — reflecting vision in policy
[PRACTICE]
whole school commitment.
seeing good practice - HT's filtering through the school.
[Influence]
3 Valuing staff group
Relational?
[INFLUENCE of SB]
— Respecting expertise
giving autonomy
respecting a teacher's ability to teach.
— Staff group wellbeing — staff sense of belonging
[INFLUENCE]
Safe to make mistakes.
a readiness to listen
Approachability
[PRACTICE]
Being seen - demonstrating that you are not removed from the day-to-day (i.e. on ground)
Staff feeling able to approach
[INFLUENCE]
Open communication.
Staff feeling able to have
conversations
Scanned with CamScanner


Collaborative learning
Targeting Intervention
Attendance group.
Small group teaching.
Meeting individual Needs
how is progress Measured? Monitored?
Family contact
teacher's Capacity (time) to think
Responding to high level of EAL in the School
Reflective Support
experiencing Success and pride.
Value Belonging.
Clubs...
take risks w/learning
Safe to fail
preparing the child for learning.
EAL Support
finding talent
outside speakers.
role Modelling
meta-cog strats.
coaching
mentality
Collaborative learning
Recognised as individuals
Opportunities for growth
Independence
empowering autonomy & freedom
asking for help.
Enabling Children to Speak.
Scanned with CamScanner


understanding
Relating to Parents
Supporting the parent
Empathising
Seeing the complexities
knowing whole Situation
knowing needs
knowing families well
Questioning
holding in mind
Opening nursery class
"Going beyond"
Making time
Non-judgemental
Open communication
knowing when to step back
knowing the community
Practical support
Signposting
Scanned with CamScanner

Appendix S: Examples of memos recorded on MaxQDA

Memo 16

Document: Shona_Head Teacher

The joy at being head teacher of this school - compassion and excitement about the role. Wanting to instill values, wanting to honour the integrity of the children in the school - wanting to nurture their characters and creativity. Wanting the children to be proud of the school - believing that they are. I guess this also links to sense of belonging - NB definition that refers to having pride in one's school - although, in order for them to feel proud of their school, they need to feel that they belong in that school - they are a part of the community.

Strategic vision

Code: A UNIFIED STAFF GROUP\Leadership practices and influences [F1]

Strategic thinking at a leadership, group, and individual level? i.e. leadership decisions (personal values, recruitment, policy, valued practice, language of belonging?) - working as a 'trickling' effect that then impacts upon group level practice - NB if wellbeing of staff is considered - they experience feeling valued - a sense of belonging - having more capacity to teach and think about the children - impacting on their pupils' sense of belonging?

Purposefully recruiting like-minded people

Code: A UNIFIED STAFF GROUP\Leadership practices and influences [F1]\Collaborative leadership [F2]\Act purposefully [F3]\Purposefully recruiting like-minded people

What is the meaning of like-minded people, and how is this known I wonder? Similar values and belief systems? Strong theme of 'caring' and compassionate qualities - child-centred practice "it's all about the children" (Teacher interview)

Targeted support

Code: LEARNER-CENTRED PRACTICE: "IT'S ALL ABOUT THE CHILDREN"\Reflective support [F1]

I am interested in how additional support delivered in this way (i.e. taking children out of the classroom for support interventions) impacts on their sense of belonging to the class group? This method of providing additional support does appear to be the norm in a number of schools - and I wonder how else it may be addressed - but does this impact on a child's sense of belonging - does accessing this additional support impact upon a child's sense of belonging? NB own personal experience with T (brother) - this is likely to be influencing my views here - but I still feel it is a key area for consideration when thinking about belonging.

Describing the feeling of the school

Code: TRANSFORMING SPACES INTO PLACES\"It's a feel"[F1]\Describing the feeling of the school

What is this about? How is 'the feel' of a school created? How can I capture this - spend more time 'being' in the school, 'observing' in the school? This seems to link again to a strategic vision - as Claire said, it is not about "throwing things up and seeing what comes down" everything is "purposeful". It feels as though 'the feel' is believed to be combination of various things, which are strategic in nature.

Reflective support

Code: LEARNER-CENTRED PRACTICE: "IT'S ALL ABOUT THE CHILDREN"\Reflective support [F1]\Promoting independence [F2]

Consider code name change from 'Listening to children' - is it just a matter of 'listening', is it more about *understanding* children - understanding their needs, understanding what is important to them, understanding what they want from their learning, their school — does this help them connect to the school and value the school? Reflecting?

Involving families

Code: REACHING FAMILIES

This code seems to capture more than just '*involving* families' - Katie (FW) refers to *knowing* families, and families feeling comfortable about coming into the school - this feels more like a process or practice of reaching out to families… have therefore renamed code to 'reaching families' to encompass the practices of inviting parents in, holding coffee mornings, sharing information, and feeling able to have difficult conversations (linking different participant views).

Memo 54

Document: Shona_Head Teacher

The journey of St Francis' feels important - I guess this links to every school being an individual entity - having its own story. Perhaps recognising the school's narrative is important? Having a connection to the history of the school?

Memo 84

Document: Claudia_Deputy Head/ SENCO

Claudi described the practices which enable the ethos to be explicit - this involved maintaining open communication via staff meetings, but also in terms of having processes of monitoring and evaluation - accountability - with regards to teaching and learning, identifying need and targeting support. Claudia described how everyone had to be on board with the vision, and make changes where necessary - however, as was referenced by Shona, Claudia implied a process of dismantling - having to make difficult decisions about members of staff who were not on board with the vision. Claudia acknowledged the difficulty with regards to some decisions made, but explained that the education of the children came first stating "it's not a dress rehearsal" - she explained that they had to do what was necessary - shared strategy (between Shona and Claudia)

Memo 89

Document: Marcel_CH01

Learning English - how was this supported by members of staff? Having a shared language - being able to communicate with staff, form friendships, access learning - all links to feeling a sense of belonging in school. How is this addressed? NB high proportion of children with EAL - does this support feelings of belongingness?

Memo 90

Document: Marcel_CH01

Misinterpretation of 'belonging' and 'school belonging' - is the language of belonging shared with the children? Does it need to be, or is it more of a sentiment? Is it important for the adults to

have a language of belonging in order to create an environment which promotes belonging? Perhaps it is less important for the children to have a language of belonging? Something to explore further.

Memo 99

Document: Rachel_Literacy/ EAL Lead

What is it about the environment? NB my own experience was of feeling welcome, a feeling of belonging - it is hard to articulate how this is achieved as it is more of a sentiment… it seems as though it is an accumulation of a number of different influences and practices, all of which promote this sentiment of belonging. The environment itself is colourful, authentic (not just for show), you get a sense of the children (presentation boards etc. are made by the children) - it is not all perfectly finished, but you feel the children. Authenticity keeps coming to mind.

Memo 103

Document: Katie_Family Worker

I wonder what is meant by this? What does it mean to be an 'restorative school' – to the adults working in the school, and the children? How might this link to belonging? It feels as though it might link to ethos and values? It seems quite embedded as it has been mentioned by each adult participant so far - does this promote a consistency of approach, which the deputy HT spoke of? It perhaps also links to the promotion of independence. My understanding of 'restorative approaches' is that they are part of the broader ethos or culture of a school, and promotes mutually respectful relationships. The pupils are given more responsibility for decision making and problem solving. So I guess this also links to *listening* to the child, and seeing the whole individual. Being a restorative *school* also speaks to how it is embedded and in the day-to-day of the school i.e. it is practices in everyday interactions… it must also mean that the adults must engage in this way of relating too, and model for the children.

Memo 104

Document: Katie_Family Worker

Knowing the families feels really important — how is this achieved in this school? It feels as though having a family worker, a 'link' person seems like a good place to start — someone who is a familiar and consistent point of contact. Katie also describes how knowing the families means she knows how to speak to them about subjects which may be difficult to hear and to talk about (e.g. SEN) and her role as SENCO assistant compliments her role of family worker.

Recognising family circumstance [F1]

Code: REACHING FAMILIES \Recognising family circumstance [F1]

The practice of seeing and empathising, but also responding to the need - showing that you have seen and are empathising with situations - this promotes the development of trust, and sustains open lines of communication.

Being culturally responsive [F1]

Code: LEARNER-CENTRED PRACTICE: "IT'S ALL ABOUT THE CHILDREN"\Being culturally responsive [F1]

This seems particularly important at St Francis' for the promotion of belonging - incorporates inclusive practice, attending to difference and reflecting the community in the school - importance of "children seeing themselves" in the curriculum and in the staff group.

Appendix T: Letter of ethical approval

The Tavistock and Portman NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

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

Tel: 020 8938 2699
https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/

Sinead Walker

By Email

6 August 2018

Dear Ms Walker,

Re: Trust Research Ethics Application

Title: A grounded theory to describe what mechanisms promote a sense of school belonging for pupils in a primary school context.

Thank you for submitting your updated Research Ethics documentation. I am pleased to inform you that subject to formal ratification by the Trust Research Ethics Committee your 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.

Yours sincerely,

Best regards,

Paru Jeram
Secretary to the Trust Research Degrees Subcommittee
T: 020 938 2699
E: academicquality@tavi-Port.nhs.uk

Cc: Course Lead, Supervisors, Research Tutors

Appendix U: Recruitment letter (staff)

The Tavistock and Portman NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

Dear Member of Staff,

As a doctoral student on the Child, Community and Educational Psychology programme at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, and currently on placement at the [placement borough], I am conducting research into what influences and practices are thought to promote a sense of belonging for children in your primary school. I am looking for expressions of interest to participate in this research study.

Inside each of us is a deep desire to be rooted and to belong. Schools are one of the few social institutions which can create that sense of place and belonging for children and young people. There is research to suggest that school belonging impacts positively on areas such as academic attainment, attendance, and emotional wellbeing. However, if the reverse is true, an individual's motivation to attend school and engage with the process of learning is negatively affected, having implications for their future outcomes.

Place and belonging matter to all individuals. Education policies around the world stress the need for more *inclusive* schools, yet it seems we need to move beyond inclusive 'ideas', towards more practical implementation at a whole school level, in order to foster a sense of *belonging* for all children and young people.

Your school has been selected to participate in this research study, and I am looking to explore with school staff and members of the school community, what influences and practices they believe promote a sense of school belonging for children in school. Involvement would include participating in an individual meeting with me (lasting approximately 45-60 minutes); we would meet in a quiet room in your school, at a time that is convenient for you, where we can discuss your views.

I have attached an information sheet which provides further details of the research study. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about this research project. I am available to chat either over the phone [xxxx] or via email [xxxx]

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this letter and for considering taking part in this research.

Sinéad Walker

Educational Psychologist in Training

Appendix V: Consent form (staff)

The Tavistock and Portman NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

Title: A constructivist grounded theory of the influences and practices that are thought to promote a sense of belonging in a primary school context

I have the read the information sheet relating to the above programme of research in which I have been asked to participate, and I have been given a copy to keep. The research has been explained to me, and I understand the procedures in which I will be involved. I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about the information I have been given.

□ Please tick box

I am participating voluntarily, and I give permission for my interview to be audio-recoded, and for the researcher to use quotations from my interview in the research thesis, maintaining anonymity.

□ Please tick box

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, either prior to commencement, or whilst I am participating. I also understand that I can withdraw permission to use my interview before data transcription and analysis (end of autumn term, 2018), without disadvantage to myself.

□ Please tick box

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by anonymising my identity, and other identifiable features.

□ Please tick box

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS) ……

Participant's Signature ……

Date: ……..

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS) ……..

Researcher's Signature……

Appendix W: Focused search strategy for second literature review (chapter 5)

Conceptual category/ focused code	Search terms *(based on further reading and hypotheses relating to conceptual categories)*
A unified staff group*/ leadership practice*	1. School improvement; school leadership practice; school transformation 2. Communities of practice; transformational leadership theory
Learner-centred practice*/ inclusive practice; the 'creative curriculum'; listening and acting*	1. Inclusive practice/ cultural diversity AND belonging 2. Creative curriculum; learner-centred practice AND belonging 3. EAL; English as and additional language AND belonging
Reaching families*/ connecting with the community; responding to family circumstance*	1. Social justice; community cohesion AND leadership practices 2. Transformative leadership AND school 3. Ecological systems theory AND belonging 4. Parental engagement AND belonging