An exploration of the views and experiences of Designated Teachers in helping to create an Attachment Aware School

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Abstract

Past research indicates the importance of attachment figures beyond the primary carer. This is especially relevant to children and young people (CYP) who have grown up in the care system and are more likely to have attachment needs due to numerous carers and multiple patterns of attachment formed. Attachment Aware schools (AAS) aim to meet attachment needs by creating safe, supportive nurturing environments.

This qualitative, exploratory study aims to shed light on the process of creating an AAS. Five Designated Teachers (DT)s were interviewed retrospectively a year after joining the AAS award (AASA) project. DTs from primary schools based in Southeast England were interviewed remotely or in person. Interview transcripts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to provide insights into the lived experience of each DT. Individual and shared themes were identified; Five superordinate themes were identified: 'Defining features of the AASA', 'Motivations to join the AASA', 'Factors that facilitated the success of the project', 'Potential barriers to the success of the project' and 'What does change look like?'.

This research provides insight into defining the features of AAS, what helps to create systemic change in schools, as well as insights into the changes created from whole school training based on trauma, attachment and action research focus. This research offers first-hand insights into an area of limited study and has wider applicability to other sectors. Future research could explore the perspectives of service users to strengthen the validity of the approach.

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Abbreviations

ACEs	Adverse Childhood Experiences
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ARC	Attachment Research Community
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
AAS	Attachment Aware Schools
AASA	Attachment Aware Schools Award
BPS	British Psychological Society
CALM	**C**alm down by learning relaxation strategies **A**ctions that will reduce anxieties such as facing fears **L**isten to scary thoughts and change them into coping thoughts **M**anaging future problems to prevent relapse
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CLA /LAC/PLAC/ CEC	Child(ren) Looked After/Looked After Child(ren) / Previously Looked After Child(ren) / Care Experienced Child(ren)
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease-19
CYP	Children and Young People/ Child or Young Person
CiC	Child in Care
DfE	Department for Education
DoH	Department of Health
DTs	Designated Teachers
EC	Emotion Coaching
EP	Educational Psychologist

GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HCPC	The Health and Care Professionals Council
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LA	Local Authority
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PACE	Playful Acceptance Curiosity Empathy
PPG	Pupil Premium Grant
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PSHE	Personal Social Health and Economic
SATs	Standard Assessment Tests
SDQ	Strengths Difficulties Questionnaire
SEAL	Social Emotional Aspects of Learning
SEMH	Social Emotional and Mental Health
SENCo	Special Educational Needs and (Disabilities) Coordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SGO	Special Guardianship Order
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
TA	Teaching Assistant
Trauma-Informed Practice	TIP
TREC	Tavistock and Portman Research Ethical Committee
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America

1 Introduction

"Beneath every behaviour, there is a feeling. And beneath each feeling, there is a need and when we meet that need, rather than focus on the behaviour, we begin to deal with the cause, not the symptom." Ashleigh Warner

1.1 Overview

This chapter aims to provide a brief overview of the historical, national and local context to offer a framework for the role of Designated Teachers (DTs). The role and responsibilities of the DT will be defined with particular regard to Care Experienced Children (CEC) and their associated needs. The chapter will then identify critical theories relevant to their work within Attachment Aware Schools (AAS) and consider the impact of the research during the COVID-19 pandemic and the possible influential factors this may have had on aspects of the research. Lastly, the chapter will outline the role of AAS in responding to trauma and attachment needs.

1.2 Historical and National Contexts

Attitudes towards discipline and behaviour have been shaped over time since formal schooling began during the Victorian era. It was not until 1987 that corporal punishments were finally abolished in all state schools (Copley, 2019), signifying a significant change in the way behaviour and discipline were thought about. From a historical perspective, the British education system has been built on systems of rewards and sanctions in response to children's behaviour, with children commonly gaining rewards for following rules and sanctions when they are not followed.

Nowadays, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) has been responsible for inspecting educational providers and measuring standards. Ofsted continues to revise guidelines for schools with recommended advice for responding to behaviour. What is considered good practice changes over time and there is a mixed picture of data according to what constitutes good behaviour. However, past research suggests defining poor behaviour is not straightforward either (Beaman et al., 2007; Cameron, 1998; Watkins & Wagner, 2000). Nevertheless, schools continue to use recommendations from the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted for guidance and recommendations for practice. Some schools in the UK implement strict behaviour policies based on zero-tolerance approaches which take a blanket approach to respond to behaviour within their settings. This means that students who are perceived as breaking school rules can be excluded from school. This may be an internal exclusion, or for a fixed period. Recent research by Reynolds (2021) suggests schools are notoriously poor at monitoring the frequency and duration students may be in an internal exclusion for or if any have any additional needs, which may be contributing to the behaviour displayed.

The zero-tolerance policy approach was originally derived from the American 'Gun-Free School Act' (1994), which was devised to respond to students bringing guns or weapons into schools. Critics have noted that these policies are designed to 'punish all offences severely no matter how minor', (Skiba & Peterson, 1999, p.24) and can be 'harsh and automatic, with seemingly little consideration given to individual circumstance and to teaching children about fairness, justice and common sense' (Levick, 2000). A system based on zero tolerance is likely to create an environment of intolerance within a punitive system. Punitive approaches can be regarded as

those based on behaviourist principles, such as zero tolerance, sanctions and rewards approaches, which tend to focus on the symptoms of behaviour rather than the underlying causes.

The most recent governmental guidance for headteachers on managing behaviour (DfE, 2022) continues to advocate an approach based on sanctions and rewards with the emphasis continuing to be on behaviour. However, the advice concerning exclusions recognises the merits of a restorative approach and the need to 'unpack problems that provide context to behaviour' (p.45). The report also recognises the value of a whole school approach. However, there is no recognition of attachment or trauma needs throughout the guidance. Similarly, The Initial Teacher Training Core Context Framework (DfE, 2019) and Behaviour Toolkit summary, have no mention of attachment or trauma, although there are some references to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Mental Health needs.

The Timpson Review (2019b) indicates that students who show the highest level of behavioural needs are those with SEND, such as those with speech and language difficulties, poorer social skills, autism, as well as those who are looked after by the Local Authority (LA). It is these children and young people (CYP) who are most disproportionately and adversely affected by such approaches and at higher risk of exclusions (Giroux, 2003; Losen et al., 2014; Skiba & Knesting, 2002) with CYP in the UK ten times more likely to be excluded than in any other part of Europe (Tillson & Oxley 2020).

Guidance from Bennett (2017) recommends schools create a culture that is calm and has clear behaviour policies in place, based on a system of rewards and sanctions. Approaches based on rewards and sanctions may have some success at managing behaviour, however, these systems fail to consider other possible reasons

behind behaviour and therefore neglect to recognise key aspects of children's social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs, which are now required to be supported according to the revised SEND Code of Practice (2015). Zero-tolerance approaches are at odds with government guidance, which appears more nuanced and advises caution against the use of temporary or permanent exclusion except in more extreme cases (DfE, 2022b).

Behaviour in schools continues to be an area of priority, a common concern for teachers and a key reason for leaving the profession (DfE, 2022b). AAS aim to offer alternative ways of responding to behaviour than those based on behaviourist principles, which disproportionally affect CYP who have SEND, attachment needs or past trauma. AAS aim to respond to the causes of behaviour. The failure to recognise the reason behind behaviours is likely to lead to higher levels of exclusions (The Rees Centre, 2020).

When considering similar systemic approaches to supporting the well-being of CYP, past research provides insight into some of the ways schools can effectively respond to meet the needs of CYP. These involve adhering to eight key principles:

1. Ensuring the involvement of SLT

2. Diversity is valued and respected and reflected in the school ethos

3. CYP are supported to understand their feelings and take responsibility for their mental health

4. Staff are able to identify and support CYP

5. CYP's voice is included in decision-making

6. Parents and carers are encouraged to support their child's mental health and well-being.

7. Staff are trained to support their well-being.

8. Monitoring and evaluation systems are in place to effectively monitor performance and evidence impact.

These principles by Demkowicz and Humphrey (2019) provide implications that can be applied to schools and wider systems.

1.3 Trauma-Informed Practice and the Role of the Attachment-Aware School

AAS are relatively new to the United Kingdom (UK), having originally arisen from the United States of America where they are more commonly referred to as trauma-informed schools or trauma-sensitive schools. Trauma-informed practice (TIP) may also be used to describe AAS schools using the same ethos.

Research by Felitti et al. (1998) suggests that the prevalence of trauma-related experiences is higher than previously thought, which sheds light on the occurrence and impact on long-term health (Felitti et al.,1998). The occurrence of trauma was measured by the researchers using 'Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which refers to potentially traumatic events that may have occurred in a person's life. The most common ten ACEs are:

Emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, physical neglect, emotional neglect, parental separation, witnessing domestic violence, parental substance abuse, mental illness, and parental imprisonment. Experience of ACEs can potentially continue to impact the health of children as they develop throughout their lives, this can disrupt development and cause social, emotional and cognitive needs unless appropriate

support is implemented (Bellis et al., 2016; Felitti et al., 1998). Research in the UK suggests that 47 per cent of 18–69-year-olds in England have experienced at least one ACE (Bellis et al., 2014), with London having some of the highest levels (Public Health England, 2016). However, not all children will be similarly affected by the same experience of trauma, possibly depending on the ability to process their emotions. When considering the needs of CYP within a school context, Bergin and Bergin (2009) suggest a need for clear descriptions of what staff may see, to be able to recognise the behaviour. Thus, there is growing recognition of the need to support trauma:

> *'Trauma-informed practice acknowledges the need to see beyond the individually presenting behaviour to ask what does this person need?' rather than 'What is wrong with this person?'* (Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, 2020)

Trauma-informed practice, therefore, aims not to 'treat' the individual per se, which could potentially re-traumatise them but instead aims to address the barriers they experience. Key principles of this approach are safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural consideration (Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, 2020).

Moreover, there is a growing awareness amongst professionals and educators of the need to train staff on the impact of trauma and attachment and to adopt whole school approaches to policies and practice to support them (National Institute for Health & Care Excellence (NICE), 2015; Rose et al., 2016). AAS aim to respond to these needs, founded on humanist principles by emphasising a nurturing, attuned relational approach. They aim to use psychology to understand the developmental needs of CYPs' social, emotional, neurological and behavioural needs. Moreover,

they aim to recognise the link between relationships and the impact which this can have on CYP's SEMH, and attachment needs.

AAS approaches are likely to vary between schools, boroughs and counties within the UK and are likely to be based on the practice and guidance from the LA (Kelly et al., 2020). There are no official statistics regarding the prevalence of AAS, however, schools are beginning to recognise the role they can play in meeting the needs of CYP who have experienced trauma or who may have attachment needs such as Children Looked After (CLA) or Children who have been Previously Looked After (PLAC). AAS aims to address trauma and attachment needs by introducing a system that is responsive to the needs of CEC and other vulnerable groups within the education system. AAS offer a support system which is reflexive and responsive to children requiring support. Social, emotional and neurological needs can be met by boosting resilience and minimising risk factors. Limited research in the area of AAS highlights a gap in the exploration of how the principles of AAS may support CEC and other vulnerable groups. Schools may query why they should consider training to become an AAS instead of carrying out interventions within schools. DTs found that in-house approaches can be useful in aiding conversations and topics around mental health, well-being and other social needs. This may for example offer targeted support through key staff delivering interventions by nurture groups or Emotional Literacy Support Assistants. These approaches offered support with social-emotional learning and building on emotional literacy skills. However, these are targeted interventions that are offered to a limited number of children with a high level of need (NurtureUK, 2006).

In contrast, AAS reflect wider systemic changes that encompass a school-wide approach, whereby the system in place is ready to respond to the needs of CYP and the local community by committing to understanding their needs, which is reflected within the school's policies, staff pedagogy, and ultimately its treatment of CYP.

By participating in an AAS approach the school is committing to systemic changes. Parker et al. (2016) note that an AAS approach reflects a humanistic, relational framework within a pyramid support system that promotes universal and targeted support depending on the level of need. The school is committing to taking an active and arguably preventative approach to respond to trauma and attachment needs rather than a reactive approach. This impacts the way schools look at and respond to behaviours within their environment that builds on a strengths-based approach. Emotion Coaching (EC) is a key component of responding to emotional dysregulation of CYP. Amongst other researchers, Gus et al. (2015) found positive outcomes from using this approach such as improvement in cognition, learning and attention, improvement in academic outcomes, resilience and emotional stability.

Further research in this area has been shown to produce successful outcomes, such as an increase in attendance rates, progression of attainment, and improvement in exam results. One study by the Timpson Programme, in collaboration with the Rees Centre, Oxford University (2020), evaluated the implementation of attachment and trauma awareness training, within 300 schools in England, over 5 years. They examined the impact of the project by measuring attainment, progress, attendance and exclusions from school. The majority of primary schools involved (24 out of 33) saw an improvement, despite a national overall decline in attendance. Eight out of fourteen secondary schools also saw improvements. Other noticeable changes were

observed in the way staff approached and recognised behavioural needs. Qualitative feedback noted trusting relationships and calmer atmospheres within their schools. This large-scale study suggests encouraging results for this approach, although, it has not offered insights into why a minority of schools did not see the same levels of progress.

1.4 Terminology

Throughout this thesis, the terms AAS and Attachment Aware Schools Award (AASA) will be used. The term AAS will refer to schools that have undergone training and so now use an attachment-based framework to respond to CYP with trauma and attachment-based needs.

Whereas the term AASA will be used to refer to the project that this researcher was directly involved with. This term therefore refers to the process of becoming an AAS and which therefore aims to consider the changes that have taken place during this time which contribute to the final AASA.

1.5 Local Context

The research carried out for this thesis explored the views and experiences of five DTs from primary schools who participated in the pilot AASA project, which was in partnership with a Virtual School and the Educational Psychology Service (EPS). The EPS was situated across three boroughs in the Southeast of England and is a not-for-profit organisation funded by the local council. The boroughs are predominately situated within high socioeconomic backgrounds (Office for National

Statistics, 2021). The research tracked the first year of the AASA which was carried out from September 2020 to July 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of the pandemic on schools at that time meant that during the year, AASA training was mostly delivered virtually to schools. At this time schools were experiencing periods of lockdown, which meant teaching staff needed to adapt to working remotely with children via online learning platforms, for the first time. Within communities, families were experiencing heightened stress due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic such as bereavement, illness and additional caring responsibilities, as well as increases in mental health needs. The AASA aimed to provide a supporting structure to schools to meet the unprecedented demands they faced at this time as well as to support and reintegrate children back into schools.

The EPS supported schools choosing to opt-in to the AASA project by providing whole-school training on trauma-informed practice and EC, as well as individual support from educational psychologists (EPs) via termly goal-focused coaching sessions. Schools carried out audits to identify key areas of development such as staff knowledge of trauma and attachment, and consideration of how the environment could be developed to support CYP needs. Schools involved in the project focused on an area of 'action research' they wished to develop, which included reviewing their school's behaviour policy to understand how it may impact CYP with trauma or attachment needs.

1.6 The Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher

The role and responsibilities of DTs were set out in 'The Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for Looked after Children' (DfCSF, 2009), to support the

SEMH and academic needs of CLA and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC).

The Department for Education, (DfE) (2018a) sets out the statutory requirements for

schools to meet the needs of CLA and PLAC, which includes adopted children and

children who are under Special Guardianship Orders (SGO). A SGO is made by a

family court and places a CYP to live with someone other than their parents on a

long-term basis, although the family may retain parental rights. Educational settings

have a legal responsibility under sections 20(4) and 20A(4) of the Children and

Young Persons Act (2008) and are required to have a DT in place by 2025 to

support their needs.

1.7 Definition of Child(ren) Looked After

According to the Children Act 1989, a CLA is any child who is in the care of the LA or

who has been in the care of the LA for a continuous period of more than 24

hours. The child is likely to be at risk of, or subject to significant harm. A care order

may be granted either by court order or with parental consent. 64,470 children were

in care ten years ago. This number has steadily increased, with the latest

government figures stating that 80,080 children are currently in care within England

(DfE, 2020). When considering the long-term outcomes of CLA, recent research

(DfE, 2020) suggests that CLA are more likely to have low attainment levels, to be

excluded from school, are at a higher risk of mental health needs and are more at

risk of death or imprisonment than any other group.

For the purposes of this thesis, the term Care Experienced Children (CEC) will be

used to encompass all children who are or have been looked after, as they are likely

to present with similar difficulties. As one adoptive parent states, "issues do not go

away when a child is adopted" (Timpson Review, DfE 2019b, p.91), suggesting early experiences continue to affect children after they have been adopted or removed from the family home. However, some parts of this thesis may refer specifically to CLA (children looked after), PLAC (previously looked after children) or SGO (special guardianship orders) as this will be specific to this population of children.

1.8 Researcher Positionality

I became interested in attachment theory by being introduced to key theorists whilst studying at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. During my time on placement in Child Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), I had the opportunity to support a young mother who was a care leaver by providing support to her and her son, who was displaying attachment-related behaviour. This experience helped me to understand the relevance of the theory and to explain the underlying needs driving the behaviour.

 As a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) on placement at the Educational Psychology Service (EPS), I had the opportunity to be involved in the AASA project by acting as a coach and by delivering training on theory relating to trauma and attachment as well as developing practice through the use of EC training. I discussed with the Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP) how I may be able to provide useful insight into the training program and could help to understand systemic changes in the schools through the insights of staff closely involved in the project. Further discussions were also had with the leading senior EP who was involved in developing the project as well as the Head of the Virtual School. After discussions with these key stakeholders, this research project was approved.

1.9 Theoretical Perspectives

1.9.1 Attachment Theory

Attachment theory was first theorised by John Bowlby and further developed by Mary Ainsworth (Ainsworth and Bowlby 1991; Bowlby 1951,1969,1988). Attachment theory has developed over time by key theorists such as Bowlby (1951,1969,1988), Ainsworth (1973) Ainsworth and Wittig (1969) Steele (2004) Geddes (2006). Bowlby's theories on attachment have helped to explain the developmental needs arising such as proximity seeking to caregivers (often during this time referred to as the mother figure) as a way of aiding chances of survival during vulnerable stages of infancy and development. In Bowlby's early work *Attachment and Loss Volume 1* (1969), he set out how neonates have an innate instinct to seek and respond to human interaction, for safety and security which will increase their chances of survival. Bowlby conceptualised aspects of his theory based on Lorenz's (1935, as cited in Hoffman & DePaulo, 1977) ethological research on imprinting behaviour in ducks and goslings as a way to understand attachment needs as a mechanism for survival. This led Bowlby to similarly consider a 'critical period' for early attachments to be formed. His work was also informed by infants deprived of the ability to bond due to being separated whilst admitted to the hospital and the effect this had on their attachment behaviour.

The caregiver can be regarded as a 'secure base' from which the infant explores the world. Bowlby argues that these early childhood experiences shape a CYP's attachment and suggests that without access to loving relationships, the child is likely to have difficulty forming and maintaining loving relationships (Bowlby,1969). It is theorised that the child may put up defensive barriers which are then transferred to

other relationships as a means of self-preservation so as not to become hurt again (Bowlby, 1944).

Bowlby's theory on attachment arose during World War II, a time when many children became refugees, and were required to adapt to different caregivers and form new attachments. Following the war, Bowlby's theories began to come under criticism at a time when women were being encouraged to return to the home.

However, Ainsworth and Wittig (1969) theorised that attachment was more nuanced and children developed different patterns of attachment in response to the quality of interaction between the infant and primary carer, through the 'strange situation procedure'. Ainsworth and Bell (1970) further developed this theory by identifying different styles of attachment through the 'strange situation' such as 'secure', avoidant', 'anxious ambivalent' and later 'disorganised'.

It is essential to consider the dynamics between the individual and the ability of key adults in the child's life to take on the role of an attachment figure. Horne (2012) argues that CYP need access to the availability of key adults and for them to facilitate a sense of self in the CYP through shared experiences. Horne illustrates the need to acknowledge 'feeling states' to then be able to 'recognise, anticipate and tolerate them' (p.71). A key aspect of facilitating attachment is through joint interactions.

1.9.2 Systemic Theories

It is crucial to consider the wider role organisations can have in meeting individual needs. Schools act as microsystems; they are communities with their own culture and rules, often governed by policies shaped by the people who work within

them. No individual is an organisation, but all individuals help to make up the organisation and shape the culture and community of the environment. Stapley (2006) suggests that an individual is an organisation's building block. Joint Systems theory (Dowling & Osborne, 1985) provide another perspective on the family and school with the child acting as a mechanism between the two boundaries of family and school.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) places the CYP within the wider eco-systems, by situating the CYP within a series of nested systems this provides a context of CYP within the wider structures of family, school, society and time. This widens the understanding of the perceived behavioural needs beyond that of the individual and provides a shared responsibility within a school context (Colley & Copper, 2017).

At a systemic level, CEC are disproportionally disadvantaged within the education system and are much more likely to have poorer outcomes (DfE, 2019b). Therefore, schools need to act to redress this imbalance to ensure equality of opportunity. The Timpson Review (DfE, 2019b) recognised how certain communities have higher rates of exclusion within the education system such as CYP from Irish traveller backgrounds, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, SEND and CEC. It is important to recognise how intersectionality within CEC is likely to compound the chances of success and disadvantage within the education system. For example, a CEC who also has SEND and is from a black and minority ethnic group is likely to have multiple layers of disadvantage within the education system.

Therefore, in accordance with the Equality Act (2010), anti-discriminatory practice makes it illegal to discriminate against someone based on protected characteristics (e.g. race, sex, age, maternal status, sexuality, religion). In relation to the effect of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) the culmination effect relating to multiple

protected characteristics is likely to have a greater impact on the individual. This means that, for example, a CYP who has needs based on trauma or attachment and a protected characteristic is more likely to be disproportionately affected within a system when the intersectionality of the CYP is also considered.

Figure 1
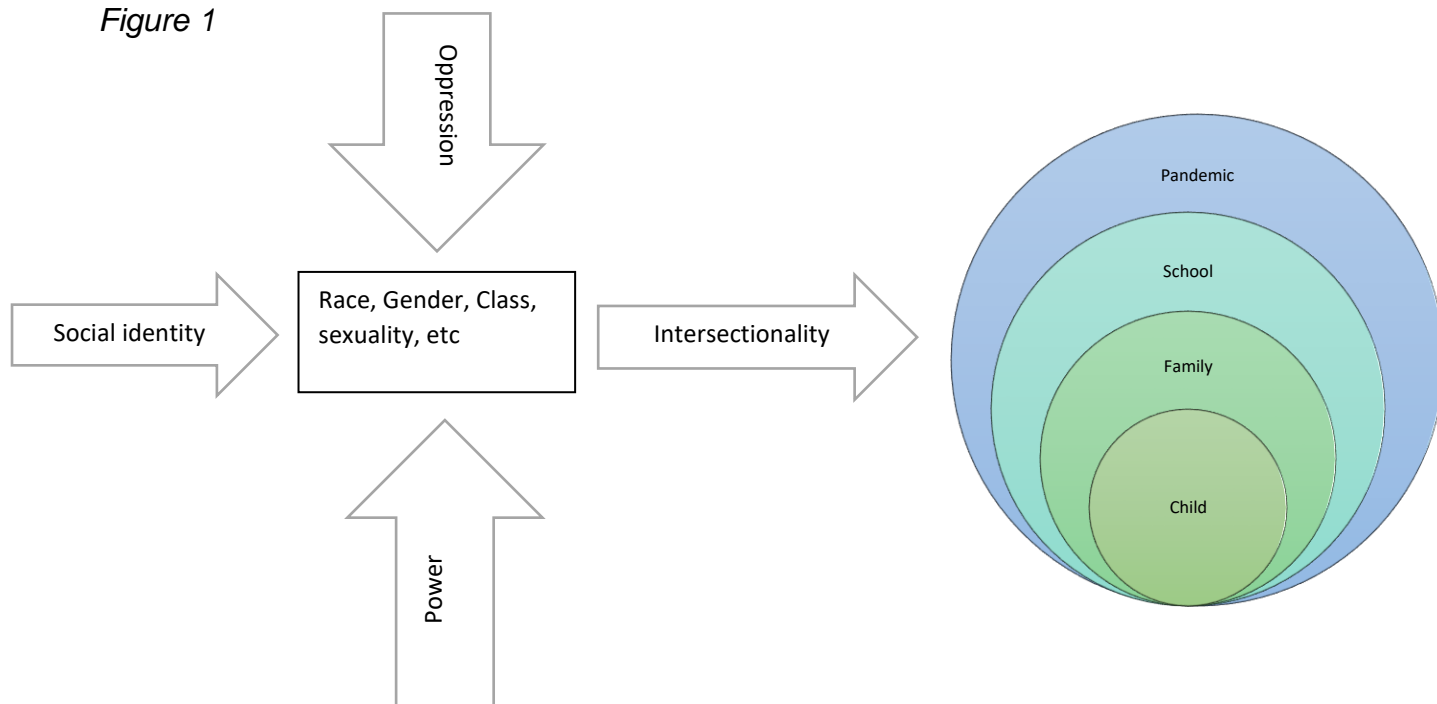
Note. This model is an adapted version of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Bioecological Model, demonstrating the various systems affecting CYP at the time this research was carried out. This model interacts with Crenshaw's (1991) Intersectionality framework which aims to illustrate the combined impact of intersectionality at different levels within the ecosystem.

In relation to the research carried out, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory serves to provide a framework for the context of the multiple levels of the system impacting CYP at the time this research was conducted. The findings from this research support the combination of Crenshaw's (1991) Intersectionality framework, which suggests that the specific characteristics of the CYP interact

differently at all aspects of the system based on structural elements relating to justice, inclusion, power and privilege within the systems (see Figure 1).

Research from Rose and Gilbert (2019) suggests that AAS can have a positive effect on school exclusions and by reducing the need for sanctions. AAS, therefore, have the potential to reduce exclusion rates for CEC and other groups that are at a higher risk of exclusions and thus can act in a protective capacity. At a wider level, it is important to consider the values embedded within systems and to consider how these are embedded within policies at systemic levels so that they respond in culturally responsive ways. Therefore, given how much time CYP spend during their formative years in education there is great potential for educational settings to act in a preventative and protective capacity by being aware of structural inequalities when considering policymaking.

1.9.3 Humanistic-Based Approaches

Research by Wright, cited in Arnold and Davies (2022) reflects on what children need to learn after the pandemic. Wright identifies key foundations that first need to be in place for a child to be able to learn and develop, as illustrated in Figure 2. These key concepts can be regarded as the building blocks needed for a CYP to be receptive to learning. The need for emotional connection is a key aspect of emotional development needed to be in place for a CYP to thrive as a result of all the foundational needs being met. Within the school context, Bergin and Bergin (2009) emphasise the importance of attachment security which can predict subsequent academic success. This adds weight to the key role staff can have in supporting the attachment needs of CYP in schools by acting as secondary attachment figures.

Figure 2

The Foundations of Learning and Development

The foundations of learning and development

Believing learning and achieving academically

Emotional connection

Safety	Security
Positive feelings	Interest

Love	Self-belief	Engagement	Play
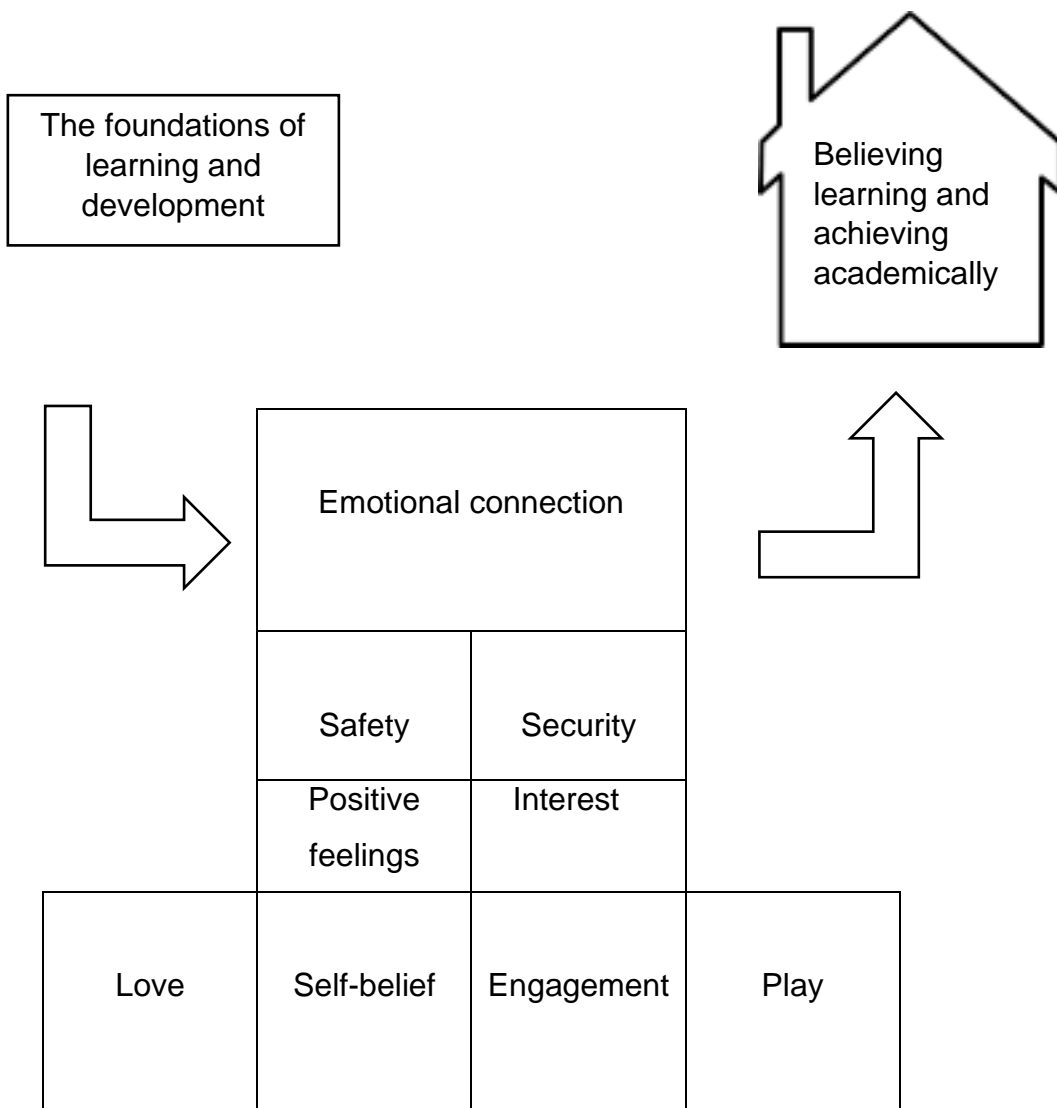
*Note. '*The Foundations to Development'. From Children in Lockdown Learning the Lessons of Pandemic Times (p.130) adapted from B. Davis and C. Arnold (2022). Copyright Karnac Books. Reproduced with permission.

Figure 3

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
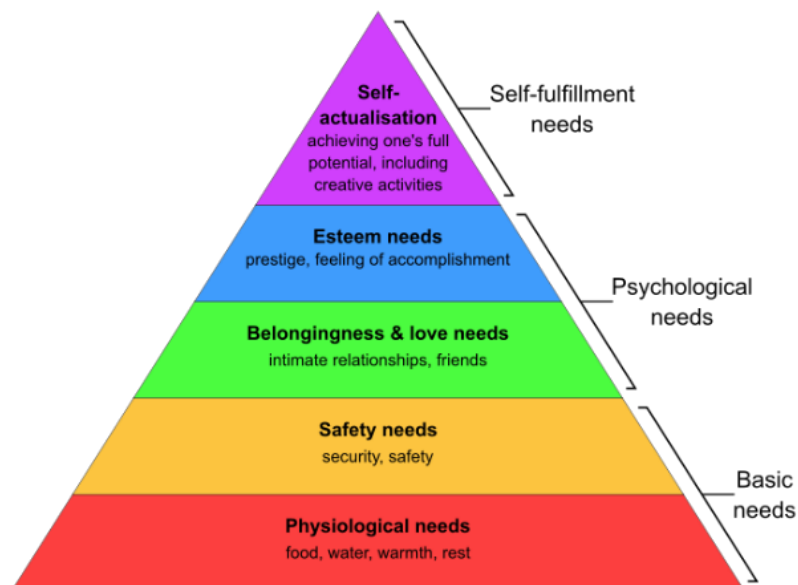
Note. *Adapted from Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1954,1968)*

Similarly, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (see Figure 3) (1943, 1954) is a framework that outlines different levels of need beginning with basic physiological needs, which once met and satisfied allows an individual to move upwards towards psychological needs, and self-fulfilment through to self-actualisation. Kolb and Kolb (2017) state that rather than just physical safety, in today's society children need to feel safe and so psychological safety should be regarded as just as important. They suggest it is key to enabling team learning (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Kolb and Kolb (2017) state that critics of the approach view supportive environments as potentially lowering performance standards and lack of discipline. However, it can be argued that building trust and respect creates an environment of psychological safety and enables openness, and flexibility, where risks can be taken. These are all elements that facilitate organisations to be innovative, effective and thrive.

1.9.4 Psychodynamic Approaches

The models above illustrate key theories regarding the foundations that need to be in place for a CYP to be able to learn effectively. Likewise, it is important to consider the theoretical basis driving attachment needs as well as the role educational settings can have in supporting these needs. Psychodynamic approaches provide an understanding of how early development influences relationships later in life and can affect the way a CYP interacts within a learning environment.

Past research by Sroufe (et al.,1983, 1986) and Main and Solomon (1986) illustrates links between CYP's attachment style and learning outcomes. Geddes (2006), suggests this is linked to the CYP's relationship between the task and teacher such as being able to ask for or to accept help, showing persistence, tolerating not knowing and accepting others may be able to do things that they find challenging. This learning relationship stems back to early attachment. Winnicott (1965) suggests that these emotions derive from parent-child interactions. Winnicott theorised the concept of 'secure enough' parenting whereby primary carers can behave in ways whereby they can respond and meet the child's needs to the extent where the child feels safe and secure. Additionally, Fonagy and Target (1997) suggest 'mentalisation' as a key response to meeting these needs. This is described as "Keeping the other's mind-in-mind" described as the 'ability to communicate an understanding of the child's intentional stance' (p.679), suggesting the importance of being able to recognise and respond to each other's needs. It is through these attuned relationships that build up a secure 'internal working model'.

The 'Holding Environment' is a term based on research by Winnicott's (1965) theory of holding and Fonagy et al.'s (2008) mentalisation research. Winnicott theorised the

'holding environment', whereby the primary carer can create the capacity to reliably meet the needs of an infant's internal state. The holding environment enables the school to be able to act in a capacity that works to create a safe, secure environment which meets the holistic needs of the CYP.

Hyman (2012) highlights a study by Fonagy and Target (1997) which states the importance of attuned relationships whereby through the relationship the CYP and adult can relate to each other's emotions and build trusting relationships. The author suggests that in individuals where there is disruption or failure to create mentalisation, this can affect the ability to understand another person's emotions and limit the potential to create connections. Research by Frith et al. (1991) suggested this can be more difficult for CYP with autism or with attachment needs.

Winnicott (1965) suggests the process of dependence to independence as a gradual progression that is supported by adults. The organisation is able to respond to the needs of individuals within it much like the responsive parent. The organisation responds by holding the undesired emotions such as uncertainty and anxiety which then become manageable over time.

1.10 Rationale and Aims of the Study

The DT acts as a facilitator between their school organisation the EPS and the Virtual School. Their role is key to understanding the experience of the researched phenomena i.e., their account of their experiences of their school becoming trauma-informed and attachment aware, to help support the needs of CYP within their school community. This is a small-scale qualitative study interested in the personal experiences of DTs. The study aims to draw upon their lived experiences to gain in-

depth insight to understand the process of becoming an AAS over the duration of a year (during the pandemic).

The research is exploratory and uses Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which is a person-centred approach, interested in participants' lived experiences. The thesis aims to contribute to the sparse knowledge of AAS and seeks to understand the process and potential benefits and barriers that may emerge from the interviews, as well as gain a further understanding of what an AAS is. Past research has provided promising insights into the merits of becoming an AAS, particularly in meeting the needs of CYP with trauma or attachment needs. For the purpose of this thesis, the remit will focus on identifying emerging themes from the interviews to understand the DT's experiences.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Overview

The literature review takes a narrative perspective (Baumeister & Leary, 1997) to evaluate the research that arose, which was deemed appropriate for this type of research. It aims to provide an overview of current literature on the research topic of AAS. The research outlined in the introduction acknowledges the disadvantages that CEC experience within the educational system. This literature review, therefore, aims to shed light on how systemic changes within schools through approaches such as the AASA project can help to support these groups. This chapter includes:

- ➢ The search strategy
- ➢ Search terms used
- ➢ The rationale for the research
- ➢ Inclusion and exclusion search criteria
- ➢ Summary of main themes and links drawn from current research

2.2 Aims and Approach of Literature Review

Rudestam and Newton (2007) suggest that the purpose of the literature review is to help 'clarify the relationship between the proposed study and previous work conducted on the topic' (p.62). This chapter does not aim to be exhaustive of all literature relating to AAS but rather aims to provide insight into the key features of AAS and highlight how this approach may benefit children who have previously experienced trauma or have needs based on attachment. The literature review aimed to answer the following questions:

2.3 Literature Review Questions

1. What are the experiences of Designated Teachers in supporting CEC through Attachment Aware Schools?

2. What does research tell us about how Attachment Aware Schools can support the needs of CEC?

The research aimed to explore the experiences of DTs in supporting CEC through AAS which is in keeping with an IPA approach. Secondly, the research aimed to explore more broadly how AAS can support the needs of CEC. The research could be useful for schools that are considering embarking on such an approach and also to explore alternative ways of supporting children who have experienced trauma or who have attachment needs. The research could be helpful to teacher training providers whom NICE (NICE, 2015) guidelines recommend are trained in understanding the impact of attachment needs. Lastly, professionals such as EPs who work to support schools with children who have a range of social-emotional needs may find the research useful.

2.4 Search Strategy

The first search of the literature was carried out on 5 September 2022, with a follow-up on 20 December 2022 to check whether any subsequent research had been published. The first search concentrated on exploring published research relating to what is known about DTs experiences of supporting CEC through AAS. This initial search criterion produced no relevant search results. As no research was found relating to DTs lived experiences of supporting CEC through AAS this potentially

highlighted a gap in the research literature and a possible rationale for the focus of this thesis.

A secondary search was then conducted to gain further insight into what is known more broadly about how AAS support CEC (Table 2). This was followed by a subsequent search designed to explore more broadly how DTs can support CEC. The initial searches were restricted to published research to identify key literature before exploring more widely unpublished literature from the Attachment Research Community (ARC). This organisation provides a range of published research, articles and government reports pertaining to CEC and AAS.

The following describes how the systematic literature search was conducted and the papers that were reviewed.

2.5 Search Terms

A literature search was conducted using EBSCO Host. All searches were conducted using educational and psychology databases. The following databases were searched, and titles and abstracts were screened:

- Education Resource Information Centre (ERIC)

- Psych Info

- EThOS

- Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection

- Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing (PEP)

The initial search explored the role of the DT supporting CEC through AAS and the following Boolean/Phrase search terms were used: "designated teacher" AND/OR

"LAC*", "looked after" or "lac" or "foster care" or "children in care" or "cic" or "out of home care" AND Attachment Aware School* OR Attachment Aware* OR "trauma-sensitive schools", OR "trauma-informed practice in schools" OR "attachment-sensitive schools" OR "trauma-informed pedagogy"

This search resulted in no relevant papers being retrieved. Table 1. describes the search terms used.

Table 1

Mapping and Search Terms for the First Search

Search mapping terms	Keyword search terms	Rationale
"Attachment Aware Schools" AND	Attachment Aware School* OR Attachment Aware* OR "trauma-sensitive schools", OR "trauma-informed practice in schools" OR "attachment-sensitive schools" OR "trauma-informed pedagogy"	These terms are used commonly in the UK and Europe to describe schools trained using an attachment and trauma-informed research approach.
"Designated Teacher" AND	AND Designated Teacher*	DTs have a statutory duty to oversee the needs of young people who are or have been looked after. In this research, DTs played a key role in helping to implement change within their schools.

"Care Experienced Children"	AND/OR Looked After or LAC OR CLA OR foster care OR children in care OR cic OR out of home care OR PLAC OR CEC.	Attachment Aware schools are created in collaboration with Virtual Schools to provide an inclusive environment for care-experienced children.

A second search was conducted using the terms: "Attachment Aware School*",
"Attachment Aware*" OR "trauma-sensitive schools", OR "trauma-informed practice
in schools" OR "attachment-sensitive schools" OR "trauma-informed pedagogy"
(Table 2).

Table 2

Mapping and Search Terms

Search mapping terms	Keyword search terms	Rationale
"Attachment Aware Schools"	Attachment Aware School* OR Attachment Aware* OR "trauma-sensitive schools", OR "trauma-informed practice in schools" OR "attachment-sensitive schools" OR "trauma-informed pedagogy"	These terms are used more commonly in the UK, Europe and Australia to describe schools trained using an attachment and trauma-informed research approach.

This second search resulted in 11 papers being retrieved. Titles and abstracts were
screened, six papers were excluded as not deemed relevant to the context of

schools and five papers were retrieved for further screening. Appendix A shows a summary of the literature papers reviewed. The papers reviewed were selected based on whether they were relevant to supporting the needs of CEC.

Following this, a further search was conducted to explore more broadly what helps DTs support CEC in education. Table 3 provides details of the search terms used. Titles and abstracts were read resulting in 10 papers being further explored. From the 10 papers retrieved, 8 were included in the literature review. 2 papers were excluded as deemed not directly relevant to the research question. Research at this stage was initially restricted to journal articles before broadening the search to grey literature and a hand search, relevant to the research question (Appendix B). See appendix C and D for an in-depth summary of papers reviewed in searches 2 and 3.

These papers were deemed relevant and were analysed using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) (Page et al., 2021) to ensure a quality assurance framework for the literature review (Appendix E and F). Table 4 provides an overview of the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied to the searches. Appendices G and H illustrates the screening process using a PRISMA chart of searches 2 and 3.

Table 3

Mapping and Search Terms for the Third Search

Search mapping terms	Keyword search terms	Rationale
"Care experienced Children" AND	Looked After or LAC OR CLA OR foster care OR children in care OR cic OR out of home care OR PLAC OR CEC	Attachment Aware schools are created in collaboration with Virtual Schools to provide an inclusive environment for

		care-experienced children.
"Designated Teachers"	Designated Teacher*	DTs have a statutory duty to oversee the needs of young people who are or have been looked after. In this research, DTs played a key role in helping to implement systemic change within their schools.

Table 4

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Literature Search

	Inclusion/Exclusion criteria	Reason
1	**Exclude** Date of publication Before 2013.	To explore current literature in the field. AAS began being commissioned in the UK in 2014, therefore impact research would come out after this date.
2	**Include** Peer-reviewed journal or report, dissertations.	To gain current knowledge of research in the area and ascertain gaps in the research base.
3	**Include** Scope of studies included.	Research may extend to grey literature if insufficient published literature is found, as well as published work which cannot be

		located through the search terms identified. To further expand the knowledge remit of the research.
	Books, abstracts, magazine articles, and government reports.	
4	**Exclude** Duplications.	Any duplication of studies will be excluded.
5	**Include** Geographical search within Europe.	The research sought to draw sources from within the UK, and Europe for close comparisons to be made, for a higher degree of relatability and transferability to be drawn from the search results.
6	**Inclusion** Studies that are related to Attachment Aware Schools.	To understand previous literature and studies about the research area.

The researcher then reviewed literature from the Attachment Research Community (ARC) by using the terms 'attachment and research' using Google search engine. (https://the-arc.org.uk/research-and-reports) a professional body which aims to help disseminate research and support schools and professionals across the country to help to create AAS. This research is made up of governmental reports, articles, books and websites.

Appendix I outlines the sources retrieved from ARC. This included relevant organisations with a key association to research in this area, as well as government papers, were sourced. This resulted in an additional 5 sources being retrieved, three

journal articles were duplicates of ones already found in the previous literature search detailed above and so were excluded. Inclusion and exclusion criteria from Table 4 were applied to this search strategy. Key themes identified from the literature review are discussed below in further detail. A further hand search resulted in 1 additional source, from a government report.

2.6 Rationale

The concept of AAS originally derives from work carried out in the United States, where a variety of terms such as trauma-informed schools, trauma-sensitive schools, and trauma-aware schools are used. The concept was first developed within the UK by Bath Spa University in 2014 using the phrase 'Attachment Aware schools', which is why this word combination was used in searches. The literature review aimed to establish what was already known about AAS within the UK and to examine how this might be relevant to the existing schooling system and its culture. The UK tends to focus on attachment research as this is more relevant to CEC and their needs, whereas in the USA the focus within the education system is more in response to trauma based on gun violence. This research was primarily focused on the education system within the UK before broadening to other parts of the world.

2.7 Literature Review

The primary research questions to be addressed by this literature review are to seek to explore how DTs understand what an AAS is as well as what is known about how DTs experience being part of an AAS. These questions therefore relate to understanding defining the elements that are essential to becoming an AAS as well

as the process involved when systemic changes are implemented, informed by Attachment Aware and Trauma-informed practice. The literature will be organised thematically with key studies discussed in further depth.

2.7.1 Defining Attachment Aware and Trauma-informed Approaches

To begin with, it is essential to understand the theoretical underpinning that schools following an AAS approach use. These principles are often referred to using a range of terminologies as highlighted in the search terminology used. Four of the papers reviewed define key features within AAS which can help identify defining features, which will be outlined and summarised below.

Research by Berger and Martin (2021) discussed the challenges involved in implementing trauma-informed practice. The authors argue that firstly there is no consensus on the terminology used to describe trauma-informed practice in schools which can create challenges in critically evaluating such approaches.

Common principles of trauma-informed approaches are described by the researchers using the '4 Rs' to outline the principles of trauma-informed approaches. These are: 'Realisation' and 'Recognition' of the impact of trauma on children, the need to 'Respond' through developing practice in schools and adapting policies, and fourthly limiting 'Re-traumatisation' through improving the school ethos and environment to respond to the need.

Similarly, a governmental report by the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) (2023), provides key principles of AAS, gathered from a meta-analysis of research. These included:

- A trauma-informed lens (recognising and responding to the signs of trauma)

- Preventing re-traumatisation (by recognising services and systems can contribute to this)

- Safety prioritised through facilitating environments and tailored support

- Adopting a strengths-based approach

- Building trust, by emphasising therapeutic relationships

- Consideration of cultural, historical and gender contexts

- Addressing power imbalances through a collaborative approach

The DLUHC (2023) provides substantial evidence of key features that are prevalent within AAS.

Furthermore, research by Zsolnai & Szabó (2021) provides similarities in defining features of an AAS framework as one that consists of five main elements:

1) Ethos (whole school approach)

2) Strategies (attachment-based strategies)

3) Partnerships (with parents, carers, and outside agencies)

4) Evaluation (assessment and monitoring)

5) Knowledge (attachment theory, trauma awareness)

The authors emphasise a key feature of AAS is the teaching of EC (Gottman & DeClaire,1997). They suggest this is an important tool that staff use to support adult–child interactions at times of dysregulation, although warn there are times this will be less beneficial, for example, if the behaviour is dangerous. EC has the advantages of being cost-effective and not requiring any additional resources other than an adults trained to use it. The process involves:

- Becoming aware of the emotions the child is feeling (from a non-judgmental perspective)

- Labelling and validating emotions

- Limit setting and reminding the young person of rules and boundaries

- Problem-solving with the young person to help them consider how they could respond differently if a similar situation were to occur.

Similarly, Rose and Gilbert (2017) suggest AAS provide a nurturing environment where adults are trained to become attuned to respond to children's social and emotional well-being. The training typically consists of three key components:

- Whole school training on trauma and attachment,

- Emotion coaching

- A neurological component of the effect trauma and attachment needs have on the developing brain.

Figure 4

Features of Being Attachment Aware
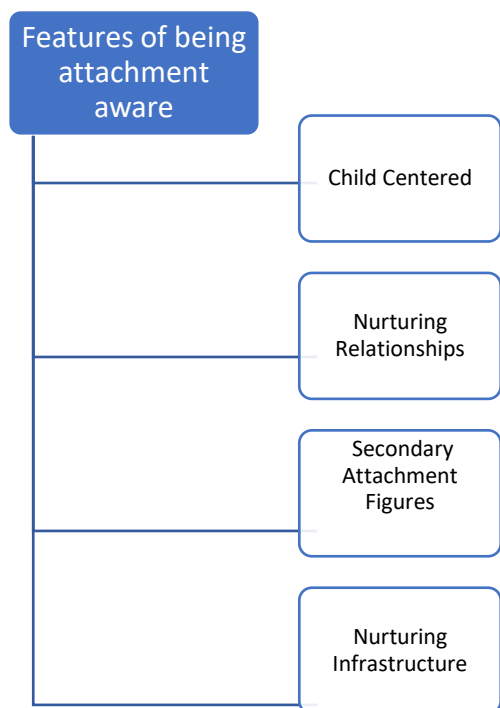
Note. This Figure illustrates key components based on Rose and Gilbert's (2017) research into AAS.

Rose and Gilbert (2017) identify the following key components as being crucial elements of schools becoming attachment-aware (see Figure 4): a child-centred approach that recognises differing attachment styles. Another feature involved recognising the innate need for belonging, so that nurturing relationships are established to meet this need. Adults may also provide secondary attachment figures to support attachment needs. Lastly, they promote the '4 S's' being seen, feeling soothed, feeling safe and feeling secure. These key features can be regarded as key features within AAS approaches, by responding to the need for security, safety and belonging.

Some of the commonalities identified between the different studies reviewed (Berger & Martin, 2021; DLUHC, 2023; Rose & Gilbert 2017; Zsolnai & Szabó 2021) include acknowledging the prevalence of trauma and recognising the signs, responding by limiting re-traumatisation and providing a nurturing infrastructure through for example, creating a calm environment. Other key features included delivering whole-school training which provides a theoretical understanding of trauma and attachment. Responding to behaviour through a reflective process allows the CYP to consider their actions alongside mediation, such as through EC. Aspects of studies that differed included:

➢ Embracing the individuality of students, by recognising and celebrating differences.

➢ Addressing the power imbalance between staff and students by allowing students to take ownership in the project through creating a buddy scheme, and having students play an active role in helping to build friendships at playtime (DLUHC, 2023).

Zsolnai and Szabó (2021) advocate evaluating the effectiveness through active assessment and monitoring. Some of the key challenges raised when embedding the practice were associated with one-off professional development training (as opposed to a continuous approach) as well as not linking the approach to school mental health policies (Berger & Martin, 2021).

2.7.2 AAS and Similar Ethos

There is currently no research from the perspective of DTs in being part of an AAS. However, the research reviewed explores schools that became part of an AAS and considers key aspects that are included in the AAS framework and the subsequent changes noted within the schools.

Parker and Levinson (2018) wrote a positional paper drawing on several studies exploring findings from different educational establishments that became AAS. The paper reflects on the existing education system and how it separates children's learning from their emotions and feelings. The authors argue that both are intrinsically 'intertwined', with important implications at policy levels within schools. They note that much of the rhetoric from governmental reports (Bennett, 2017) presents a view which does not take into consideration the affective side of learning as part of the educational process. Neither is there an awareness of how this might affect both students and teachers. The researchers suggest that previous government policies have considered issues relating to behaviour and control but argue instead that emphasis needs to be placed on the mechanisms involved in understanding the causes of behaviour and how best to facilitate engagement in learning.

 Parker and Levinson (2018) suggest that these relational factors in the education system need to be recognised at a wider systemic level. Furthermore, they suggest that the AAS programme ought to be much more like a 'tool in a tool kit' (p.5), able to complement other school initiatives such as 'Thrive, Theraplay or nurture groups' (p.5), unlike social emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) or personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) which were differentiated as taught programmes. One key

point the authors stated was that general PSHE programmes were limited as they were not deemed sufficient to meet attachment needs.

Parker and Levinson (2018) also identify a political dimension to how critics of AAS such as Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) view these relational and therapeutic approaches. For instance, the argument that the practice 'undermines a pursuit of knowledge' (p.879) is not based on sound theoretical underpinning. Parker and Levinson (2018) note how in the past, successive UK Conservative governments have tended to focus on behaviour and discipline from a punitive perspective rather than attempting to understand the reasons or causes for the behaviour (DfE, 2017). The authors suggest that economic disadvantage, mental health, children in care and those with SEND are likely to be the most disadvantaged by these policies, unlike those favouring a relational approach.

 However, there has been evidence of a shift in thinking, with the mental health and well-being green paper (DoH & DfE, 2017) highlighting a need for schools to meet mental health needs and therefore provide further reasons to consider a more holistic approach, rather than one founded on behaviourist principles. Moreover, the authors suggest that an AAS approach offers a whole-school initiative that is not built on stigmatising young people but aims to meet their underlying needs instead. There is evidence now which suggests this whole school approach to be a legitimate one.

Moreover, Rose and Gilbert (2019) carried out two large-scale pilot studies across different LA areas. These studies lasted two years and involved over two hundred participants (consisting of teachers, support staff and pupils aged 5-16 years recruited from 40 schools). Part of the study involved monitoring outcomes for pupils deemed 'at risk', such as with SEMH needs, CEC and students identified as pupil

premium (students who qualify for additional funding e.g. as a result of being from a low-income household). Outcomes were analysed through a mixed measures approach looking at academic outcomes i.e. maths, reading and writing. SEMH needs were measured using Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs) by recording differences in emotional symptoms, conduct problems, inattention, peer relationship problems, and pro-social behaviour. Sanctions and exclusions were also monitored. Rose and Gilbert's (2019) study provides an evidence base of hard and soft indicators from schools undergoing AAS training. Findings from the study were indicative of improvements in academic abilities such as reading, writing and maths. The research also found significant decreases in sanctions and exclusions. Other findings included: professionals citing the approach as having a positive impact on their work with less need for physical interventions, witnessing increased self-regulation and emotional control among their pupils, and staff feeling more confident in themselves when talking to young people about their emotions.

This is an encouraging outcome from a large-scale longitudinal research project. The results accounted for 98 percent of those who were interviewed and completed a questionnaire at the end of the project who felt more confident in their understanding of attachment.

The study demonstrated a positive relationship between academic performance beyond expected levels and the implementation of the AAS project. This provides some encouraging evidence to support the use of AAS programmes, whilst also bearing in mind possible other unforeseen factors which may have contributed to the results.

The authors acknowledged the limitations of the study, such as the AAS approach not being a 'panacea' to all SEMH difficulties, in addition to there being a lack of a control group, which may have offered a comparable study.

Prevalent themes highlighted by the research were that staff responded positively to the training and in turn changes in students' responses were cited by staff, such as fewer negative behaviours.

Although it may not be entirely possible to generalise from this study due to the limitations posed by a specific demographic, cultural context and distinctive school environment, nevertheless, this research provides strong support for the difference a relational-based approach can have both academically and on behavioural outcomes. Although the literature is sparse in the area of AAS research, this study provides noteworthy findings for the effect of supporting SEMH and improved academic outcomes.

It is clear to see this research adds to the knowledge base by providing a greater awareness and understanding of the processes between learning and creating a sense of belonging through attachment research. This research is important because of the inequality CEC and children with SEND experience, particularly during a time when there is a greater requirement for a response to SEMH needs owing to the 2020 pandemic.

Another large-scale study into AAS conducted by Kelly et al. (2020) involved 77 schools (from a range of educational providers such as primary, secondary, special schools and a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). Kelly et al. (2020) were in their 5th year of providing schools with attachment-aware training, action research and reflective practice. The AAS programme aimed to support 'children in care and vulnerable learners' using training based on areas of neuropsychology that are associated with

trauma, attachment and sensory responses with particular regard to the interaction between the environment and the way the young person responds within it. There were three strands to the AAS programme: one strand involved developing the school into a hub of excellent practice within the AAS network. A second strand involved a taught component led by the Virtual School, which involved training on attachment theory (free of charge, for the duration of one year) and lastly, the third strand involved a bespoke action research project with an available bursary to aid implementation. Evaluation of the research involved quantitative and qualitative data analysis. This focused on participants scaling their levels of confidence in attachment theory. Questionnaires were used pre- and post-training. The results suggest an improvement in confidence levels although this measure could potentially be subject to social desirability bias with participants being motivated to self-report and rate themselves more favourably in the post-evaluation phase. Another potential criticism was that the research was measured in terms of the confidence levels of staff demonstrating an understanding of attachment theory and attachment awareness; this did not necessarily capture the relative successes of the training on the outcomes of young people in the schools per se. Hence, the lack of research from the perspective of the young people attending the schools reduced the impact of the study, although it provided information on some of the specific improvements undertaken in the classroom. The researchers offered some insights into improvements found in the schools in their discussion.

Kelly et al. (2020) recommended key areas for change:

> ➢ **Developing Policies and Systems**

This entailed changes to the exclusion policy to be more sensitive to family background and circumstances, as well as adding trauma and attachment needs to the SEND policy.

> ➢ **Transforming the Environment**

These changes ranged from providing safe/calm spaces inside and outside of the classroom to be used when students are dysregulated and need a space to calm down.

> ➢ **Staff and Pedagogical Development**

Kelly et al. (2020) note that it is not the role or hierarchy of staff but the quality of the interpersonal relationship that is key to the students developing trusting relationships that provide a sense of security.

The study by Kelly et al. (2020) refers to students having a level of autonomy by having a choice over whom they would like to be their key adult. The authors state that 'knowing who this person is and where they can be found enables de-escalation of situations' (Kelly et al., 2020, p.346).

 The study shows how staff support students' emotions through a combination of co-regulation and EC strategies. They are aware that their students are at different stages of their ability to regulate their own emotions. Additionally, staff report greater confidence and less blame of themselves at times of challenge.

Other findings relate to initiatives such as reviewing the structure and routine of the day by, for example, ensuring all children are welcomed into class each day, thus helping to promote a sense of belonging. The authors acknowledge that although they have seen changes to pedagogical practice across all types of schools, some of

the changes are more likely to be easier to implement in smaller primary schools than in secondary schools.

Another element of the research that appeared to help strengthen the work within the schools was that the work was being carried out by two in-house members of staff (referred to as ambassadors or agitators), who attended the training and disseminated the training and research to staff.

> **Impact on Pupils**

Kelly et al. (2020) report that children in the participating schools felt happier and safer, with lower anxiety levels, less stress and less worry, which led to improved behaviour overall. Adults modelled an ethos of care which resulted in children being more empathetic. The study also reported that this had a wider effect which went beyond targeting a key group of individuals. Having a child-centred approach that placed importance on listening to the child's voice, without making assumptions, helped to foster a more nurturing wider environment. The research carried out by Kelly et al. (2020) suggests part of the increase in well-being in students is due to being given a greater level of responsibility and a say in decision-making. This allowed CYP to have their voices heard (e.g., requesting more contact time with adults or being allowed to help design a nurture room). All these things were found to facilitate a sense of community and build resilience.

> **Extending Relationships with Parents/Carers**

A key aspect of the research suggests that home-school links were most important for vulnerable students, by providing a place of stability. Bridging the gap between school and home was reported to be an important element by having a positive

impact on the relationships with parents and carers as well as building resilience and self-esteem of parents, carers, and students.

One key feature of AAS is related to embracing relational-based approaches. A recent study on AAS and teachers based in Hungary (Zsolnai & Szabó, 2021) explores the relationship between AAS and the teacher-student relationship. The researchers argue that there is a role for teachers to provide a secure base and emotional security, particularly for children in early childhood or when no secure attachment is available from the home environment. The researchers recognise that this may be different for older age groups, who place more importance on peer relationships. In addition, the structure of secondary schools means that children are taught by multiple staff, so they may be less conducive to forming close relationships. The authors argue that EC offers a period of reflection, allowing the child to co-regulate their emotions and ultimately be more likely to have control over their emotions in the future. Moreover, the authors suggest that attachment has a long-lasting impact on children's social and academic success in school and beyond, which adds weight to the need for staff in schools to be aware of the process to be able to form 'attachment-like relationships' (Zsolnai & Szabó, 2021, p.323). The authors state that there are three main periods of attachment formation: firstly, in the early years, when the child and key caregiver have the opportunity to form strong bonds; secondly, during early schooling when children learn to bond with other adults who may act in the role of a caregiver; and thirdly, during teenage years. The authors provide research to suggest that as the child gets older the capacity to form strong relationships with adults decreases. They suggest that this occurs because teenagers typically tend to rely on their peers for support and secondly, the nature of secondary schooling means that they are taught by several adults which may result

in less opportunity for meaningful relationships to develop. The authors argue that the capacity to form these bonds is a prerequisite for learning to occur, particularly in CYP who have had fewer opportunities to develop these relationships in the past. Similarly, Machett (2022) found that authentic relationships with staff were valued above titles and roles by CEC. The CYP gave examples of staff who went beyond their role in ensuring the CYP were held in mind with regular check-ins and contact even after leaving school. Experiences were shared of teachers buying clothes for CYP such as a prom dress or new uniform to ensure they had access to occasions like the school prom and were not bullied for ill-fitting uniforms. Some CYP did not know about the role of the DT or those who did rarely found them helpful.

Recent research by Little and Maunder (2021) discusses the link between childhood trauma and young people's disruptive behaviour in the classroom. The authors stress the importance of teachers and staff being attachment aware and the need for training on the subject within schools and educational providers. The researchers state two prevalent concerns affecting the UK education system: firstly, the number of young people who may have experienced trauma and secondly, the number of teachers leaving the profession. The authors reflect on the tension between a system that is fuelled by a performance-driven culture and an alternative relational one that aims to meet the underlying needs of students by prioritising relationships. The authors suggest that in addition to the benefit of young people using the latter approach, this would also reduce teacher stress and aid teacher retention.

Another large-scale study by Doonan and Stephen's (2021) research aimed to provide support to schools through the Attachment and Trauma Awareness project.

53 schools participated in the project from a range of educational providers. Schools were encouraged to develop their specific trauma-responsive practice both systemically such as creating relational behaviour policies and individually. An audit was used to support planning and development. The project used training in either EC or through the Circle of Adults (which uses professionals within the school setting to reflect and provide feedback and strategies for identified vulnerable children). This feature differed from other AAS projects which tended to focus on trauma and attachment training and EC to support behaviour. One potential criticism of the EC approach was that it could be seen as reactive and waits for a crisis before a period of reflection to then find alternative ways of responding in the future. However, EC is a tool that aims to reduce behaviour that is challenging by jointly seeking alternative ways of responding. The approach teaches explicitly about labelling and regulating strong emotions, intending to help reduce challenging behaviour in the early stages and thus help to prevent future occurrences. In this study, the researchers sought feedback from participants using both quantitative and qualitative measures across three, time intervals. The researchers found an increase in awareness of attachment and developmental trauma and an increase in confidence in using EC approaches. Other findings from the research suggested the importance of a whole school approach deemed critical for continuity amongst staff members as well as making time for staff to reflect on their practice.

Carpenter and Carpenter (2020) discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's social-emotional well-being and the need for a 'recovery curriculum'. The article highlighted how schools provided a sense of belonging and suggested what was lost during the pandemic was this sense of belonging which came from daily interactions with peers and staff. The authors argue that humans are essentially

social creatures and thrive in the context of meaningful relationships. The article provides weight to the notion that children need more than a curriculum to be able to develop fully and so the combined sense of a loss of opportunity, freedom, routine, structure, and friendship, along with an increase in anxiety has had a devastating impact on young people's mental health and well-being. The article cites an increase in self-harm (Young Minds, 2020), as symptomatic of the stress experienced by young people during a time of uncertainty and anxiety. The authors provided five recommendations for recovery:

1. Relationships – This involved an action plan to restore and rebuild relationships.

2. Community – Re-establishing links within the community by listening and understanding what has occurred and the need to facilitate a transition back to school.

3. Transparent curriculum – Honest and open conversations regarding the loss of learning that occurred as well as conversations about how gaps in the curriculum would be approached.

4. Metacognition – This involved reskilling learners to enable them to regain confidence going back to learning.

5. Space – the opportunity to work at the learner's pace.

The authors concluded that after such a long break in learning, those crucial foundational relationships need to be re-established to regain trust to facilitate well-being as this is the foundation for all learning. Although these recommendations were in response to the pandemic, they are still relevant to schools when considering

key elements which can contribute to an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

2.7.3 Attachment Theory

Attachment theory is a key underlying concept of AAS and trauma-informed practices. Smith et al. (2017) offer a critique of attachment theory. They noted that it has been the dominant discourse in social work practice and policies and that it is limited by the weight it places on a biological narrative, notably that severe neglect affects the brain in direct and deterministic ways. The authors instead suggested how attachment is fundamentally about relationships and the power that comes from an essentially loving relationship. The authors stated that the term *attachment* is interchangeable with *relationships,* and so instead of focusing on biological or deficit-based models, importance needs to be placed on what can be done to facilitate the relationships between adults and vulnerable young people. The authors offered an alternative perspective based on the teachings of German social theorist Axel Honneth's (2010) theory of recognition. The theory based itself on three key principles: love, rights, and solidarity. The concept of love within a professional context may appear problematic, particularly when professionals may focus their role on the tasks that arise from the nature of their work rather than facilitating the relationships as a part of that role. However, Honneth (2010) suggests that when CYP have warm, nurturing, reciprocal relationships where they feel that they matter, they are respected and their strengths and talents are recognised. This then, has the power to make a difference to their lives, enabling them to thrive.

2.7.4 Neuropsychology

Research by Woolgar and Simmonds (2019) provides an overview of the neurobiological effects of early adverse experiences on CEC and the implications for professionals working with them. The researchers state that children who have experience with the care system are more likely to have been exposed to possible abuse, neglect, or other adverse experiences. Within stressful environments, children are likely to take on adaptive ways of surviving such as hyper-vigilant attachment styles. However, when the child is out of the environment with the perceived threat, they are still likely to continue to behave similarly. At a biological level, the authors outlined how the brain reacts to stress within the Hypothalamic Pituitary Adrenal axis, which interacts with the stress hormone cortisol in an attempt to maintain homeostasis. Secure attachments can work to counteract this effect by leading to an increase in oxytocin which acts to reduce levels of stress and promotes positive effects (Fonagy et al., 2008). Furthermore, brain-imaging pictures provide support for the physical effects neglect and ACEs can have on the developing brain, such as a reduction of neural connections resulting from these effects.

Moreover, these challenging life experiences are reinforced by neurobiology (Blakemore, 2008) whereby neural networks are strengthened by past experiences. The authors state that in severe cases, brain imaging research reveals differences in the structure of the brain in individuals who have experienced adversity (Teicher et al., 2003). However, the authors point out that the brain's plasticity means that this is not definitive and so over time the brain's ability to make new neural connections shows the potential for rewiring to occur through attachment-based approaches.

Moreover, the authors discuss the role schools can adopt by providing supportive environments, for example, by helping to meet the attachment needs of some young people. The authors state that the role of attachment figures can go beyond the traditional concept of the mother as originally theorised by Bowlby (1988) and that schools have an important role to play in helping to meet these needs. The authors argue that knowledge of trauma and attachment is not a part of the initial teacher training (DfE, 2019a). Moreover, the DfE guidance (2019a) still bases advice to new teachers on behaviourist theory by advocating systems of rewards and sanctions as well as establishing proactive techniques. However, there is still no recognition of trauma and attachment. The DfE (2019a) advice for 'vulnerable or highly challenging' pupils does not go beyond establishing 'persistence and consistency' with routines and boundaries.

Smith et al. (2017) caution against medical model-based deterministic arguments that can stigmatise CYP who have multiple ACES. However, literature within the field of neuropsychology can explain some of the processes that may occur within the brain as a response to the effects of attachment and trauma responses and so this research remains an important aspect of AAS research and training.

2.7.5 DTs Experiences of Supporting CEC

Bhagvanji's (2020) thesis entitled "An exploration of designated teachers' work with LAC what constrains and enables attachment aware practice" provides an overview of personal experiences from a phenomenological approach. Seven DTs were interviewed through a discourse analysis to explore how governmental policies affect their role as well as how they interact with past theories of trauma and attachment. The research highlighted much of the emotional labour associated with their roles.

The research raises an important question about roles and the potential conflicts that may arise due to expectations associated with DTs' roles. The potential challenge associated with supporting CEC is raised in addition to the dual role associated with teaching and learning. The ability to adequately support CEC by DTs who take on a key worker role is explored through the interviews. Bhagvanji (2020) suggests that CEC are disproportionately disadvantaged by a punitive education system which they can struggle to fit into, in addition to the conflict within their personal lives. The author encourages teachers to try and understand how CEC's experiences affect their emotions and behaviour and subsequently their capacity to engage in learning. This research highlights the lack of inclusion which CEC experience whether in their home environment, in social care, or in their schooling. As one powerful CEC account documents, this situation perpetuates feelings of isolation, loneliness, rejection, abandonment and the lack of empathy from those around them which impacts self-esteem and motivation to engage.

Research by Boesley (2021) explored the challenges associated with carrying out the role of the DT in supporting CEC. Boesley conducted mixed-method research on 44 educational providers made up of schools, and PRUs. The DTs completed surveys, and some were interviewed to gain a richer understanding of their views.

The researcher states that for DTs to be effective and confident in their role they are required to have clear up-to-date information on the CEC as well as support from the Virtual Schools. The support of virtual school headteacher was seen as a key component in providing schoolwide training on trauma and attachment and training and support for DTs (Sebba & Berridge, 2019).

Some of the challenges associated with the role are inconsistencies between different LAs, which meant learning different ways of operating for each LA. The CEC within each school could be under the care of different LAs, who all have their own ways of working. The lack of a standardised approach meant DTs had to understand and work with various systems which were often confusing and time consuming. The researcher raised the apprehension that DTs have in identifying CEC and the difficulty they have in providing the support CEC are entitled to, without a system in place that helps to identify their profile. Moreover, Samul (2021) states that DTs need to ensure a joined-up approach with the professional network which is essential to providing support. This is in line with the legislation (SEND CoP, 2015) which advocates professionals to work together to meet needs.

 Recent research by De La Fosse et al. (2023) explored challenges DTs faced when supporting CEC with autism. DTs felt an initial challenge with differentiating their needs. The research suggested that facilitating factors included multidisciplinary working (facilitated through virtual meetings), support from the Virtual School and Personal Education Plans shared with other professionals. Other facilitating factors involved being part of an AASA, use of EC, the use of an Empathy Lab (although the research did not provide details of what this entailed) and access to counselling for CEC. A marked shift in attitude in staff was reported by DTs, Policies were amended to reflect the needs of CYP who experienced trauma and attachment and spaces were created to support emotional dysregulation. DTs also felt regular check-ins with CEC were beneficial to support a holistic child-centred approach.

Lastly, Morgan et al. (2015) raise an important question regarding teacher identity and how this influences the way they see their role. The researchers argue that

meeting both the cognitive needs of CYP and their socio-emotional needs are not mutually exclusive and go hand in hand with providing the best outcomes for CYP.

2.7.6 Systemic Changes

The papers reviewed below aim to explore whole-school systemic change, as well as to identify possible barriers and facilitators as a result of taking on an AAS approach or similar ethos.

2.7.7 Whole school training

Factors that facilitated systemic change as well as the barriers to such changes were identified in a report by the DLUHC (2023). This report outlined the following factors that enabled systemic change in adopting trauma-informed approaches:

• Governance and leadership that advocated and supported this practice.

• Effective utilisation of audits, policies, and procedures that facilitated the implementation of trauma-informed practices.

• A conducive physical environment, such as safe and collaborative spaces.

• Collaboration among staff at all organisational levels.

Additional measures included training and development to ensure staff's confidence in applying these principles, obtaining feedback on the project's effectiveness, and establishing adequate financial structures to support related expenses.

In contrast, the report identified several barriers to the implementation of a trauma-informed approach, including:

- Change fatigue among staff.

- Limited capacity to introduce new tools and practices.

- High staff turnover rates.

- Resistance to the notion that trauma is prevalent in society and that both individuals and organisations bear a role in addressing it.

- Budget cuts and the commissioning of services separately, leading to a fragmented approach.

- Failure to acknowledge the possibility of secondary trauma experienced by staff.

- A lack of consensus on what constitutes a trauma-informed approach and a dearth of standardised models for making comparisons (the researchers identified only one study that conducted pre- and post-comparisons).

This paper raised pertinent points that individuals in leadership positions should be mindful of when initiating systemic changes in educational institutions.

Similarly, a paper by Kennedy and Laverick (2019) acknowledges the complexity placed on headteachers to meet the needs of all children within a system of high levels of stress within staff due to high workloads, accountability and limited resources. However, the authors argue that schools have the potential for a containing function. The concepts of 'Holding' and 'Containment' are from the psychodynamic work of theorists Winnicott (1965) and Bion (1962) and originally referred to the parent-infant dynamic of being able to respond to the child's needs in a consistent manner that helps to meet the needs of the individual and thus helps to provide a secure base. The authors argue that when applied to schools', adults have

the potential to respond to the needs of CYP in an empathetic and attuned approach. The research suggests that supervision is likely to be beneficial to teachers and leaders in schools to provide a space to reflect on their professional practice. This they suggest is essential when considering the highly emotional nature of teaching and the complexity of feelings experienced by teachers (Edwards, 2016). The practice of supervision is uncommon within education settings and sits apart from performance management or appraisals and so provides a non-judgemental space. By providing capacity for leaders and staff in schools this then provides the capacity to support the needs of CYP through an inclusive approach.

2.7.8 Implications for EPs

When considering the role of professionals in supporting CEC, EPs are well placed to support the holistic needs of CEC at multiple levels within education systems. Unpublished research by Best (2019) offers insight into some of the ways EPs can support CEC such as:

II. Advocating for a relational approach within schools

III. Supporting the socio-emotional needs of adopted children and their families within schools.

Additionally, Mears (2020) states that the role of the EP was highlighted as being in a key position to both audit and monitor the progress within schools as well as to identify any systemic barriers to change. Moreover, Boesley (2021) makes useful recommendations for EPs in supporting CEC, including raising the profile of CEC by highlighting any CEC within schools at termly planning meetings to

ensure their needs are considered and they are fully supported. Boesley (2021) also suggests EPs can offer to deliver training on trauma and attachment needs, or trauma-informed approaches, in addition to developing school policies.

Langton's (2017) research emphasises the need for professionals to be aware of children who do not have the label and status that comes with LAC recognition but may still face the same complexities such as CYP under SGOs (e.g. bullying by peers, difficulties accessing the curriculum mental health needs and a lack of understanding of their presenting needs by carers and professionals). Professionals need to bear in mind that once a CYP has been adopted they are still likely to face the same complexities as before and may also need ongoing support. Furthermore, Mannay et al. (2017) suggest that the majority of the CYP interviewed felt the label of 'looked after' held negative connotations which led others to have lower expectations of them, pity them or view them as 'troubled'. This resulted in the CYP feeling frustrated, with a desire to reject the label and to be seen as 'normal'. Through these experiences CEC expressed that an understanding of their complex family histories and sometimes transient homelives led adults to have lower aspirations of their academic potential. The authors state the 'unintended harm associated with their identity' can have within the school system and the need for carers and professionals and key adults in their lives to have high expectations for them.

2.7.9 Critique and Summary

The reviewed studies offer insight into some of the key components that make up an AAS as well as highlighting key theories, backgrounds and recommendations. The

research reviewed also provides insight into the systemic changes that occur from taking on an attachment-aware and trauma-informed approach and provides support for claimed improvements in SEMH and well-being, as well as academic benefits and positive effects on staff well-being. This section will summarise some of the key findings but will firstly address some of the criticisms which arose from the literature reviewed.

A potential criticism of the approach is that it requires resources and support from all the staff within the school. This can be labour intensive as it requires all staff to undertake and maintain training in this area.

A second potential criticism of AAS is that the approach may not be suitable for all children, such as those with a higher level of need requiring more specialist intervention. Past research suggests a graduated response to meeting these needs is the most appropriate process (see Figure 5). This model places AAS as a universal approach to all students, with more of a targeted approach for CYP who have a higher level of need such as by providing a keyworker. At the highest level of need specialist support is provided through specialist services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Figure 5
Graduated Response
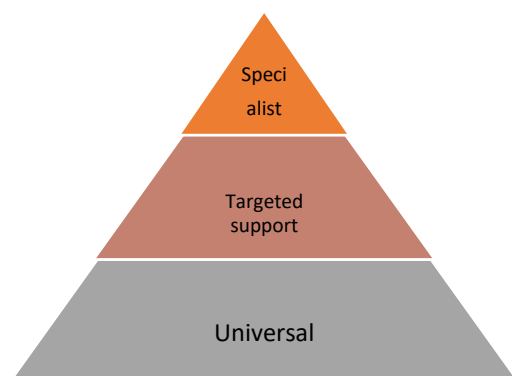
Graduated Response, adapted from Bath Spa University.

Large-scale longitudinal studies conducted, have been promising in terms of improvements documented in for example, academic progression as well as the development of soft skills, e.g., problem-solving, emotional intelligence and developing self-control). However, there has been relatively little literature published in this area, which limits conclusions that can be drawn from using such an approach. Additionally, there were often no control schools used to measure similar comparisons at the time that the research was conducted.

Many of the reviewed papers focused on the key theme of the relational element at the heart of attachment research. This was seen as an integral part of an AAS.

Moreover, it was acknowledged that whilst some children will have experienced trauma or attachment difficulties in their past, the emphasis remained less on the identification of these issues and more on solution-focused approaches to supporting those CYP, through the use of whole school staff training with relevant theoretical material, and providing strategic approaches, such as EC.

Another theme that emerges from the literature reviewed is the effect that the training has on staff and children. Whole school systemic change is facilitated through schools providing training on attachment and trauma-informed theories and equipping staff with practical strategies to support behaviour such as EC. Other changes described were action research projects often driven by a member of staff within the school, the creation of a calming space for children to regulate their emotions, and the implementation of relational-based behaviour policies. The effect that these changes had on schools appeared extensive, including increased attendance, improved grades and decreases in sanctions. Although these approaches set out to initially support CEC, the approach appeared to be wide-ranging and beneficial to a wider population; helping many vulnerable groups in schools and as well as improving teacher well-being.

Noteworthy school improvements within the literature review provided key areas of development:

➢ Academic improvements were reported in literacy and numeracy. Schools often use standardised assessments in reading, writing and Maths and so this provided quantitative data on student progress. However, creative subjects may be harder to measure in a similar way.

➢ The research reviewed on AAS did not explicitly measure the health benefits of the approach. However, some of the research reported fewer absences in schools which could correlate with improvements in health, although further research would need to be held to explore this claim.

➢ Improvement in staff well-being was reported in the literature, this was identified as an increase in staff confidence in managing challenging behaviour and staff became more reflective in their practice. Student

behaviour was cited by Little and Maunder (2021) as one reason that led teachers to want to leave the profession therefore the approach may have implications for aiding teacher retention, as DTs reported that teachers felt more confident and equipped to handle challenging behaviour.

In summary, the literature review helped to provide an understanding of some of the key features of an AAS. As noted earlier these features are likely to vary however it is noted (Kelly, 2020; Parker & Levinson, 2018; Rose & Gilbert, 2019) that there are key commonalities that are often shared, these encompass:

- A school-wide relational approach

- Behaviour policies that reflect the needs of CEC who may have experienced trauma and/or attachment needs

- The creation of a calming space which CYP can use to regulate themselves

- A key adult approach (Zsolnai & Szabó, 2021)

- School-wide training on trauma and attachment

Some approaches varied on additional features such as an emotion lab/ access to therapeutic counselling. However, taken together these features help with the overall framework of providing a space where CYP can feel seen, soothed, feel safe and secure (Rose & Gilbert, 2017).

In addition to systemic changes the role of the DT is an important feature of the literature review. DTs have a statutory duty to provide support for CLA which is broadening to also encompass PLAC. The literature review suggests that other CEC are not provided with the same status or support and so children on SGOs are not always recognised and supported to the same extent (Langton, 2016). Some of the

CEC within the research reported that they did not know about the role of the DT or at times feel supported by them (Matchett, 2022).

The role of the teacher was similarly a key feature of the literature. Past research highlights the complex role that teachers play in schools and how teacher training does not provide adequate preparation for understanding the needs of children who are care-experienced and may have trauma and attachment needs. The literature emphasises the emotional labour that is associated with responding to complex needs (Edwards, 2016). Zsolnai and Szabó (2021) state that teachers are in an important position to act as secondary attachment figures. Although the role of the Virtual School was found to provide training and understanding to DTs with particular emphasis on CLA this was not always extended to other CEC (Sebba & Berridge, 2019).

Unlike other professions the education system does not yet provide support for teachers to be supported through supervisory pedagogy. This means that teachers are without systemic opportunities to reflect on their practice. Kennedy and Laverick (2019) advocate for a relational model of supervision stating the importance for those in a role with high levels of emotional labour to have a support system built into their practice.

Lastly, the literature review provides insight into relational approaches within schools such as AAS. A growing body of research sheds light on the potential impact; large-scale studies by Rose and Gilbert (2017) involving 40 schools over 2 years provide hard and soft indicators of improvements ranging from an increase in academic results, staff confidence and increased self-regulation. Kelly et al. (2020) involved 77 educational establishments (primary, secondary, special and PRU). Core areas of change focussed on amending policies to reflect underlying attachment and trauma

needs, changes to the environment, developing staff pedagogy, and extending relationships with parents and carers. The research adds weight to the growing impact of a relational-based approach (Boesley 2021; Doonan & Stephens 2021). In addition to these larger-scale studies, Webber (2017) provides in-depth qualitative research through a case study based on a relational approach to a young person in a primary school with attachment needs. These studies provide an evidence base for an approach that can be used in a range of settings to help meet the needs of CYP with trauma and attachment needs.

2.8 Relevance and Impact of the Research

Schools are complex systems, which often rely on emotional labour in addition to the teaching of the curriculum. Through this research, it is hoped that there will be a greater understanding of key influences that facilitate systemic change.

This synthesis of the literature paves the way for a deeper understanding of the needs of CYP who have experienced trauma and attachment needs and how school settings can help to meet their needs through relational approaches and systemic changes.

The research highlights the integral part EPs play in liaising with schools to facilitate AAS projects within schools and LAs. Accordingly, it is hoped that professionals such as EPs, teachers and policymakers will find insight as a result of this research to inform their means of improving the well-being of children in their care.

This research, therefore, intends to make an impact on practitioners, individuals, and organisations at wider levels of society, by gaining an understanding of DTs in-depth

experiences of creating an AAS in the hope that others working in educational establishments or considering embarking on a similar venture will learn from their accounts. It is hoped that the research will draw out the features and differences of AAS and offer possible insights into the benefits of using this approach, especially as there is minimal research in this area. The research plans to contribute to the awareness of using the approach as an alternative way of responding to the complex needs of CEC and other vulnerable CYP to better support them throughout their time in education. Additionally, while the use of IPA does not allow for generalisations to be made, it is hoped that elements of transferability will be of use to other settings through the insights of the DT's lived experiences. Lastly, at a wider level, it is hoped that policymakers and educational frameworks, such as Ofsted can use insights from this research to inform future educational developments.

3 Methodology

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the research carried out. Firstly, outlining the aims and purpose of the research, followed by the philosophical perspective adopted which is one drawn from the ontological positioning. This ontological and epistemological positioning underpins the rationale, research questions, qualitative approach and use of IPA methodology. Secondly, the research will review the different stages of the data collection, analysis and ethical questions regarding the trustworthiness of the study given the researcher's reflexivity.

3.2 Aims and Purpose

The research is exploratory and therefore required open-ended research questions to facilitate an in-depth inductive qualitative analysis. The research aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Designated Teachers' experience being part of the implementation of an AAS?

1.a What are the Designated Teachers' understanding of an AAS?

The first question aims to explore the process of being part of the AAS, based on the DTs individual experiences. Secondly, the subquestion aims to explore more broadly

what the DTs understanding of an AAS is, such as the elements that make up the overall framework of an AAS, to help define the concept.

A preliminary literature search revealed a gap in the research within the area of AAS which seeks to alter schooling practice through the adoption of systemic change that seeks to benefit students' emotional development. There was no academic evidence of the role that DTs play in facilitating AAS. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to investigate the lived experience of DTs to understand their role within AAS projects and the effect this had within their schools on policy and practice.

Despite previous research revealing the positive effect AAS can have from a quantitative perspective on academic outcomes, little to no research was found from a qualitative perspective. This was an aspect of the research that was deemed essential to uncover, as AAS are designed to create an environment that essentially supports the feelings and emotions of an individual. Therefore, it was appropriate to explore the first-hand accounts of those individuals most closely situated within the system.

3.3 Research Design

This research is qualitative in design and data was gathered through semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured approach to the interview was chosen because it is a suitable approach that fits in with the chosen type of analysis. Smith and Osborn (2008) suggest IPA is not concerned with cause and effect or fact-finding. Instead, it aims to gather first-hand views of phenomena experienced through in-depth semi-structured interviews. Willig and Rogers (2017) similarly advocate using this method when using an exploratory approach, so that the interview has structure but also

allows for the interviewee to follow their thoughts, feelings and perceptions. Semi-structured interviews allow meaning to be constructed between the researcher and the participant.

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed for key concepts to be explored through the interview schedule questions. The interview was designed to be flexible and responsive to information provided by the participant's responses throughout the interview process. Three general questions were asked during the interviews: the researcher used a target question which allowed for flexibility within the research to follow lines of thought from participants (see interview schedule in Appendix J). The researcher prompted participants to encourage them to go into further depth or reflect on the participant's views to gain further clarity and construct meaning-making. The IPA approach was a suitable way of gaining insight into the participant's lived experiences, which influenced the open-ended and exploratory nature of the questions adopted by the interviewer.

3.4 Other Methodological Approaches Considered

This research required a method of data analysis that emphasised the interpretative and hermeneutical aspects of the study. IPA was chosen over other thematic forms of data analysis, such as thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) or grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) as the researcher is interested in the in-depth individual experiences of participants whereas other forms of analysis look for patterns across the data as a whole from the outset and thus may lose the uniqueness of the individual's experience.

3.5 Critique of IPA

An overview of IPA research by Smith (2011b) suggests much of IPA research was used to gain in-depth personal experiences of illness within health psychology. However, IPA may be criticised for a lack of objectivity as IPA is an idiographic philosophy based on participants' subjective experiences and the uniqueness of the individual within a homogenous sample.

Potential drawbacks of using IPA are that it is a lengthy and detailed process that takes time to organise, conduct interviews with participants, transcribe the interviews verbatim and take time to reflect and interpret the responses to later code the data and analyse it.

Additionally, the research may describe the phenomena without providing reasons behind why it has occurred (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is therefore more suited to understanding and exploring processes or experiences rather than outcomes.

3.6 Researcher Positioning
3.6.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a philosophy that is concerned with understanding the lived experiences of humans, based on how they consciously reflect upon those experiences. First derived from Husserl (1927) who later argued that it was important to 'go back to the things themselves' (Husserl, 1982, p.35). Phenomenology is rooted in the process of how we make meaning in our lives, whether the 'things' which are being reflected upon are in the present environment or the past. It is the act of consciously thinking about them which is central. Husserl argued it is through the conscious relationship sought through intentionally thinking about the

phenomena that are important, a process likened to 'Searching for Gems' (Smith, 2011a) or bringing something that was hidden to light (Heidegger, 1962).

The process of meaning-making is described as being dependent on the hermeneutic circle, which is the interpretative process that is dynamic, where the making of meaning shifts between the part and the whole (Smith, 2011a).

3.6.2 Ontology and Epistemology

Ontology considers the nature of reality and can be defined as 'the study of being' (Crotty, 1998). Ontology ranges from a positivist's realism, which argues that the 'truth' about the nature of reality can be verified objectively, to a constructivist paradigm that argues individuals hold beliefs that will differ, based on multiple realities that can change based on the information a person holds at that time (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The proposed research is interested in exploring the nature of each DTs experiences within their specific contexts. This research, therefore, takes on a relativist ontology which in this study assumes there to be multiple realities of each AAS based on each DTs individual experience within their school system, such as each school's ethos, area of 'action research' (identified area to be studied and changed), school community etc. Therefore, how each school varies and the interaction which exists between the individual and their reality is an important research consideration (Burr, 2003).

Epistemology can be defined as 'a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know' (Crotty, 1998. p.3). Constructivist epistemology asserts that multiple realities may exist and so it will be important to consider each participant's perspective, to explore their reality and discover their truth. When interviewing DTs, it was important to gain a sense of the individual's perspective as well as the

researcher's interpretation of it, as part of the hermeneutic cycle. The research aimed to uncover ideas based on DT's experiences and interpretations concerning their role in creating an AAS intended to represent their lived reality. The research takes the perspective that there is no absolute truth, each DT will hold their own perspective of truth and reality, based on their interpretation of events within their varying school contexts. Smith et al. (2009) suggest IPA is suitable when the focus is on personal meaning and sense-making in a particular context, for people who share a particular experience. Seth (2021) theorises the possibility of being able to imagine what it may be like to experience a phenomenon from another person's perspective; although this is somewhat possible, it is limited by our own subjective experience, so the author argues it is impossible to truly understand another person's conscious experience.

This dilemma is further explored through the model of Johari's window (Luft & Ingham, 1961) (see Figure 6) which uses a quadrant to explore what is known to the self and others. The window can be seen as an interactive model that is used to understand the different aspects of the self. Whereby, there will be aspects of the self which are known to others and hidden from one's perception (blind spot) as well as other aspects of the self which are known to oneself but not known to others. It can be argued that there are multiple aspects of the self which are likely to manifest in various forms and situations. Likewise, Smith (2011a) suggests that to get to the phenomenon, the researcher must attempt to understand what is 'apparent', 'suggestive', and 'secret'. These aspects pertain to what is apparent at face value, what the researcher may interpret and what may be hidden from view (this is further discussed within the data analysis section below).

Figure 6

 Johari's Window

Known to self   Not known to self

	Known to self	Not known to self
Known to others	Open	Blind Spot
Not known to others	Hidden	Unknown
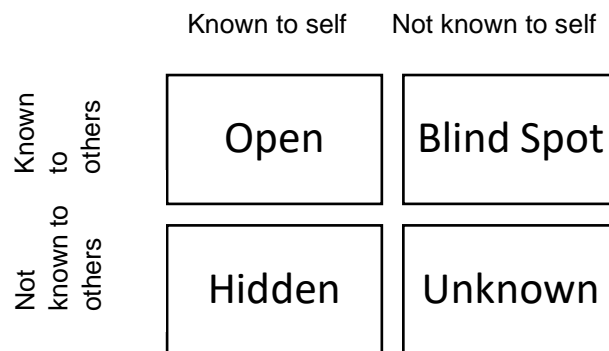
Note. Adapted from Johari's Window (Luft & Ingham, 1961)**.** *This figure illustrates aspects of self-awareness.*

3.6.3 Rationale for Qualitative Study

As part of Yardley's (2000) evaluative criteria, the author states that there should be coherence between 'the research question, philosophical perspective, method, and analysis' (p.215). Therefore, the rationale for choosing a qualitative approach links back to the researcher's ontology and epistemology, research question and methodology. As stated earlier the research uses an ontological position which believes that to seek truth about the world around them is dependent on a relativist position based on an individual's interpretation of reality. The epistemology which I draw on is from a constructivist approach which states there are multiple realities based on a person's experience in the world. This approach is therefore in line with IPA which is interested in a person's lived experience based on their meaning-making. Smith et al. (2009) suggest that as IPA is based on the researcher's interpretation of the participants meaning-making of their experiences, any claim of truth should be tentative as analysis is subjective.

3.6.4 Description and Rationale for IPA

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is described by Smith (2011b) as:

'An approach to enquiry concerned with the detailed examination of participants'

experience and how participants make sense of that experience. It is

phenomenological in its concern with lived experience and it is interpretative in

recognising the analysis of experience as a hermeneutic activity. A distinctive feature

of IPA is its commitment to an idiographic perspective to the in-depth analysis of

individual cases' (p.6)

IPA has three main tenets of philosophy that inform the approach (see Figure 7).

Figure 7
Philosophies Informing IPA Approach
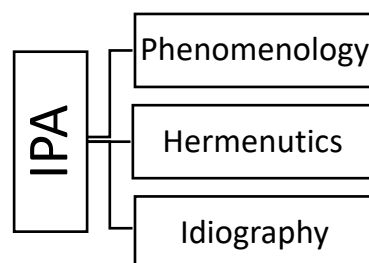
These include:

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is interested in understanding how a person makes sense of particular experiences. The key principles of phenomenology can be attributed to theorists such as Husserl (1859-1938) Heidegger (1889-1976) Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) and Sartre (1905-1980) (Smith et al., 2009).

For Husserl phenomenological enquiry meant focusing on the human experience, through a process of reflective enquiry (Smith et al., 2009). Husserl was keen to

understand the phenomenon in its purest essence, to get as close to the phenomenon as possible. One way of doing this involved setting aside or 'bracketing off' one's judgement and beliefs that may be held.   Husserl believed this to be a critical aspect that needs to be considered so that preconceived beliefs do not cloud the ability to make sense of another person's experiences. Willig (2013) suggests that *meaning* is something that occurs that is separate from experience and so phenomenology helps to explain how different people can have different experiences of the same event, based on the individual's perception and interpretation of it. IPA attempts to understand the meaning-making of an individual's lived experiences based on their interpretation of them.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics focuses on the element of interpretation as theorised by Heidegger (1927; 1962), often through the use of language.

There are two key aspects within this: the first relates to the interpretative activity, as the participant attempts to relay meaning based on their experience through language and the second aspect relates to how the researcher attempts to interpret the participant's understanding of the experience (double hermeneutics).

Smith et al. (2009) cautions that it is not a matter of the researcher's interpretation being truer per se than the participants. However, the research's interpretation may be able to 'add value' by offering insights by connecting meaning within the wider context of the data set or by grounding it within psychological theories.

Lastly, Smith et al. (2009) suggests the hermeneutic circle as a dynamic process that considers the relationship between the part and the whole such as the word within

the context of the sentence level or an extract within the wider data set. This dynamic relationship helps the researcher to consider meaning at different levels.

Idiographic

Idiographic philosophy is often based on a participant's subjective experiences and the uniqueness of the individual within a homogenous sample. Larkin et al. (2006) argue that IPA can be viewed more as a perspective than as a methodology, with a focus on the experiential claims of the participants at the centre of it. IPA is inductive as well as idiographic and so considers the value of the individual participant's in-depth detailed account of the phenomena rather than something to be generalised. The value of using an idiographic approach is from the in-depth nature of exploration with a single case study or small sample. This allows for rich data to be detailed and analysed.

3.7 Research Procedures
3.7.1 Sampling

IPA specifies the use of a 'fairly homogenous sample' as possible, ideally between 3 and 6 participants (Smith et al., 2009). Five participants were recruited for this study; therefore, an optimal sample size was reached. IPA does not seek to generalise from participants' experiences and so smaller sample sizes do not pose a problem, rather IPA draws upon an idiographic philosophy based on participants' subjective experiences, it attempts to draw upon the uniqueness of the individual within a homogenous sample to understand something about the phenomena experienced (Smith et al., 2009).

The researcher used a homogenous sample as possible by recruiting DTs from one type of setting (primary schools), within one of the boroughs participating in the AASA project.

3.7.2 Participants

AAS are created with the central aim of supporting CEC, therefore it was crucial to gain the experiences of the individuals who were to be centrally involved in facilitating the AASA within their school settings. The role of DT has been a statutory requirement to support CEC since 2009 and has more recently extended to supporting PLAC since 2018. The role is supported by Virtual Schools who have a key responsibility in overseeing all CEC within a LA. For these reasons, this study aimed to recruit participants who were employed as DTs within their schools. Participants consisted of white women, which broadly reflected the majority demographic of staff within their respective schools. All the DTs had additional duties within their school; most of the DTs were in senior leadership positions and held teaching responsibilities, were safeguarding leads, or were assistant head teachers.

3.7.3 Recruitment

Participants were recruited on a first come basis until the desired number was recruited. Recruitment took place by emailing the head teachers of all 25 primary schools participating in the AASA project at the end of the summer term (July 2021), a year after the project had started. Schools were provided with information sheets which outlined the research project and time commitment (see Appendix K).

The researcher was unable to secure any participants in the first wave of recruitment. Upon reflection, it is thought that this may have been due to the high demands in schools on staff time at the end of the summer term. Therefore, recruitment emails were sent out again at the beginning of the Autumn term (September 2021) to recruit a sufficient number of DTs. This proved more successful with several schools registering interest. From the respondents, two had to be discounted, firstly because they had only begun in the role of the DT at the start of the new academic year and so would not have had not been part of the previous year's project to be able to reflect on the process. Another DT had to be discounted for a similar reason as they had been job-sharing and were only in the position of DT during the final three months of the project. This meant that they had not been in the role long enough to have sufficient oversight of the whole process, to be able to reflect upon it. DTs were informed of the inclusion criteria (below) to ensure they met the requirements for the study. Once this was confirmed, five DTs were recruited in September and invited to participate in the study via email.

3.7.4 Inclusion Criteria

IPA requires the sample to be as 'fairly homogeneous' as possible so that the researched phenomena can be explored and understood. The inclusion criteria for participants in this study were as follows:

 ➢ Participants must have been in the role of DT for at least a year.

 ➢ They must work within a mainstream LA primary school setting.

 ➢ The participating school will be enrolled in the AASA training programme.

 ➢ Participants will have a good level of English proficiency (i.e., speak fluent English) to be able to participate confidently in interviews. This is an important

aspect of IPA as it is based on gathering views and hence words used, pauses, and tone of voice are all taken into consideration when processing the data.

Table 5 illustrates the homogeneity criteria.

Table 5

Homogeneity Criteria

Participant Factors			Setting Factors	
Participants	Fluent in English	In the role of DT at the beginning of the project	Training Status: Must have participated in the AASA over the last year	Setting type: Mainstream Primary school
Hannah	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Victoria	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Louise	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Anna	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Alice	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

3.7.5 Settings

Five DTs were recruited from mainstream LA primary schools situated within Greater London boroughs. Participants were interviewed at the end of the year following their involvement in a year-long pilot of the AASA project. The project involved DTs

attending a series of workshops they could opt-in to depending on their interests as well as two whole school training sessions on:

1. Trauma and Attachment

2. Emotion Coaching

These sessions were either delivered by the EPs supporting the school, who in most cases were the link EPs. The training was mostly co-delivered with the DTs to encourage them to take ownership of the project within their school community. A whole school audit was first performed to provide data on potential areas to develop within the school. This would be used to inform an action research project within the school. By identifying areas of need based on attachment and trauma research this could then be used to improve pedagogy or practice within the school, such as the behaviour policy, the use of restorative approaches, or possibly developing an aspect of the school environment, such as a therapeutic space. For each academic term, DTs were offered three goal-focused coaching sessions by EPs using the principles of the G.R.O.W model (Grant, 2012) (see Figure 8). The model was used to aid goal setting as well as problem-solving, to consider what they wanted to achieve within the year and what the potential barriers might be. Regular support and workshops were delivered by the Virtual School throughout the year on aspects that would help them to develop the action research project.

Figure 8

G.R.O.W Model
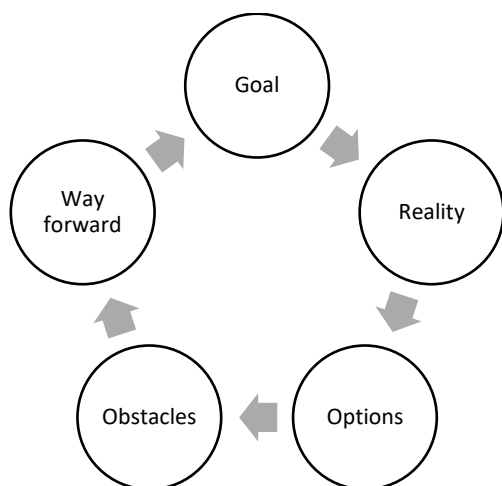
Note. The model is based on the G.R.O.W model used for coaching (Grant 2012), as a way to identify achievable goals, potential options and obstacles that may help or hinder the process and how to overcome any potential barriers.

3.8 Data Collection
3.8.1 Interviews during the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the time of interviewing (summer 2021) the COVID-19 pandemic was still impacting the country. There had been several lockdowns, with dual forms of teaching (in person and online) still happening; classes which had returned were in bubbles (UK governmental guidelines stated that classes could not mix with other children outside of their class bubble). This created a feeling that normality had not yet returned and there were effects of the pandemic still being experienced by the school community.

In line with government guidance and recommendations from the Department of Health at the time, the researcher ensured all protocols were followed to meet the guidance at the time of the interviews which required social distancing within indoor spaces with good ventilation. Additionally, frequent Covid testing was good practice before meeting indoors and so the researcher ensured a negative COVID-19 test was performed before any face-to-face meetings.

3.8.2 Pilot Interview

A pilot interview was conducted with a fellow researcher to practice the practical aspects of meeting online via the video conferencing platform 'Google Meet', which at the time was a relatively new way of meeting. The pilot interview rehearsed the interview schedule and style of questioning which asked open-ended questions with prompts designed to follow the lead of the interviewee and gain in-depth insight into their experiences in line with IPA methodology. The pilot interview also helped with asking spontaneous questions and trying out different questioning styles, such as 'How did you feel about that?', or 'Can you tell me more about that?' or allowing for pauses for the other person to generate thoughts in an unrushed approach. The pilot interview was first carried out with a fellow researcher to gain confidence in the operational aspects of the interview. Meeting virtually was new at the time and so it was important to learn how to facilitate a call as well as to gain confidence in practising interview questions and consider any challenges that may have arisen from conducting a semi-structured interview using few questions. This practice enabled the researcher to refine different aspects of the interview process and

improve the skill of interviewing participants using prompts to ensure a greater level of depth.

3.8.3 DT Interviews

All interviews were offered in person or virtually. The use of face-to-face and virtual interviews had both pros and cons. The COVID-19 context meant that offering a virtual interview was a way of minimising potential exposure to contracting the virus which was still very active at that time. There was also the convenience of not needing to travel or find an allocated room within the school. However, the use of virtual interviews can have potential disadvantages as well, such as during the first interview there was a technical difficulty which meant the researcher could not hear the participant for the first few minutes. This took a little while to problem solve and remedy, and so may have impacted the potential length of the interview. Another potential disadvantage of interviewing virtually is that the whole body cannot be seen. As people also tend to communicate to a high degree through their body language (Mandal, 2014), its relative invisibility online has the potential to reduce some of the information that is communicated when meeting a participant in person, thereby altering and thus potentially affecting rapport building, which is often a key aspect of interactive data collection (Braun & Clarke, 2013)

Four of the interviewees opted for virtual meetings via 'Google Meet' and one opted for a face-to-face interview that was also recorded on a laptop, to allow for opportunities to review later to aid transcription and the data analysis process. The meetings aimed to adhere to recommended guidance to ensure that the essential standards of practice were adhered to (British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of

Ethics and Conduct, 2006, 2018). All of the participants were interviewed within a single meeting, typically lasting between 45 minutes to one hour.

3.8.4 Ethical Considerations

In line with the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2014) ethical approval was sought through the Tavistock and Portman's Research Ethics Committee (TREC) via a TREC form (see Appendix L). The letter confirming ethical approval, (see Appendix M) was recieved. After approval was granted by the committee, consent was then sought from each participating primary school. This entailed approval being granted by headteachers and informed consent from participants. Information sheets which outlined the study were sent to all schools. The research undertaken sought to adhere to the guidelines of the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2014), and that of the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2018, 2021), which states four main competencies: Respect, Competence, Responsibility and Integrity. This research aimed to adhere to these principles through the research process, as detailed below. Additionally, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) (2015) advocates the use of reflection on one's practice which the researcher sought to become aware of through reflexivity as detailed below.

3.8.5 Power Imbalance

The researcher was aware that they were known to two of the participants through supporting schools within the EPS. The researcher was aware of a potential power imbalance that this could cause, or the potential participant bias (whereby the

participant may want to please the interviewer by providing socially desirable answers). To minimise this dynamic, the interviews began with the caveat that although the researcher's role was typically to support the school by working within the EPS, in this capacity the interviewer was acting as a researcher who was interested in the views they held from their involvement in the AASA project. The participants were told that they were not obligated to take part and that participation or otherwise would have no bearing on day-to-day relationships with the researcher or the EPS. The researcher felt that these two participants were able to give a balanced view of their experiences and able to reflect upon both positive and negative aspects of the AASA project.

Additionally, the use of IPA is interested in the in-depth experiences of the participants. This means that aside from the three questions that were asked, participants were in control of what they wanted to talk about, which placed the locus of control (Rotter, 1966) with them. This may have had the effect of placing more power with the participants and therefore reducing any likelihood of potential discomfort.

3.8.6 Consent

Consent was first sought and approved by the head of the Virtual School involved in creating the project via telephone and followed up with written consent (see Appendix N). Verbal consent was then sought from the lead EP involved in creating and organising the project within the EPS, to ensure that the research was in keeping with service and would be of value to them afterwards. Following this, an email was sent to head teachers inviting their schools to participate in the research.

Interested schools were again sent inclusion criteria to ensure any DTs participating in the research met the specified criteria. If the criteria were met by participants, they were then invited to participate in the research and an information sheet was provided to inform them of what the research entailed. This was then followed up by seeking informed consent from prospective DTs to participate in the research (see Appendix O). At the start of the interviews, participants were again informed of their right to withdraw from the research and of the use of recording equipment for the research (as stated below in further detail).

3.8.7 Ethics and Risk

When considering possible harm to participants, the researcher ensured measures were put in place to minimise risk. As well as following ethical guidelines (BPS, 2021; HCPC, 2016), this involved participants being fully informed of the nature of the research. Following a risk assessment (see Appendix P), the risk to participants' well-being was considered to be low (by the Tavistock and Portman Research and Ethics Committee). Contingency measures were put in place should the interview process or nature of the research on trauma and attachment elicit feelings that cause any distress. Moreover, teaching can be considered a profession which entails emotional labour, and so working with children who have high or complex needs may also result in a need for an emotional outlet. In the event this was to occur, participants would be offered the opportunity to be debriefed after the interview, talk about any feelings that arose and be signposted to organisations that can offer further support. The researcher also planned to check back in with them after a couple of weeks if necessary to ensure their well-being.

3.8.8 Data Storage and Confidentiality

Participants were informed by invitation letter and again at the time of interviews regarding how their data would be processed and stored once the analysis was completed (in line with university protocols). Participation in the research was voluntary and participants were fully informed of their right to withdraw from the interview process at any time (without question) or have their data withdrawn up to two weeks after the interview prior to the data being processed and analysed. Participants were briefed that although strict measures to protect identity by anonymising the data would be implemented, it might be impossible to guarantee complete anonymity owing to the nature of some of the data, such as possessing a combination of attributes e.g., involvement in the AAS project, geographical location, the type of school, and particular characteristics or attributes of the staff.

Data were audio recorded on a password-protected laptop, transcribed verbatim and analysed using IPA (Smith et al., 2009). Data was kept securely in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (European Union, 2018) and the Data Protection Act (2018). Participants' data was anonymised by firstly providing participants transcripts with a number e.g., DT1, for confidentiality then later in the analysis by providing them with pseudonyms.

3.8.9 Situation of the Self in Research

IPA is associated with the use of 'bracketing off'. This involves the researcher being conscious of pre-existing thoughts, feelings and emotions, and acknowledging that they bring their own bias based on pre-existing assumptions. However, it can be argued that it is not entirely possible to completely rid ourselves of bias but rather to

be aware of the bias which we hold and the influence it may create on our work. Guba and Lincoln (2005) suggest that this awareness of one's role in the process of gathering data is crucial and may enhance the quality of the study. Therefore, to minimise potential bias within this study the researcher was reflexive and conscious of their wider role involved in some aspects of the project, such as delivering training and coaching DTs (not involved in this study). It was important to acknowledge that the researcher could have held potential bias through having some personal experiences within the project. For example, having prior knowledge of the process of coaching DT had the potential for the researcher to be less inquisitive during the interview stage or by making assumptions about what their experience was like based on my own. Procedures were put in place to minimise the potential for this to occur such as by bringing conscious awareness, thoughts, feelings and proximity to the project. A research diary was used to track decisions made throughout the process and aid the 'bracketing off' from these experiences; Additionally, during the analysis process, the researcher ensured that any inference emerged from direct references to the transcript. The use of research supervision provided opportunities to discuss different aspects of the research as they arose, such as conducting research using IPA, how to carry out semi-structured interviews and consideration of emerging themes and how they may reflect the individual experiences of each participant.

In addition, as part of the research sessions led by staff at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Institute, students were allocated to different research groups depending on the type of analysis used. This allowed the researcher to reflect with peers on matters that arose and to provide each other with support and critique at various stages throughout the research design.

3.9 Data Analysis

3.9.1 Stages of Data Analysis

Phases of analysis were undertaken using IPA (Smith et al., 2009) and are presented in Figure 9. Appendix Q shows examples of the stages of analysis which the researcher undertook (transcription, initial noting, coding and developing emerging themes). Following the interview stage, each DT's interview was transcribed verbatim, ensuring that all utterances were recorded, including significant pauses, repetitions, and emotional reactions. This process involved listening repeatedly to the recordings to ensure accuracy, Smith et al. (2009) suggest that within this stage there is an element of interpretation as the researcher begins the process of meaning-making based on the participant's responses.

Figure 9
Stages of IPA Analysis

Stage 1. Familiarisation with transcripts	Stage 2. Initial noting and examination of content and use of language	Stage 3. Development of emerging themes
Stage 4. Connections between emergent themes	Stage 5. Repeat individually with all participants	Stage 6. Search for connecting themes across participants. Development of overarching themes, repeat with all participants

Stage 1

➢ The researcher first reads and re-reads the initial transcript, to familiarise themselves with the data (see Appendix Q). IPA requires the researcher to familiarise themselves with the transcripts as a part of the data analysis process to begin to interpret meaning-making (Willig, 2008).

Stage 2

➢ In line with Smith et al.'s (2009) approach, data was then analysed by going through the transcript and highlighting pertinent words, phrases or terms into three columns: descriptive, linguistic, or conceptual. This helped to provide an interpretation of DTs experiences, intending to get as close to their experience as possible.

➢ This descriptive step involved initial noting by labelling the text in terms of the frequency of words or phrases, words that stood out for perceived importance to the participant or researcher.

➢ This linguistic step involved making comments at a deeper level of analysis based on the choice of words used such as metaphors, and connotations of keywords of phrases used.

➢ The conceptual step involved the process of looking at keywords or phrases, possibly concerning larger aspects of the data set or key concepts or theories that can be drawn from the meaning of the extract (see Appendix Q).

Stage 3

➤ The conceptual coding step involved looking for emergent themes that

capture the participant's experiences. This involved moving between the 'part'

and the 'whole', such as looking at particular extracts and relating them to the

overall interview.

Stage 4

➤ Developing emergent themes, subordinate and superordinate themes

➤ This process involved the researcher searching for connections between

themes, by primarily working with the annotated notes. The researcher then

began to group and organise emergent themes by mapping them onto a

thematic map.

Stage 5

➤ The process involved participants' data being processed in turn, as part of an

idiographic approach as the data is concerned with the unique experiences of

the individual (Smith et al., 2009). IPA is based on looking for themes from

transcripts within and then across cases (Larkin et al., 2006; Willig, 2008).

Stage 6

➤ The final step involved identifying where themes converge or diverge, within

individual participants and then shared at the group level. This is illustrated in

Tables 7-11. Themes were developed into areas of convergence when there

were commonalities between three or more participants. This was carefully

tracked back and highlighted on the transcript to ensure an accurate account

was presented. This process took time to synthesise each participant's views and ideas, which either contributed to becoming a theme or were abandoned if the themes were not well represented. In areas where there were no shared experiences this highlighted areas of divergence. Both aspects were described to show features of connection and unique experiences.

➢ The emergent themes that were grouped into commonalities were then more broadly grouped into superordinate and subordinate themes.

➢ The labelling of subordinate and superordinate themes was revised to find labels that best represented the themes (see Appendix Q). Liaising with my supervisor also helped to construct themes to ensure they fully represented the experiences and views of participants.

3.10 Validity and Quality
3.10.1 Trustworthiness

Whilst issues of reliability and validity are found within quantitative research methods these have less applicability to qualitative studies. In qualitative research Yardley (2000) uses four key principles to support the integrity of qualitative research:

1. Sensitivity to Context

This can be illustrated by showing empathy during the interview, identifying patterns of themes by closely relating them to the transcripts and showing an awareness of existing literature on the topic to be explored. The researcher has sought to show sensitivity to context by adhering to these aspects throughout the research process and also by, for example, providing verbatim

extracts to provide the participant's voice within the research and by making tentative claims when making possible claims of interpreting meaning.

2. Commitment and Rigour

Secondly, Yardley (2000) uses the principle of 'commitment and rigour'. The researcher sought to demonstrate this during data collection through the care that is shown through thoroughness and attentiveness towards participants. Smith et al. (2009) emphasises that the role of the researcher and the level of skill needed when interviewing participants should not be underestimated.

3. Transparency and Coherence

The third principle is 'transparency and coherence', which the researcher adhered to by detailing the stages of the research process. For example, describing how participants were selected, detailing the research schedule and the stages of analysis (Yardley, 2000).

4. Reflexivity

Finally, the researcher will be aware of their own 'reflexivity' as an essential part of the qualitative research (Galletta, 2013). The researcher aimed to be thoughtful and reflective throughout the data collection process and analysis to bring to conscious awareness any factors that may have influenced the research. The impact and importance of the research is also considered by Yardley (2000) as a key aspect of what makes the research valid, by having something interesting to offer. The impact and importance of the research are discussed further in the discussion chapter.

I was aware of myself in the role and the potential conflict of supporting two of the participating schools as a Trainee EP. To be mindful of any potential conflict of roles I prefaced the interviews with the understanding that I was working in the capacity of the role of researcher and that I was interested in the views and experiences they held during their involvement in the AASA. In addition, I used supervision to discuss the research findings to consider the potential conceptual level of meaning of participants' thoughts when inferring potential meaning. I also kept a research diary to track where thoughts had come from and to ensure they were linked to the transcripts from their accounts and not my thoughts or feelings.

Lastly, 'member checking' is a way of checking with participants whether the themes or interpretations are in line with their intentional meaning. IPA may use this with single case studies however, a large aspect of IPA is based on the interpretative account between the researcher and the participant to offer insights in the data beyond the surface level. Therefore, member checking can be seen to undermine the integrity of the interpretive process (Smith et al., 2009). Other ways of strengthening the ethical integrity and quality of the data are discussed below.

3.10.2 Quality

When carrying out IPA research Nizza et al. (2021) suggest four key markers for high-quality IPA. These consist of:

1. Constructing a compelling, unfolding narrative.
2. Developing a vigorous experiential and/or existential account.

3. Close analytic reading of participants' words.

4. Attending to convergence and divergence.

The authors state that these four elements are essential to be able to convey the participant's accounts of their lived experiences. They suggest that an event becomes an experience due to the level of significance a person gives to the event. It is through this process of reflection that helps a person to process and make sense of past events. Likewise, Smith et al. (2009) suggest good IPA relates to allowing a person to reflect on something of importance to them to help them make sense of it. This study has therefore attempted to follow these key markers throughout the analysis.

4 Findings

4.1. Chapter Overview

The chapter will first present each DTs individual experience in turn with a visual map of emergent themes. These illustrate the different levels of themes; superordinate themes (blue), subordinate themes (grey) and related themes (Smith et al., 2009) (now renamed 'experiential themes' and 'group experiential themes' (Smith et al., 2021). For the purposes of this research, the former terminology will be used as this was current at the time of writing.

These relate to the research question which aimed to explore the views and experiences of DTs in supporting the implementation of the AAS. The chapter will draw upon some of the extracts that emerged from the interviews before presenting the shared experiences of the DTs and lastly highlighting areas of convergence and divergence.

4.2 Hannah's Views and Experiences

Figure 10

Thematic Map of Hannah's Views and Experience
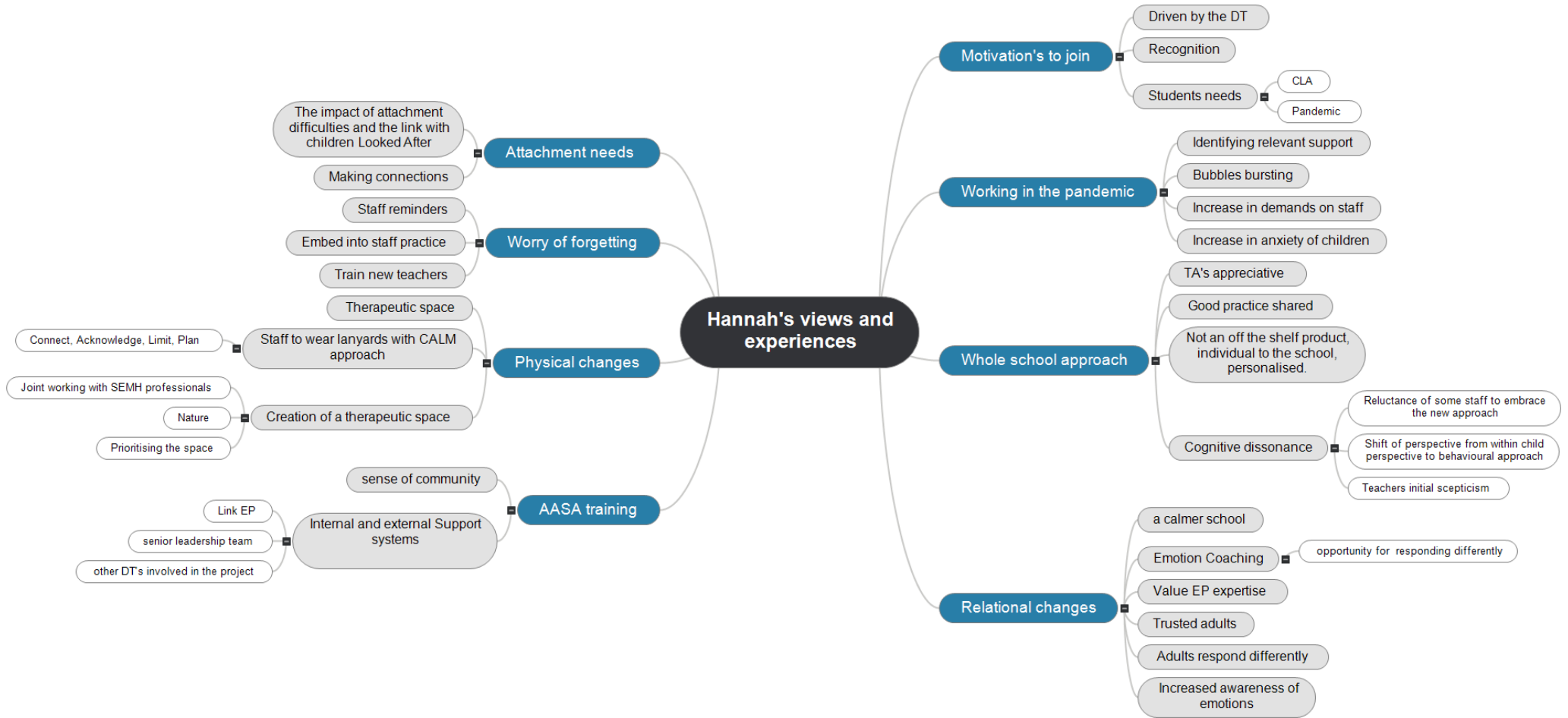
Hannah is a Special Educational Needs and (Disabilities) Coordinator (SENCo) within her primary school, who still teaches at times to cover lessons. The following summary is based on an interview with Hannah at the end of the year after her school completed the AASA. Hannah's views and experiences are presented in the thematic map in Figure 10.

Hannah spoke enthusiastically about her desire to join the AASA (relating to the process of her school becoming attachment-aware and trauma-informed). This appeared to signify an alignment between Hannah's views and the school's ethos. She shared that she was familiar with attachment research as part of the SENCo training she had previously completed. Hannah's prior knowledge of attachment research re-ignited her interest and helped to drive the project forward by taking action to approach the headteacher to become involved. Hannah shared that she also felt the award fitted in with the ethos of the school. She reflected on the need to support CEC and their families:

'It's just being aware not only of Looked After Children but their families as well. You know, it's definitely an issue we need to focus on.' (55-57)

The AASA worked in collaboration with the Virtual School whose aim is to support CEC. This came through during the interview as a priority for Hannah, when considering their immediate and longer-term needs. Hannah reflected on an aspect of the training that stood out to her about the longer-term prospects of CEC:

'When it comes back to the Looked After Children because at the beginning of the session they had those facts and figures about how well they do in school and how well… [corrects herself] not well some of them do …and what some of their futures look like…and you just needed reminding of that.' (436-446)

Hannah showed an awareness that the pandemic created a level of unpredictability which increased anxiety in students and families; classes were restricted from interacting with each other to limit the spread of the virus. Although Hannah described this as not always effective, and the virus spread between different classes resulting in '*bubbles bursting*' (a bubble was a term used at the time to describe the isolation of a group of individuals as a way of minimising the spread of the virus):

'The biggest challenge was COVID (laughs) um …you get hit quite bad in terms of our school was open and shut, bubbles were bursting everywhere, it was a nightmare!' (613-619)

Hannah was conscious of the effect the pandemic had had on students and wanted the school to be able to identify relevant support to put in place:

'Making sure that we were able to establish the variables that create that nurturing environment for the kids to come back into [was important] …' (90-93)

It was apparent that Hannah faced some challenges regarding the receptiveness of staff towards training. Some of the differences were between teaching staff and teaching assistants; teachers were initially wary:

'You put the word out, oh it's a whole school staff meeting, and you get oh my god seriously you get the eye rolls, you get all that.' (129-134)

Whereas teaching assistants were appreciative of being invited:

'TAs were actually really, really grateful that they could be involved in that type of training as a lot of the staff meetings is just teachers, you know, and then you kind of have to feedback to them.' (151-158)

The initial difference in attitude could be attributed to the different roles within the school and the additional time constraints on teachers, whereas the support staff may have appreciated the opportunity to access the same training as teachers and acquire new skills. However, once all staff had received the training Hannah could see a difference in staff recognising attachment behaviour and a change in their approach:

'You just see them like, really join the dots with children, they know and I definitely think, because the staff have changed their way...that's gonna affect the rest of the school because they've changed their mindset…'

She continues:

'…their reaction isn't to shout. They can think, oh actually, maybe it's part of the issue, their home life, so you know maybe that's not going to help, so let's think of the why [of] behaviour, the why.' (830-851)

Hannah's repetition of the word '*why*' appears significant as this embodies the concept of really wanting others to understand the reasons behind children's behaviour. Her hope appeared to be that by receiving the training, the staff would gain a broader and shared understanding of the context of children's lives and the reasons for their behaviour, leading to greater levels of empathy in the classroom.

A cognitive dissonance occurred when staff were asked to reflect on their own beliefs and the new approach they were asked to accept. Hannah reflected on how some staff's own belief systems may have contributed to their initial reservation to engage with it:

'My guess is, well, if you're sort of used to using a punitive approach and if you've gone to school and that's always been your experience or that's your home experience as an adult, then it must take a little bit of shifting to think, okay, there's this other way of dealing with things and yeah, just wondering how that sort of matches up with, you know their past experience and then this sort of new approach.' (1061-1073)

This extract suggests that there is possibly a cognitive dissonance among staff who are reluctant to fully embrace a new approach that does not align with their

own belief system. Hannah reflected on how sceptical staff needed to see changes before fully committing to the new approach:

'… It's taken a few [staff] longer, maybe to try it because they're set in their ways, but hearing the success of others ... you kind of get it...and I think actually now I can safely say that all teachers are using it in school.' (1025-1031)

Hannah had a strong sense of responsibility to keep the project on the school's agenda. There was a concern with keeping it present in the staff's minds and Hannah's responsibility within the project: *'I'm just aware that's part of my role…'* (237-239)

After the training had been delivered and staff were more confident in using the approach, Hannah was keen for staff to continue to use the approach and for it to be embedded within their practice, appearing as a regular item on the school agenda. Without regular reinforcement, Hannah feared the training could be forgotten and staff return to their old ways of practice. She expressed a commitment to '*continue the message*':

'I hope that we can interweave it through everything we do'. (902-904)

As part of the AASA staff were given training on EC, which helped to facilitate children to recognise and respond to how they were feeling at times of dysregulation.

One key aspect that emerged throughout the interview related to children's increased awareness and ability to articulate their feelings and emotions. Hannah recalled one event that stood out in her mind, of a child who would normally respond physically when upset. She described him as *'emotionally illiterate like he had a very fixed mindset'.* She recalled an interaction with him:

'[child says] ...*I feel like I've got a volcano in my tummy and sometimes it explodes, I know that I've got to work, to sort out how I react to it.*' (661-665)

Hannah sounded somewhat surprised by the change she began to see in the way he was able to respond differently:

'He's came out with, something like that because we've had these emotional coaching sessions with them… was just like [a] winning moment'. (673-680)

Similarly, Hannah expands on a time when EC was used with a child in year five:

'We see it brings a calmer school, certainly, with the older ones, because I was in year 5 for a day last year, and it's a tough class, you know. It's a gorgeous class but in terms of emotion, very emotional class, and there were certain characters in there who would have proper meltdowns as in wanting to flip tables and all of that and actually myself I practised on one of them…' (273-284)

Hannah went on to describe the class both as a *'gorgeous class'* and a '*tough class*'. This juxtaposition between the class having two opposing qualities described

the tension and complexity of the teaching relationship. Hannah again spoke with an element of surprise:

> *'…the behaviour has de-escalated quicker and no one's falling out with a grown-up (laughs)'* (305-352).

Hannah's surprise appeared to be partly because the approach had been successful with individuals whose behaviour had appeared entrenched.   It was also a reaction mirrored by staff members who had seen children, believed to be challenging, respond differently after the adults altered their approach.

4.3 Victoria's Views and Experiences

Figure 11

Thematic Map of Victoria's Views and Experiences
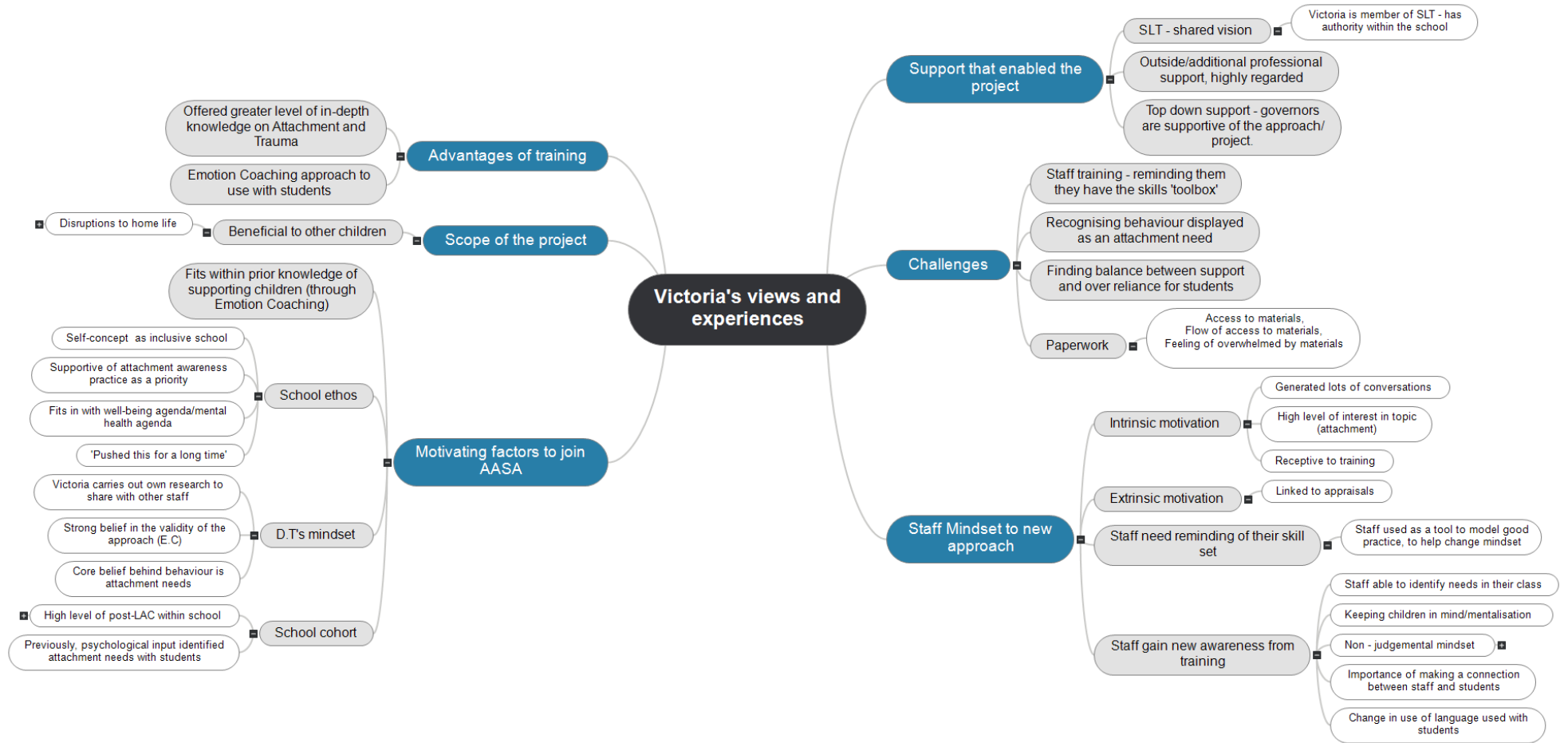
Victoria works as a member of the senior leadership team (SLT) within a mainstream primary school. She is not classroom-based and has the authority to make decisions within the school. A thematic map of her views and experiences are shown in Figure 11.

Victoria began the interview by explaining her reason for joining the AASA. It became apparent that there were three main drivers for signing up for it. The first related to the school's ethos:

'There were overlaps with the well-being agenda and mental health agenda that schools are involved in.' (130-131)

This meant that the approach fitted within the school's framework and made it easier to integrate into their preexisting system:

'I felt that from my perspective that we have pushed this for a long time, which is probably what interested me in taking it on anyway.' (167-169)

It was also apparent that Victoria felt she had the support of the school community:

'I think we are a school that is wanting to be very attachment aware we have a staff that are very committed to that kind of approach'. (9-12)

Victoria spoke positively about support from governors and school staff being receptive to the AAS approach as it was something already familiar to them:

'We already sought out training …hmm on attachment as well as emotion coaching in the past.' (12-14)

It was clear that the subject of attachment was something that Victoria was passionate about. She was keen to share recommended reading with other members of staff and kept them informed:

*'[I'm] very keen on reading the Louise Bomber books which I always recommended to staff.' (*14-15*)*

In terms of the 'school cohort' it appeared important that vulnerable communities within the school's population were recognised:

'We have overall very few PPG (pupil premium grant) children, but within that, we have a relatively high number of post-looked-after children.' (17-21).

This may have contributed to a greater understanding of the relevance of the approach as it was apparent who would benefit from it within the school community. Outside professionals similarly highlighted attachment as a need within the school which may have raised awareness and relevance of the requirements within the school community:

'…the psychologist's analysis often includes an element of attachment difficulty.' (32-34)

Staff views about the new approach related to three main themes; intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and new awareness staff gained from the training.

Intrinsic motivation was apparent through Victoria's account of interactions with the staff. She spoke of a team that was receptive to training:

'I do think… I think we have committed staff who are keen to learn.' (187-188)

Extrinsic motivation was influenced by Victoria's status within the school. Victoria has a role within the SLT and linked the ambitions of the school with '*everyone's appraisal target'*.

This shows the importance of the agenda given within the school from a strategic perspective. However, it may also create a lack of autonomy among staff regarding how they take up their individual responsibilities within the project. Similarly, another example of extrinsic motivation transpired through Victoria's expectation of how staff carry out their duties:

'Emotion coaching is a strategy that everybody should be using, reminders of using it at the time and modelling and using it with each other.' (131-135)

'For those few members of staff who haven't got it right yet, to see… for other people to model it or correct it… because we know it's a priority and we know that everybody knows what they should be doing.' (190-195)

As a member of the SLT, this influences how Victoria conducts her role, oversees the project and implements the approach from a school-wide strategic perspective. This emerges from the interview through her use of language, such as the repeated use of the word 'should' in the extracts above. This suggests an expectation of how staff ought to respond to a situation.

During the interview, Victoria recounts how a non-judgmental mindset leads to better relational opportunities. This was evident by the staff's use of systemic questioning as a means of enquiry in an open and curious manner:

'Everyone is very familiar with the 'wondering if' and has been for a long time [and] ...not making judgments on behaviour.' (136-138)

This starting point is seen as an important perspective for staff to take when talking to children about an incident that has occurred. Teachers are often seen as authority figures, with the power to punish children whose behaviour is deemed inappropriate. So, by staff beginning at a point of being open-minded and non-judgmental, allows an open dialogue as well as provides an environment which nurtures relationships. Victoria spoke about some of the challenges she faced concerning staff needs, which included needing to remind them that they had the skills to support children's needs:

'*It still needs constant reminders to staff that they have those skills in their tool bag now so that although they will. . . there will still be times when they see behaviour and they haven't actually ...um deployed those strategies before they ask for help.*' (47-54)

Within the school environment, there may be an expectation that new initiatives will be taken up and implemented quickly. However, in this extract, the linguistic use of the word 'tool bag' is suggestive of something that can be dipped into, and the right tool selected. The suggestion of needing 'constant reminders' indicates that although staff have the tools and competence there is possibly a level of confidence that is initially lacking when presented with a new approach to use. Other challenges that arose were the staff's ability to recognise behaviour as an attachment need:

'*I think sometimes it's just a bit tricky to get staff to understand the challenging behaviour they are seeing*'. (87-89)

Victoria goes on to comment that where there is a '*more subtle identification*' that does not involve CEC, staff may need:

'*…help in signposting and understanding that many of the strategies that we use and the emotion coaching, are not limited to children with attachment disorders.*' (96-100)

Victoria was reflective of weighing up the needs of children in the school, with a desire to support them, but also being mindful of not wanting to increase dependency to a possible point of learned helplessness. Victoria spoke of a need to find the right balance between support and over-reliance:

'[There is] quite a subtle difference between supporting a child, and over supporting the child to making… the difficulty of making a child over-dependent and over-attached to you. That's quite. . . that's quite nuanced in the . . .. in the balance that people are trying to achieve, you know, making that connection and not . . and not being with them every second of the day and dependent.' (114-122)

For Victoria, this distinction between staff striking the right balance identified challenges that could result in enablement or over-reliance.

Victoria's account highlighted some of the advantages of the project. These included: relating to a greater level of in-depth knowledge on attachment and trauma, the EC approach used with students and the potential scope of the project. As a result of the whole school staff training on EC, Victoria noticed a change in the language used by staff. Victoria described the visible difference the training had made to staff:

'I think we have committed staff who are keen to learn and who are listening, and you can hear the language going around school.' (187-189)

Although the project is primarily aimed at supporting CEC, Victoria reflected on the scope of the project to support children who have experienced other disruptions to their family life*:*

'Thinking about the individual triggers experiences of some of those children that have had difficulties, and seeing... seeing and understanding those attachment difficulties that come from children...um where early life has been disrupted by divorce.' (141-146)

Victoria held the belief that the approach had a wider scope and *'the strategies that we use and the emotion coaching, are not limited to children with attachment disorder'.*

4.4 Louise's Views and Experiences

Figure 12

Thematic Map of Louise's Views and Experiences

Louise worked as a SENCo and class teacher within a mainstream primary school. Figure 12 highlights Louise's views and experiences expressed within the interview within a thematic map.

The AASA was co-created by the Virtual School. This helped to bring the needs of CEC to the forefront of the project. Louise described a desire for change driven by a motivation to meet the needs of CEC students:

'*We aren't a school that's got an incredible amount of LAC, pre-LAC*'... (710-711)

'*that's not to say that if we went further down that road, it might become more of a priority.*' (717-718)

As well as acknowledging the needs of CEC it appeared important that it was '*an approach that will help all of our children.*' (64-65)

Louise spoke about how the effect of the whole school audit '*really opened our eyes'.* This suggests that there were elements of the system which Louise became more aware of after conducting the research with staff. Being more aware of areas of need from a systems perspective allowed her to consider other aspects of research such as the link between theory and practice.

'Most people felt that we built relationships really well. It was just more formalising it, you know, why are we doing it, and what is best practice'. (89-90)

Louise's thoughts here relate to a desire for theory-to-practice links. Louise later described how teachers had taken a lot of the strain during that time highlighting challenges with implementing the project:

'We're all a bit emotionally drained, at the moment.' (218-219)

This theme of staff feeling emotionally drained was apparent during the interview, it became clear that the pandemic had altered the role and responsibilities of teachers; they were not just continuing to deliver the curriculum, but also providing a sense of continuity and containment. Louise spoke about the normalisation of these multiple roles, their challenges and the effects on teacher's performance and self-esteem:

'[It can feel as though] you're failing everything... your job, teaching your child and I think everyone was incredibly stressed, and you know I think it's, you know, I think it's just about everybody acknowledging that everybody was in a bit of a tough place ...and the kids need to be given a bit of slack.' (912-919)

In contrast, Louise reflected on the positives of being part of the AASA. Contributory factors to the overall success of the project were discussed such as practical strategies that the school could draw upon that appeared to be essential for Louise:

'I think what the Attachment Awareness Award allowed was a reflection time and then, the opportunity for me to go okay what are the really good tools that we can actually use day to day.' (169-174)

Despite the timing of the AASA being carried out at a challenging time, Louise was highly motivated to carry out the project and this intrinsic drive is likely to have influenced its success:

'*I always think I could do more, and I think sometimes it's just to acknowledge you know actually, you've done enough for now and it is having an impact and that's okay. Like how long is a piece of string, hey?*' (971-977)

Likewise, this extract may also draw upon Louise's possible frustration with a feeling of wanting to do more. The analogy of the saying 'how long is a piece of string?' suggests not knowing a finite endpoint and so being able to reflect on what has been done and acknowledging the impact it has had appeared important.

A desire for change driven by a motivation to meet the needs of CYP was apparent in several ways within Louise's account which was evident through an apparent desire to support children with the development of real-world skills:

'It's okay to feel angry but you can't just thump someone that's just not the way the world works.' (163-164)

This extract suggests a desire to equip young people with the skills to be able to regulate their emotions so that they can apply these skills in the outside world.

There may be an underlying concern about what may happen to them outside of school if they behave similarly.

Louise reflected on her understanding of how challenging behaviour can be rooted in the previous attachment needs:

'I do think that Attachment Awareness helps with that because if children aren't emotionally ok, they're not gonna learn.' (835-838)

Here Louise reflected on the importance of being emotionally regulated to be able to learn, suggesting that children need to be in a calm emotional state before they can engage with the cognitive demands of school.

Throughout the interview, Louise expressed concern about the effects of trauma on the students '*it sits there and it's kind of unconscious*'. Louise shared:

'*When a child has experienced trauma at a young age, they really can't help that it rears its head. They have no control over that.'* (193-197)

She felt that there are emotions residing within some children that can be triggered and cause an emotional disturbance, that is rooted in past experiences:

'*It allowed our staff to know the background of the trauma and the brain and the fact that it sits there and it's kind of unconscious. It allows us to think more about the iceberg [model] and that with every behaviour, there is a reason*.' (230-237)

For Louise, it appeared evident that students should not be blamed for having these emotions and so the importance of staff recognising '*it's not the child's fault'* was paramount*.*

Louise felt it essential that staff were aware and able to '*allow the space for children to articulate their emotions'*. Louise went on to share her reflections on some of the strategies used within her class:

'The *Zones of Regulation work we're doing is really great. I know that my class are now really verbalising…*' (202)

She continued:

'… it's allowing the space for children to articulate their emotions is a really powerful thing.' (209)

Students became able to verbalise their feelings and emotions. The use of the phrase '*powerful thing'* suggests she has noticed meaningful change using these tools.

When working with children to help them to manage their emotions, the relationship between the staff and the student is key. Louise was aware of the closely intertwined relationship that staff have with students:

'*What you're presenting out is going to be picked up if you're like "ahh!" then that's what the kid is going to present back. Not to say we are perfect all the time*'. (1048-1055)

Here Louise implies that children mirror back behaviours they see adults performing. Louise reflected on the difference that adults can make by changing the way they interact with students to enable students to learn to respond differently. She noticed that by equipping adults with different ways of responding they felt more confident:

'Staff surveys suggest staff feel more in control and happier about the way they deal with behaviour.' (429)

4.5 Anna's Views and Experiences

Figure 13

Thematic Map of Anna's Views and Experiences
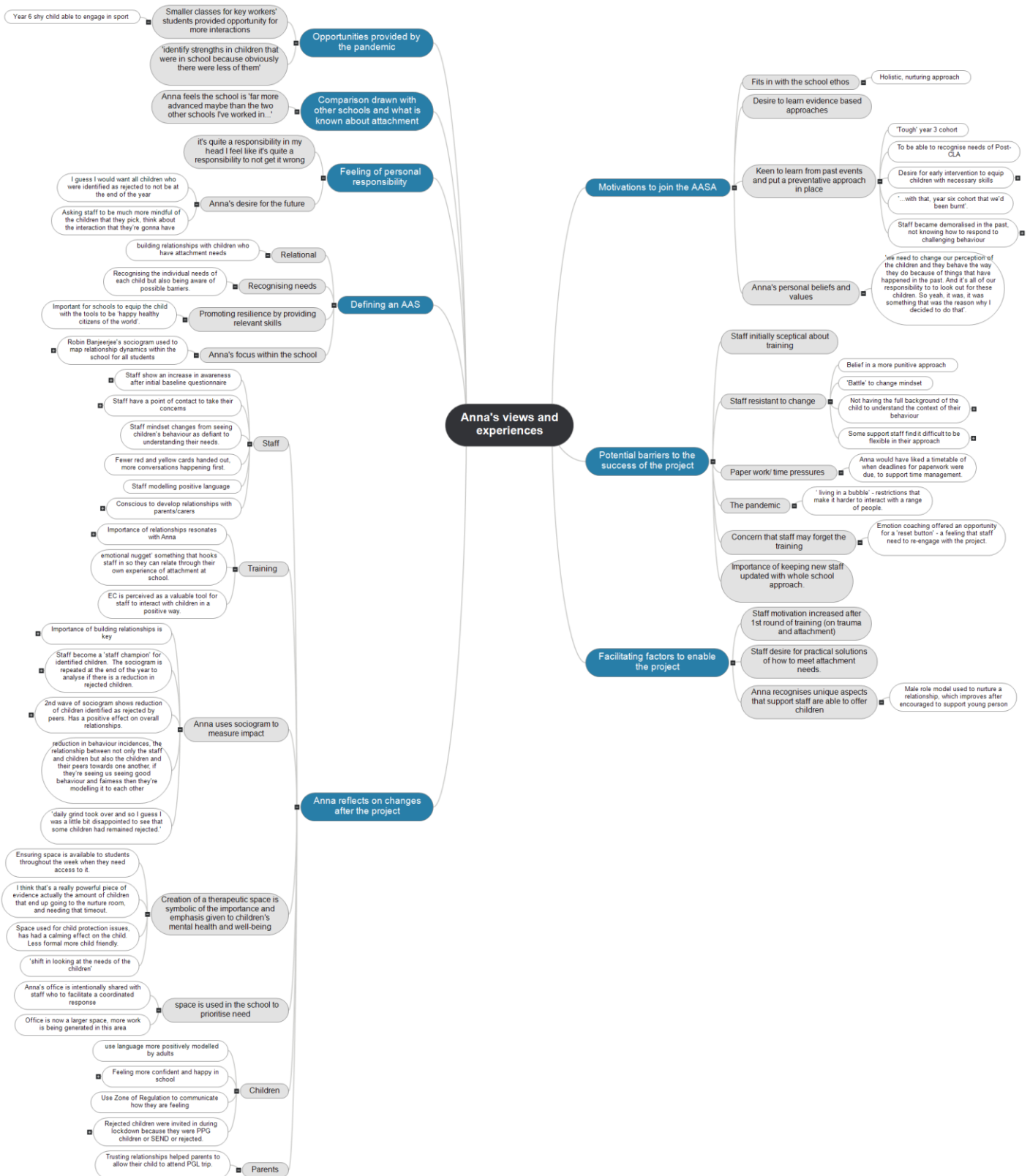
Anna works as a teacher, SENCo and member of the SLT in a small mainstream primary school. The thematic map in Figure. 13 shows key themes from the interview.

When asked what motivated the school to join the AASA Anna described it as fitting in with the school's ethos:

'It's not about standards or grades or SATs results… it's about the whole child.' (16-21)

This extract conveys a sense of emphasis that the school is keen to support all aspects of a child's development, going beyond academic achievement. It appeared important to Anna that the values of the school were backed up by a desire to learn evidence-based approaches:

'…it's one thing saying we have a lovely ethos of, you know, being a nurturing school, but then what's the evidence behind it?' (29-35)

Anna reflected on a couple of experiences that resonated with her relating to a challenging time in the past whereby there was a desire to learn from past events and put a preventative approach in place:

'We had a particularly difficult cohort of year six children…' (60-63)

'…There were various internal exclusions and three-day external exclusions; it was just a really tough, tough cohort.' (66-72)

The repetition of the word '*tough*' emphasises the hard reality of the situation and the challenge this presented at the time. Later in the interview Anna also described them as:

'…that year six cohort that we'd been burnt by...' (499-501)

Anna's use of the word 'burnt' infers a painful experience. She described how trust had broken down and this was central to the deterioration of the relationship. Anna noticed similar patterns of behaviour in current year groups. This contributed to her motivation to prevent a similar scenario from reoccurring:

'What can we learn from that? Like, so..so we've got year threes at the minute, that are starting to display that kind of attachment [behaviour]...' (82-87)

The rhetorical question within the transcript suggests that Anna's previous experience acted as a motivator for change. Moreover, the experiences appeared to

drive Anna's beliefs and values in wanting to make changes to the school. It appeared important to her that when faced with a similar scenario, the school would be able to respond in a way that supported the children and provided them with the necessary skills.

Anna described some of the challenges she experienced in setting up the project, such as some resistance within the staff to change:

'*The battle was changing mindsets.*' (304-305)

The use of the word battle suggests an ongoing struggle between two opposing perspectives. Upon reflection, Anna described how part of the difficulty stemmed from staff not fully understanding the background circumstances of the child and how it was impacting the child's behaviour. This meant:

'…*acknowledging that they [the children] have additional barriers and giving them the tools to overcome those barriers.*' (312-316)

Anna shared thoughts that related to staff initially being sceptical about training:

'I think until they had that first round of training, they kind of thought, oh, it's just another thing to do, another kind of gimmick, but, but once they had that first round of training … the feedback from that was really, really positive.' (134-149)

From this extract, it appeared that staff initially had reservations about the training, possibly believing the training to be something they have already encountered and so would be of little benefit to them. Moreover, when presented with a new approach, staff appeared conflicted about using an approach that did not tie in with their own experiences of discipline and school. Anna recalls a conversation with a member of staff about a child who was displaying challenging behaviour. The member of staff argued:

"Well, he's just a naughty kid. Well, he just, you know, he needs to …you know, [he needs] really strict barriers, and he needs to be made an example of" [Anna recalls] *… especially I would say from the non-teaching staff.'*

The phrase '*made an example of*' when recalling staff responses, suggests that the adults' response to the young person will be harsh and will act as a deterrent to other children from behaving similarly and possibly less about meeting the needs of that individual child. However, Anna found that by tapping into the staff's own experiences allowed for a new approach to be considered:

'…if you start to talk about your own experience at school and say, ... "Can you think of an adult at school that you still remember to this day?... that they were your best teacher or your best person. Yeah, that person, what, what was it about them?" And then, I feel that that taps into some sort of emotional nugget.' (2162-2183).

The use of the word '*emotional nugget*' suggests something that is valuable but needs help to be uncovered or unearthed. It may be used as a currency to exchange with others as a way of getting in touch with valuable past experiences to enable them to relate to their current practice by reflecting on the values of that special person.

The impact of the pandemic presented a mixed picture of positives and challenges. The negatives ranged from additional restrictions, such as social distancing, put in place by the UK government, which meant classes could not mix:

'At the time we were living in a bubble world.' (2092-2093)

The use of the word bubble provides a feeling of both protection and isolation from the rest of the environment. It was also a word introduced by the UK government at the time of the pandemic to describe the separation of people to minimise the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

However, the pandemic provided some unforeseen opportunities. Despite the additional challenges the pandemic presented within the school, the COVID-19

restrictions facilitated some aspects of benefits within the school. Anna shared that the amount of extra person-to-person time increased through smaller class sizes (because only key-worker children were attending at the time, and other children engaged in online learning).   As a result, staff were able to spend more time getting to know the children and promote a relational approach:

'We had a year six male teacher who is very proactive with sport, and he identified this boy's talent and was able to kind of invite him. He wouldn't have known that without Covid. So, in some respects, it helped, you know… identify strengths in children that were in school.' (2279-2288)

Anna elaborated:

'We had a boy in year six who was incredibly...um shy and quiet and not particularly part of the popular sporty group, and then because of lockdown and because of having that close relationship with staff... he ended up playing a lot more cricket and rounders and football. Once school got back to normal, we were worried he would go back to being shy and retiring and not getting involved and we didn't see that. We saw him starting to join in.' (906-931)

What was apparent from this extract of the transcript was the lasting effect the encouragement of the teacher had on the child's self-esteem. Anna states a worry that he may go back to his previous behaviour but the confidence that was developed during the lockdown appeared to remain. Similarly, Anna also described a young girl with autism who was very nervous, anxious, and often did not want to

attend school. However, through additional support and understanding, Anna noted a change:

'She's a lot more confident; she shares in class a lot more. So…, she still needs her cuddly toy… it's got nothing to do with being defiant. She's needing that security and that sensory touch type thing and so she's much happier in school'. (960-978)

Anna noted how staff shifted the way they responded to behavioural incidents such as, 'fewer red and yellow cards handed out, more conversations happening first', to staff modelling positive language and being conscious to develop relationships with parents and carers. The importance of responsibilities and relationships felt central to the project:

'We need to change our perception of the children …and they behave the way they do because of things that have happened in the past … and it's all of our responsibility.' (548-556)

The use of EC was seen as a valuable tool for staff to use with children. She expressed 'It's about the way we talk to these children', with the potential to escalate or de-escalate the situation. A key feature of Anna's contribution involved her exploring children's interpersonal relationships using Robin Banerjee's sociogram tool. The tool is designed to map the peer relationships within the class and identify

and address the social and emotional needs of identified students. Anna reflected on how she would have previously approached an intervention to support children identified as rejected:

> *'...before I would be like, so keep an eye on those guys, you know, to the class teacher or I would then do another round just to make sure that there were no longer rejected children. And I just thought, well, what intervention am I actually putting in place here? Yes, I'm identifying the children that are at risk of reject, rejection, but then I'm not really following it up with, with anything.'* (445-464)

As a result of the sociogram findings Anna *'asked staff to become a staff champion for each of these children'*. Anna appeared conscious that identified children needed a higher level of intervention than just monitoring alone. This prompted Anna to match these children with a key adult. At the end of the project, Anna found that the results were varied; although *'there was a large number that were no longer rejected'* there was disappointment expressed that some children remained rejected:

> *'The daily grind took over and so I guess I was a little bit disappointed to see that some children had remained rejected.'*

Anna identified these children as:

'...they were PPG children or SEND or you know rejected' (2276-2279)

Overall positive findings within the school community were identified as follows:

'The reduction in behaviour incidences, the relationship between not only the staff and children but also the children and their peers towards one another, if they're seeing us seeing good behaviour and fairness then they're modelling it to each other.' (1013-1025)

4.6 Alice's Views and Experiences

Figure 14

Thematic Map of Alice's Views and Experiences
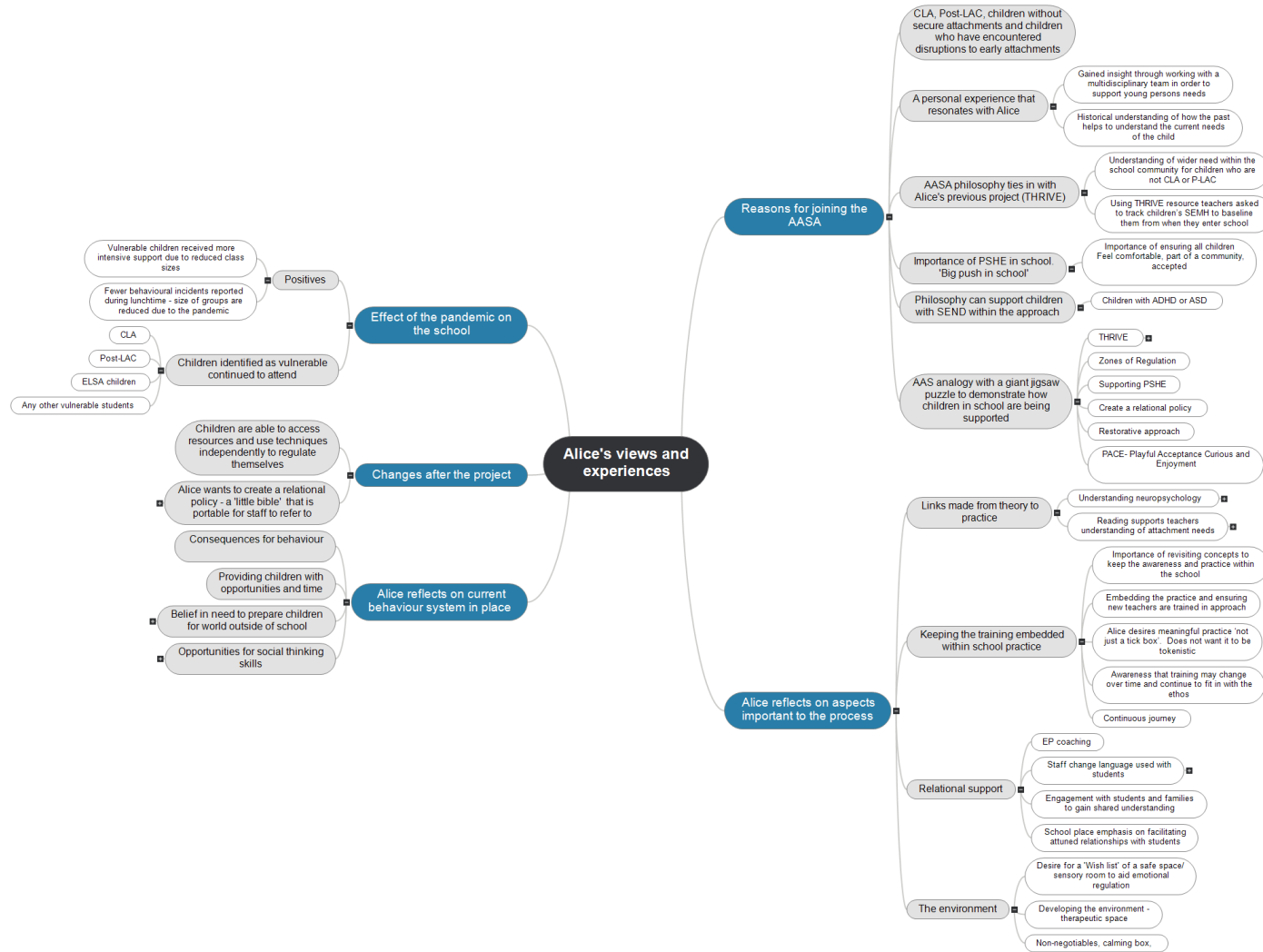
Alice worked as a SENCo, member of the SLT and covered some of the teaching responsibilities with the school. The school was a small church school. Figure 14 highlights the main themes from the interview.

Alice shared one of the reasons for the school joining the AASA related to a poignant personal connection that Alice had made with a family and their child:

'We had one quite profound experience with one of the children that we had in school'. (11-12)

She explained that there had been frequent involvement from the multi-disciplinary team to support the child and their family. Alice felt that she had learned something from this experience and that it had shaped her desire to support children with similar needs, whether those were CEC or in the wider population. Alice reflected on how the approach could be beneficial to all children as well as recognising how it could support particular groups:

'…for those children who are looked after but also the children beyond that and who may have not had secure attachments when they were little or have had some interruptions in their early childhood'. (31-36)

The definition of the word 'interruption' means 'the action of preventing something, especially a system, process, or event, from continuing as usual or expected' (Cambridge University Press, n.d). Alice's suggestion of an interruption to

early childhood also having a negative impact recognises the importance of feelings of safety and security a child needs during their early years.

For Alice, it was important that the training was continuous and was undertaken by both existing and new staff. Alice described wanting the approach to be meaningful to teaching staff's practice and '*not just a tick box* [*exercise*]':

> '*It's just going to be ongoing; it will never stop, and it will change as well. There will be new things that happen.*' (621-623)

This comment suggested that Alice was aware that the AASA was just one of many school initiatives taking place that came in and out of teaching practice over the years depending on educational pedagogy and was likely to develop and evolve over time.

Part of Alice's role has been to provide staff with new ways of perceiving problems. She described a scenario of a member of staff who was struggling:

> '[*Alice reads an extract from 'Inside I'm Hurting'*] "*The child may leave you feeling deskilled worthless because of his own feelings about himself*". A member of staff who'd come to me in tears because… she's so skilful, but she had got to absolutely empty… she'd been drained... and... um... and I just said to her come, just come and sit down. I'll go there, but I just want you to read this page. So, it was being able to go "it's hard… it's hard, but you're doing such a*

good job." …because she's, she's so skilful as well …but you know we...we..., and it's going to be a journey for some of these children and they will test and test and test and until that's there, but… you know I see her now, working with that child and she is the key attachment figure for that child, so secure... um ..which is lovely.' (662-680)

The use of the words 'absolutely empty' and 'drained' provides the connotation of a container that has reached the bottom and has nothing left to give. These terms appear to mirror how the teacher was feeling at that moment. The relationship between the member of staff and the student was facilitated by Alice. Alice showed validation and support for the teacher through this challenging time but also shared her understanding of why the child may have been behaving in this way and how that might have related to their needs. This may have helped to change the way the teacher perceived the student and created a level of empathy.

The use of language was deemed as another area of importance to Alice. She reflected that staff had begun using an approach where they were encouraged to be curious and open-minded. Phrases used such as '*I've noticed that...*' or '*I wonder if…*' allowed a dialogue to occur between staff and children. The focus on language helped staff to remain curious about what was going on and acknowledge to children that adults noticed them behaving differently but remained non-judgmental when exploring the reasons behind it. Alice explains how '*curious questioning*' was used by staff to facilitate '*social mapping'*, to enable children to reflect on an incident and help them to make different decisions in the future. Alice suggested that this approach helps children to feel a sense of connection, by staff '*recognising where they are in terms of attunement*'.

When reflecting on the ways that staff can gain a shared understanding of children and families, Alice shared the details of one of her play sessions with a child:

'*She spotted my puppets and had gone (ahh) and I didn't realise but grandma's a really, really important figure in her household, and I didn't realise how important grandma was until we got out the puppets and out came grandma and so then that was 'enjoyment' at that… and 'acceptance' and she was telling me about grandma and she'd got this other little girl and she was playing with this and I thought oh she's obviously playing out some relationships.*' (193-204)

This extract from Alice's interview provides some potential insight into the child's inner mind. Within this play session, Alice learned about family dynamics and the important roles within the family, such as the importance of the grandma within the family system.

Alice noted the importance of making theory-to-practice links which was apparent from teaching children skills to enable emotional regulation. This was linked in a previous training session on the neuropsychological processes that help to explain how the brain reacts when faced with a perceived threat:

'*We've done the triune brain, understanding that flipping your lid and things like that.*'

Alice refers to aspects of training she has undertaken that references Dan Siegel & Bryson (2011) 'flipping your lid' model. This explains how when a person

encounters a real or perceived threat the brain may revert to basic survival functions; whereby the neocortex responsible for language and abstract thought is less accessible as the body prepares for fight or flight. Alice is mindful of what occurs at a biological level and the importance of understanding what is occurring, particularly for CYP who have experienced trauma or attachment difficulties.

When considering physical changes within the school, Alice spoke about non-negotiables for all classrooms:

'…*you have a calming box... you also have a worry box as well*.' (464-467)

This was part of a school-wide approach to allow all children to have access to resources to aid their SEMH needs. Alice identified her hopes for the future, such as the use of creating safe spaces for children, with a 'prayer garden' and 'a sensory room' at the end of her wish list.

Alice reflected on changes she had noticed in terms of a student's behaviour and how they were supported:

'*Can you recognise, where you might be able to do something to support you with not having the same outcome next time?*' (388-390)

She stated:

'*[The approach is about]…giving the children opportunities and time*' (475-476) and later reflected that '*children start to find their own solutions*'. (397-398)

To highlight this, Alice expressed a sense of achievement about a child during a football game who '*would have normally walloped somebody*' but instead reacted in a different way, by stamping his foot and walking away. Although Alice was unsure whether some of the reduction in behaviour incidents was because children were still in '*bubbles*' and there were fewer children out in the playground, suggested '*those interactions are less intense*'. It was therefore not possible to fully disentangle the new initiative in conjunction with the reduction in children in the playground, which are both likely to have had a positive effect on the reduction of behavioural incidents.

Alice held the belief that the AASA was perceived as wide-ranging:

'…really the journey that you're on doing attachment awareness is raising everyone's awareness of attachment'. (493-495)

She observed:

'…being aware of the whole child, and who they are and where they come from and why they work in the way that they do and finding what are the bits that they would… they might need some support with and but also recognising those strengths and celebrating those with them'. (161-167)

For Alice, the AASA was an approach which could also co-exist with past frameworks that the school were using:

'…it became a big jigsaw puzzle of putting all these pieces together so Thrive became one piece, the Attachment Aware became another and then..um we had all… obviously all the PSHE, …so everything sort of came together'. (121-128)

Alice uses an analogy of a '*big jigsaw puzzle'*. She metaphorically puts the pieces of the puzzle together which helps to consider how best to support children in the school and reflects it as a variety of complementary approaches which fit together. Alice spoke about elements that were essential to her plan for the whole school change. She considered key aspects such as EC and a restorative justice approach, '*so that everybody is working on the same [page]… using the same sort of language,...and that's key*'. She continued '*to create a relational policy…alongside our behaviour policy*' to reflect children's needs and integrate these with the existing Thrive and PACE frameworks.

After analysing at the idiographic level Smith et al. (2009) recommend analysing the data for patterns of convergence and divergence across cases. Table 6 provides an overview of the main superordinate themes and corresponding subordinate themes (participants' corresponding areas of convergence and divergence are represented in Tables 7-11). The rest of the chapter examines each superordinate theme in turn.

A subordinate theme was established when the theme was present in three or more participants' views and experiences, which adds further validity to the findings (Smith et al., 2009). Although identifying themes allows for areas of convergence to become established, it was also important to ensure that poignant areas of

divergence were also captured as this may show experiential insights thought to reflect their views and experiences. Lastly, salient extracts from interview transcripts are presented to illustrate key aspects of the subordinate themes across participants.

Table 6
Superordinate Themes and Corresponding Subordinate Themes

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Defining features of the Attachment Aware Schools Award	Promoting a nurturing and inclusive school
	Fostering a relational approach
	Tools and strategies can co-exist
	Concerns with the longevity of the approach
	Desire for theory to practice links
	It's not the child's fault
	Developing a common language that maintains curiosity
	Features of neuropsychology
	It's not limited to attachment disorders

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Motivations to join the Attachment Aware Schools Award	Fits in with the school's ethos
	Response to the pandemic
	Fits in with school ethos
	Desire to support the needs of the children in the school
	Desire to learn an evidence-based approach

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Factors that facilitated the success of the project	Top-down support (e.g., HT, Governors, SLT)
	External support (EPs/coaches, Virtual School, other DTs)
	Intrinsic motivation
	Positive feedback from staff
	For children to articulate their emotions it's a really powerful thing
	Highly regarded within the school

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Potential barriers to the success of the project	Staff resistance to new training
	Cognitive dissonance leads to reluctance to use a new approach
	"We were living in a bubble world"
	Desire to keep training alive
	We're all a bit emotionally drained at the moment
	Opposing priorities
	"It's first and foremost understanding what attachment is"
Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
What does change look like?	Attitude of staff perception towards children improved relationships and behaviour
	Changes in children's interactions
	Creating a calming space
	Improved relationships with parents/ carers

4.7 Defining Features of the AASA

Table 7

Superordinate theme: Defining features of the AASA

Subordinate themes	Hannah	Victoria	Louise	Anna	Alice	Present in over half the sample?
Promoting a nurturing and inclusive school	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fostering a relational approach	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tools and strategies that can co-exist with other similar approaches	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Awareness of neuropsychology	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Desire for theory to practice links	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
It's not the child's fault	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Developing a common language that maintains curiosity	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes

It's not limited to attachment disorders	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

It is important to note that AAS are likely to vary between different LAs and so all of the interviews undertaken began with DTs providing their definition of the main presenting features of an AAS based on their knowledge and experience.

4.7.1 Promoting a Nurturing and Inclusive School

The first subordinate theme for defining an AAS concerned how much the school provided a nurturing inclusive environment which took a holistic view of the child:

' I think um...an attachment aware school is overall a nurturing environment where everybody is on the same page with a consistent approach to dealing with emotions and behaviour and about having staff that are emotionally coached and aware. I think that was the most crucial part of it.' (Hannah, 2018-2027)

4.7.2 Fostering a Relational Approach

All DTs expressed AAS as having a relational quality to them, that centred on building strong relationships between staff and children and working to develop this skill in all staff. Anna acknowledged the significance of having strong relationships as a foundation beginning in early childhood:

'…key aspects of making a connection and feeling that you are… you have a trusted stable relationship and how it is fundamental, especially when it is coming from children that have not had that at home or in the early years'. (Anna, 236-250)

4.7.3 The Desire for Theory to Practice Links

DTs commented on the importance of understanding the evidence base behind the approach and the desire to formalise it within their school. As a result, staff were able to foster a culture of recognising behaviour and understanding the theory behind the advocated approaches.

Alice shared how important it was for a teacher supporting a CEC to understand why the behaviour was occurring. Understanding the nature of what was behind the behaviour helped the teacher to develop a bond with the child. In reference to a Louise Bomber book '*Inside I'm Hurting*' (2007) Alice said:

I thought that every, every primary school teacher, or perhaps every teacher should read this before they go to teach because I think they'd be much more empathetic when a child turns up late to their class or hasn't got a pencil or has just a bit grumpy for some reason and I thought that this would be so, so helpful for everybody. This was very good. So that was one of the recommended reads. (Alice 695-704)

4.7.4 It's Not the Child's Fault

During the interviews, all of the DTs spoke passionately about the need to understand children's behaviour within their school context:

'It is just being a bit more reflective and open when it comes to the children who are showing certain behaviours.' (Hannah, 2117-2120)

Anna felt the focus needed to be shifted to what adults can do to support them:

'it's all of our responsibility… to… to look out for these children'. (Anna, 540-554)

The phrase '*it's all of our responsibility'* suggests an approach that seeks to provide a supportive system around the child, where everybody involved with the child assumes a level of responsibility. The following comment may also relate to a previous experience that Anna would not want to reoccur:

'*We felt like what… what lessons can we learn from that cohort? And what can we do to better prevent that ever happening again'.* (Anna, 95-97)

4.7.5 Developing a Common Language that Maintains Curiosity

The use of language within schools and the ways that staff responded to children was another key aspect which was highlighted by DTs as being beneficial in de-escalating behavioural incidents. It also helped the young person in question to reflect upon what had occurred. The importance of positively framed hypothesising (a systemic tool) is highlighted below:

'Two key phrases that we often use with the children… "So I've I noticed that"'... so it's recognising that behaviour and recognising there may be some dysregulation, or, you know, not really understanding perhaps why a child might be behaving in a particular way...um and then, investigating that further, to then say, "oh I wonder if ?" and giving opportunities for them to go; "no you got it wrong it's this"...or "this is what's going on for me", or "yes actually this is what's going on and it's normal, and like, sometimes I just don't know".' (Alice, 245-264)

4.7.6 It's Not Limited to Attachment Disorders

AAS are established with the needs of CEC in mind. However, DTs expressed a wider scope of needs that the new system could support and the potential impact this could have:

'Where it was the more subtle identification, that's where sometimes there was still help in signposting and understanding that many of their strategies that we use… and the emotion coaching are not limited to children with attachment disorders.' (Victoria, 96-102)

'So, we did see quite a lot of children who were maybe having tics or were suffering what seemed like anxiety, and obviously, there's no more funding from the government for any additional support for mental health and well-being, of course not. So, I suppose it helps us as well to help those children. When we're not experts in it but at least we feel that we've got a little bit of borrowed expertise, because we have the training.' (Louise, 453-464)

'It also resonated with children who are on the autistic spectrum, who have ADHD, for example, and actually looking at those individual children,

actually, this is just going to work for all of you!...um.. and so then, as a school then we're thinking, well this just needs to be a school-wide approach.' (Alice, 94-100)

Hannah spoke of the value of being able to support children where other approaches had been less successful:

'I think and for some children, there's hope where it's been a constant battle.' (Hannah, 2066-2069)

The use of the word 'battle' suggests a struggle that has been ongoing for some time and the feeling of all other avenues being exhausted.

4.7.7 Features of Neuropsychology

Over half of the DTs describe AAS in relation to an aspect of neuropsychology including an understanding of what occurs within the brain and how this may impact cognition and the child's emotional state:

'It allowed our staff to know the background of the trauma and the brain and the fact that it sits there and it's kind of unconscious. It allows us to think more about the iceberg [model] and that with every behaviour, there is a reason, you know, it's not the child's fault, and it certainly helps those of us that did have previously looked after children…um there were a few. It really helped those teachers to kind of really think, oh hang on a second that child has had quite a lot of trauma in their life.' (Hannah 230-242)

4.8 Motivations to Join the AASA

Table 8

Superordinate Theme - Motivations to Join the AASA

Subordinate Themes	Hannah	Victoria	Louise	Anna	Alice	Present in over half the sample?
Fits in with the school ethos	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Personal resonance	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Desire to support the needs of the children in the school e.g. CEC, SEND, response to the pandemic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
For recognition of having the award	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Desire to learn evidence-based practice approaches	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Personal recommendation from a trusted source	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

4.8.1 Fits in With the School Ethos

The second superordinate theme concerned how motivated the school were to become an AAS, and a key assisting factor in this was how far the new approaches aligned with pre-existing ones or values within the school.

'The overall behaviour improves because the overall ethos of the school is that er, we understand and we know.' (Hannah 2031-2034)

'I saw it being advertised hmm. So, my school was very happy to support me with that hmm. I think we are a school that is wanting to be very attachment aware we have a staff that are very committed to that kind of approach'. (Victoria, 8-12)

Victoria used the phrase '*wanting to be*' in relation to the school's aims to take on an attachment-aware approach. Her change of tense from past to present progressive suggests that this aim has not yet been reached but is something they are still aspiring to achieve within the school.

4.8.2 Desire to Support the Needs of the Children in the School

All the DTs spoke about their schools responding to the needs of the children. Some DTs spoke about providing support to children who were CEC, SEND, or as a more general response to the increased anxiety children faced due to the pandemic. Hannah noted the rise in awareness of trauma and attachment in relation to CEC:

'Yes, it was a subject… it's a very, very, you know, a current subject if that's the right word, certainly in this school just now just being aware not only of Looked After Children but their families as well. You know, it's definitely an issue we need to focus on…' (Hannah, 59-67)

'The main thing for us was to… to help with any behaviour issues and to make sure that we're approaching it in a way that dealt with the initial the underlying problem rather than just firefighting, not that we have too much anyway, things, what are the things that support our SEN children and the third prong of it was to ensure that we did have things in place when we were looking at co-regulation and emotion coaching and mindfulness to generally help with the post-Covid.' (Louise, 440-453)

4.8.3 Desire to Learn Evidence-Based Practice

Throughout the interviews, all of the DTs spoke about making links between theory to practice and this being an important factor in understanding children's needs. However, Louise also spoke about the frustration of being presented with theories when the need in schools was for practical strategies:

'We understood about the importance of regulating our emotions and how that helps children... we understood about how stress affects the brain, we understood, we've had 'Zones of Regulation' training in the past from the EP, we understood different emotions and how they could manifest. Most of us .... we already knew the Iceberg Model and we already knew that we needed to ask for help and that children were also crying out for help…and I think what we realised was that the adults in the school knew all those things they didn't always know what to do to help and often when you have training from EPs and this is no disrespect to the profession, often the training is quite theoretical and actually what schools want is okay, here's a theory and this is

what you've got to do!... because actually, we don't live in a theory space we

live in a day-to-day practical space.' (Louise, 123-138)

4.9 Factors that Facilitated the Success of the Project

Table 9

Superordinate Theme - Factors that Facilitated the Success of the Project

Subordinate Themes	Hannah	Victoria	Louise	Anna	Alice	Present in over half the sample?
Internal support (Top-down support e.g. HT, Governors, SLT)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
External support (EP's/coaches, Virtual School, other DTs)	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Intrinsic motivation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Positive feedback from staff	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
For children to articulate their emotions it's a really powerful thing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Highly regarded within the school	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
AASA was free to access	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

4.9.1 Internal Support

The third superordinate theme 'factors that facilitated the success of the project' is comprised of subordinate themes that included themes in Table 9. DTs spoke about the importance of having support from the SLT, the headteacher, and support from governors. This relational element appeared to be significant in supporting the DTs throughout the project.

'It's making sure that the senior leaders and the governors are on board, that they want to do it and I did spend quite a lot of time to ensure the governors were invited to some of the training, from the EP… that was important. So, it is a whole school thing that we are doing. Otherwise, it's just tokenistic.' (Hannah, 1011-1019)

4.9.2 External Support

External support was received on three levels; support from the Virtual School, coaching sessions from EPs and liaising with other DTs. The input from fellow professionals was described by DTs as beneficial:

'It is worth the time and the support was great I think the Virtual School do a good job of, you know, making sure they're really visible.' (Hannah, 585-590)

'The training that we received from our attached psychologist was fantastic. We got lots of feedback from staff.' (Victoria, 43-45)

'So great!... I think having the coaching sessions with the EP was absolutely invaluable. I think if we would have just been sent the reading...if we'd have just been given group training, we wouldn't have been anywhere near as successful or achievable, or um... bespoke to your school… within those coaching sessions allowed me to do was to really think of what is it about our school,... what does our school need? And then, you know, how do we get there, because I think what's so difficult is you're wading through all this theory yourself, and that's not your background if I were to actually start or what is the priority or how does that work in my school. So, I think that was really great and I think you know, the team at the Virtual School and Education Psychology Service were always really supportive, and actually, the forums that were put on.' (Louise, 627-648)

'Our EP involvement was very, very important at the time. Yes, so the EP involvement was very strong and also we had the engagement with families was really good and that was really important too.' (Alice, 45-49)

Hannah spoke positively of her experience liaising with other DTs:

'The award made it feel like a community where… right, that's in the Attachment Aware Award forum and we had a little chat about what we were all doing so it seemed like everybody was supporting each other as well, which was really, really good.' (Hannah, 512-520)

4.9.3 Intrinsic Motivation

DTs spoke with enthusiasm about their involvement in the AASA which permeated through all the interviews:

'Oh, 100% …and really privileged to have done it and I think it's a really great thing that we have done and I know that now I'm thinking about doing like doing bronze, silver, gold level of it,... like most awards do. I think that's a really great idea I think is a way to incent. . . incentivise schools to keep it in mind'. (Louise, 674-682)

The phrase *'keep it in mind'* supports the idea of not wanting the training and ethos of the project to be forgotten.

4.9.4 For Children to Articulate their Emotions It's a Really Powerful Thing

Overall, a positive change in children's behaviour was observed by all of the DTs as a result of an increase in positive interactions between staff and students. Hannah described a vignette of an interaction with a year 5 student which demonstrated the effect of EC in practice:

'We see it brings a calmer school, certainly, with the older ones, because I was in year 5 for a day last year, and it's a tough class, you know...it's a gorgeous class but in terms of emotion, very emotional class, and there were certain characters in there who would have proper meltdowns… as in wanting to flip tables and all of that and actually myself I practised on one of them. He scrunched up his paper and I was like,

" ...I can see like, you ...I can you are frustrated right now and I can... maybe you are feeling stuck?" and he was like... and then it turned out that instead of having an argument like he usually would... It was "wait what you're not angry with me? cause I scrumpled up my paper?" It was like "No I'm not angry at that but maybe next time you could do this?" and he was just like, "Oh", he was like... "oh okay". (Hannah, 288-299)

Louise and Anna spoke about an improvement in the interactions between staff and students:

'I think adults may be calmer, ermm when dealing with tricky situations'. (Louise, 380-382)

'We had quite a tricky cohort that quite,… we had, we had the three LAC children as they were in year 5 and 6. I think it did help us just to have a better mutuality, like an even playing field with the children in terms of our emotional respect for each other. (Louise 576-581)

A lot of it was just helping the children to almost manage the level of emotion they were feeling, whereas higher up the school it's not so much that they know, they sort of know that more, but this helps much more. Actually, it's not the end of the world.' (Louise, 604-611)

Anna shared the relational changes that had been noticed at the school and how they reflected a shift in the school's values:

'…and so the evidence would be the reduction in behaviour incidences, the relationship between not only the staff and children but also the children and their peers towards one another, if they're seeing us seeing good behaviour and fairness then they're modelling it to each other...The other changes I would say are ...so our star of the week also always focuses on a value now and um where it didn't before, it was like they've done well in their writing...you know now it's looking at growth, integrity, kindness, creativity and joy, and what the children do, I've noticed this class …because they've obviously had this embedded in them over the last year. They want to nominate their own peers, like 'I really feel that Bertie should get the star of the week this week as he brings so much joy to people's lives'. (Anna, 999-1018)

4.9.5 Highly Regarded Within the School

During the interviews, it was apparent that the project was highly regarded throughout all the schools. This was apparent in several ways, such as having the backing of the SLT and the DTs feeling supported. In one school, this was evident by the allocation of resources that had been dedicated to the project, commitment to co-working and facilitating awareness amongst other staff:

'You know, we'll be expanding, like there's so much paperwork and, and the, the amount of staff that come in and sit with us and talk to us and parents and children and so the physical environment did change because I proposed to our headteacher that the inclusion team needed a bigger space'. (Anna, 784-798)

For other schools, it was a priority that there was a consistent approach used by all staff for interactions with children:

*'The headteacher wants the office lady to have it, the dinner ladies to know about it, so it's the whole school'. (*Hannah, 949-952)

4.10 Potential Barriers to the Success of the Project

Table 10

Superordinate Theme: Barriers to the Success of the Project

Subordinate themes	Hannah	Victoria	Louise	Anna	Alice	Present in over half the sample?
Staff resistance to new training	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Cognitive dissonance leads to reluctance to use a new approach	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
"We were living in a bubble world"	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Desire to keep training alive	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
We're all a bit emotionally drained at the moment	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Opposing priorities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
"It's first and foremost understanding what attachment is"	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Governmental focus on academics (e.g., closing the attainment gap, not on well-being)	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Balance between support and over-dependence	No	Yes	No	No	No	No

4.10.1 Staff Resistance to New Training

Over half of the DTs shared feelings of frustration regarding staff members' initial resistance to change when presented with a new approach:

'At the beginning, I think there was a feeling of well we know this, we've done this training'. (Victoria, 73-75)

However, the scepticism appeared to reduce once staff had engaged with the training:

'… it's taken a few longer maybe to try it because they're set in their ways but hearing the success of others ... you kind of get..and I think actually now I can safely say that all teachers are using it in school.' (Hannah, 1025-1031)

The resistance from staff to engage in new training could stem from feelings of anxiety about being asked to engage in a new approach outside their comfort zone, where they might feel professionally exposed or personally vulnerable.

4.10.2 We Were Living in a Bubble World

The seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic became apparent in the UK in March 2020 with significant consequences for education. A national lockdown led to schools being closed for two months between April and May.   This meant that classes moved online except for children who were identified as vulnerable or parents of key workers who could still attend. Schools reopened in June and then after the summer holidays measures were put in place to restrict the mixing of children between year groups. Restrictions or 'Bubbles' were introduced as a way of attempting to minimise the spread of the virus. This restricted classes from interacting at lunch, break time and assemblies. Children primarily in secondary schools were required to wear face masks. Some of the DTs reflected on working during this time:

'The biggest challenge was COVID (laughs) comes and then you get hit quite bad in terms of our school was open and shut bubbles were bursting everywhere it was a nightmare'. (Hannah 613-619)

'*We were living in a bubble world*'. (Anna 2091-2093)

'*I mean COVID was definitely the biggest challenge and all the time that took away but in terms of school and stuff yeah I just think the idea of just asking people to stay after school it's just why? why do we need this?*' *(*Hannah *628-635)*

4.10.3 Feeling Emotionally Drained

Staff well-being was a recurring theme that was referred to throughout most of the interviews. This took the form of multiple factors, such as increased demands on time because of changing health regulations and procedures and managing anxiety in children. The challenge and uncertainty of taking on a project within the school came with a high sense of responsibility for the success of the overall project:

'*Everyone is really stressed at the moment so I'd say staff well-being is not great at the moment, but I don't think that's about attachment awareness I think everyone's really stressed, and incredibly busy because of the expectations because of COVID, so I wouldn't say staff well-being wasn't particularly brilliant, but I don't necessarily think that is, any reflection on attachment awareness and I think definitely our school does try to make sure that staff are being considered, and we all look out for each other, but I just think the situation that we're all in the moment is one that and unfortunately it's just one that is stressful*' (Louise *390-406*)*.*

4.10.4 Opposing Priorities

Undertaking the project in a busy school environment with competing demands presented challenges for all the schools interviewed. Time pressures related to being

able to frequently bring the AASA to regular staff meetings when there were other competing school priorities. This was further exacerbated by the increase in workload due to the pandemic which meant that when schools returned, teachers were frequently required to prepare and teach online lessons as well as in-person taught lessons:

'I think some of the readings quite, was quite hard going and then when we kind of got told we don't have to do all of the reading, you can just pick them up. Then I was like phew! It felt a bit like you got a degree to do the reading but actually, it wasn't like that but that's kind of how it was set up to begin with, and that's just not manageable, it is just not going to work with people doing hours of reading on top of everything else.' (Louise, 287-298)

'Our time constraints were definitely around the school closure. So training, getting the training done was, that was, that was tricky. Just the practicalities of it.' (Alice, 712-716)

4.10.5 It's First and Foremost Understanding What Attachment Is

Hannah spoke about the challenges of staff understanding the attachment behaviour that they were seeing:

'I think it's first and foremost understanding what attachment is...and it's not a mindset as such for kids, it's not um, … it can get confused with a lot of things. It gets confused with your ADHD…"oh they've definitely you know"...and you're like "no, no, no, no let's think". So, it's staff just being aware of that behaviour is a result of what's gone on.' (Hannah 1094-2004).

Table 11

Superordinate Theme: Changes as a Result of the Project

Subordinate themes	Hannah	Victoria	Louise	Anna	Alice	Present in over half the sample?
Improved relationships	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Changes in children's interactions	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Desire to change behaviour policy	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Physical environment e.g. therapeutic space, calming boxes,	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Improved relationships with parents/ carers	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

4.11.1 Improved Relationships

Over half of DTs were able to describe improved relationships between staff and students. This resulted from the training and change in the approach used within their schools. Hannah described a change in staff attitude:

'You just see them like, really join the dots with children, they know and I definitely think, because the staff have changed their way,...that's gonna affect the rest of the school because they've changed their mindset and you know...um just the way it was delivered in training and um... I think it's, I don't know how to word this but softened some staff I don't know if that's the right word, maybe mellowed them so, in fact, the reaction isn't to shout they can think oh actually, maybe it's part of the issue, their home life, so you know maybe that's not going to help so let's think of the 'why' behaviour, the 'why'. (Hannah, 830-851)

Similarly, Anna described how staff in her setting began to respond differently to children's challenging behaviour:

'They [the staff] kept saying that they could connect so well with certain individuals in their class, that they were recognising that displayed the behaviours of children with attachment issues. So yeah, I think, once they might not have been on board for that first kind of um..when we had to do that baseline questionnaire… there are a few kinds of "no I don't know anything about it, I don't think it really relates to my class" and then after the training, they were much more on board..' (Anna 160-182)

4.11.2 Changes in Children's Interactions

Anna noticed children begin to use the language that was modelled for them by adults:

'We saw him starting to join in and also modelling the language. We saw the year six boys like 'Tommy', "That was amazing! That throw was fantastic!". So, their language towards each other changed.' (Anna, 926-939)

A couple of the DTs reflected on children who learned to take a different approach to their behaviour when feeling annoyed or upset:

'That was a child who was… I'd describe him as emotionally illiterate…like he had a very fixed mindset. He's came out with, something like that because we've had these emotional coaching sessions with them… was just like a winning moment.' (Hannah, 749-752)

Another child could access space to regulate his emotions:

'So, thinking back to a particular incident I had a child that came and used the beanbag here the other day…just sat down and popped himself on the beanbag and went "I just need..' I'm just having a moment and I need to get away thanks very much". Sit there, have a little chat, let me know when you are ready to go back.' (Alice, 558-565).

4.11.3 Desire to Change Behaviour Policy

Although it was not a shared theme a couple of the DTs reflected on how the school planned to make changes at a policy level:

'The wins are we have an Inset day from our EP talking about the Zones of Regulation at the start of the year, everyone has to have a display up we're using the CALM script on our website, something we have to do, it's now part of our

appendix to our behaviour policy, you know, everybody has to have a slide at the beginning of the year we do have parents kind of meeting with the new class teacher with all of the parents. Everybody had to have a slide saying that we did the attachment awareness, what it meant they could use it at home so I think we started off the year well.' (Louise, 752-768)

'I wanted to be able to create a relational policy that had almost training that was going to happen for everybody, almost like a little bible for them to be able to go…this is how we want everybody to behave towards the children in our school.' (Alice, 599-605).

Alice likens the 'relational policy' to her desire to create a '*little bible'*. The linguistic use of the word '*bible*' has the connotation of a text that provides a moral compass to believers. Similarly, the '*relational policy*' may also guide staff with directions on how to interact with students.

4.11.4 Changes to the Physical Environment

As part of the project, DTs were encouraged to consider how altering the environment could allow children to access space to regulate themselves:

'*So, this sort of room is quite near the school's main entrance so they can come here for five minutes regulate, read a book, just get in the school. I think it'll just yeah help in lots of ways.*' (Hannah, 602-608)

'*I think that's a really powerful piece of evidence actually the amount of children that end up going to the nurture room and needing that timeout.'* (Louise, 673-679)

Alice spoke about calming and therapeutic measures being an integrated part of their 'non-negotiables' provision expected in all classrooms.

4.11.5 Beneficial to the Wider School Community

DTs reflected on staff feeling more competent in managing children's feelings and the improvement this had on parental relationships:

'Parents are like, how do I handle these ...and you know it's like..we know CALM (laughs)...here it is! We have a really good sort of parent network (Victoria, 884-888)

Lastly, Anna considered how building trust with parents influenced attendance on a residential trip:

'I think also we had PGL at the end of last year for the year sixes and we had a wide range at the beginning of children and parents who were reluctant to go and by the end of the year I think we only had four children who didn't go..em, because they'd built up trust within the teachers and the parents as well you know it's a big thing five days away, so that would be..., it's tough but it does benefit them.' (Anna 1040-1064)

5 Discussion

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter begins by discussing the key findings of this research. It will then consider these in relation to the five prevailing themes that arose from the literature review. The chapter will describe the strengths and limitations of the research, dissemination strategy and evaluate the potential benefits and disadvantages for future research. The chapter will lastly, provide the researcher's reflections on the research process, implications at a societal level and for the work of EPs.

This research provided insight into the lived experiences of five DTs working in primary schools during the Covid-19 pandemic, in light of their experiences of helping to create an AAS. The research is specific to these contexts, but it is hoped that through these experiences other professionals will gain insight into the processes involved and potential outcomes in similar situations. This final chapter will consider key themes from this study in relation to the research questions:

5.2 Research Questions

The research used a qualitative approach to provide in-depth data based on DTs experiences. The research set out to explore the following research questions:

1. How do Designated Teachers' experience being part of the implementation of an AAS?

1.a What are the Designated Teachers' understanding of an AAS?

5.3 Participant Perspectives

The DTs interviewed were able to provide valuable first-hand accounts of their experiences helping to create AAS over the course of the year. Throughout the findings, DTs were able to use their reflections to consider the project as a whole, as well as base their observations on the personal interactions with staff and students at their schools. Such accounts provided a rich and unique perspective that is not well represented in current literature.

After analysing the DTs interviews across cases, it became apparent that there were different layers of reflection. The differences in perception came from the different responsibilities which the DTs held within their schools. Those with teaching responsibilities drew upon first-hand accounts, based on seeing and using the approach at a grassroots level. In contrast, non-teaching DTs views provided an overview from a top-down perspective, which tended to focus on the implementation of the approach from a strategic perspective. These variations in perspective provided insight into the AAS approaches at different levels of the system and illustrated how working at different levels within an organisation can affect the way experiences are considered and viewed.

5.4 Main Findings

A summary of the findings relating to the research questions are explored through the following themes. The first research question sought to explore DTs understanding of what an AAS is. This is recognised in the first theme (Defining

features of the AASA). The second research question sought to understand DTs experiences of being part of an AAS and is explored within the remaining themes.

The findings from the interviews carried out with the DTs provided rich data from which key themes were drawn. These are considered in light of current literature and are discussed below.

The analysis produced five superordinate themes:

1. Defining Features of the AASA

2. Motivations to Join the AASA

3. Factors that Facilitated the Success of the Project

4. Potential Barriers to the Success of the Project

5. What Does Change Look Like?

5.4.1 Defining Features of the Attachment Aware Schools Award

Several features of AAS were identified. These related to relational factors that fostered a nurturing environment, through the development of staff understanding key prevalent theories and actively applying new skills at the whole school level. This entailed providing staff with a theoretical background to attachment and the neurological underpinning of trauma. This was considered by DTs as an essential element of systemic change. It was important for staff pedagogy to understand why the behaviour may occur, such as relating to a child's early experiences and whether the child has been able to satisfy their innate need for safety and security through a 'good enough' and responsive caregiver, as theorised by Winnicott (1953). Subsequent attachment patterns can develop by responses based on experiences that are formed; for example, whether the child has been able to form trusting and

responsive attachments over time. The Still Face Experiment by Tronick (1978) illustrates the immediate effect of an unresponsive caregiver on an infant during a short interaction and the need for repair to the relationship. Relationships can be regarded as cycles of rupture and repair (Walser & O'Connell, 2021). However, when the rupture phase is prolonged and there is little opportunity for repair that is when a child may begin to learn that their needs will not be met by their caregivers and so can become less responsive and stressed. Bowlby (1969,1988) theorised that 'internal working models' are mental representations informed by previous caregiving relationships. Consequently, when there has been little opportunity for repair this can reinforce negative belief systems, that for example adults cannot be trusted or will not meet the CYP's needs. This then informs how the CYP may respond in future relationships.

DTs found that having an awareness of how these attachment behaviours interacted within the classroom environment provided a context as to why the behaviour may become transferred to the school environment. Research from Geddes (2006) describes a 'learning triangle', she states that children with attachment needs are more likely to present in different ways depending on the CYP's pattern of attachment. For example, a child with attachment needs who presents with insecure-avoidant attachment needs is more likely to prefer to engage in task-orientated behaviour and work in a more self-reliant manner, than by working directly with the teacher supporting them. Similarly, a CYP who has experienced ambivalent-avoidant attachment may be more likely to show attention-needing (or connection-seeking) behaviours which focus on receiving regular attention from the teacher. Geddes suggests that disorganised attachment styles are least likely to engage with the teacher and the task.

As part of the AAS training staff were provided with the pedagogy and skills to improve their practice through strategies such as EC which is designed to support students with their self-regulation, facilitate attuned relationships and provide learning opportunities to reflect on incidents. Cultivating trusting stable relationships was regarded as a key factor in all schools. The concept of everybody responding by being on the same page provided a consistent response.

5.4.2 Motivations to join the AASA

The motivation to join the AASA was linked to the following subordinate themes and will be discussed in turn below;

- ➢ Response to the Pandemic
- ➢ Fits in with the School Ethos
- ➢ Desire to Support the Needs of the Children in the School
- ➢ Personal Resonance

5.4.2.1 Response to the Pandemic

It is important to note that this research was carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic and so the context at the time is likely to have been one of the contributory motivating factors which would be different if it was carried out at another time. A motivating factor that emerged from the interviews was partly in response to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. DTs spoke about an increase in demands from the community. The AASA provided a way of responding to the increase in uncertainty at the time as a result of multiple pressures, such as the opening and closing of

schools, multiple lockdowns and the need to respond to changing governmental advice.

5.4.2.2 Fits in with Other Approaches

One of the DTs shared that part of the appeal of the AASA was that it was able to fit into and coexist with other relational approaches in the school. For example, Anna felt the approach was one aspect of a puzzle that fitted together with other approaches such as 'PACE' (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy). The PACE (Golding & Hughes, 2012) program aims to provide support to CYP who have experienced trauma by helping adults to promote these values through making meaningful connections with the CYP through a person-centred approach that promotes 'unconditional positive regard' originally derived from Rogers's (1951) Humanistic theory.

5.4.2.3 Desire to Support the Needs of the Children in the School

Whilst the initial motivation of the DTs to join the AASA was driven by supporting the needs of CEC (and as a response to the pandemic), it became apparent from the reflections of the DTs that there was a wide scope of the potential impact for the training to meet a range of children's needs. DTs provided personal accounts of how the change in approach was able to impact a range of children's needs, such as children who were described as being shy, emotionally illiterate, having ASD, or becoming quickly dysregulated. Within the group of children most likely to benefit from such an approach, it was interesting to note that the needs related to social and emotional reciprocity, social withdrawal, difficulties with social communication, and

possible emotional outbursts. These traits were seen within different groups of children who may typically but not exclusively have ASD, attachment or trauma needs, or who are less communicative, shy or may have social anxiety.

The change in children's behaviour was accounted for through multiple factors, such as teaching emotional literacy skills to regulate themselves, opportunities to reflect with an adult on an upsetting situation and providing alternative ways to respond differently in the future. Other reflections encompassed an awareness of how the behaviour policy may inadvertently impact children with trauma or attachment needs. For instance, one school used Banerjee's sociogram to identify levels of social acceptance of CYP to analyse who were potentially most at risk of rejection from peers so that the school could provide further support through an identified key adult approach. However, after evaluating this approach, early findings suggested some limitations, as some children were still identified as rejected by their peers after a term of using the approach.

This limitation may be due to the sociogram's focus on *who* may be more vulnerable to exclusion from their peers rather than providing insight into *why* this may occur. Research by Mulvey et al. (2017) suggests that social exclusion may occur within peer groups, particularly if children are identified by their peers as having particular social characteristics such as being shy, withdrawn, anxious or prone to externalising their behaviour which may be seen as aggressive. The researchers suggest that these groups are also at an increased risk of being targeted or to be bullied.

The role of the DT has a statutory duty to provide care to and support the needs of CLA (The Children and Young Persons Act, 2008). This means that DTs had an awareness of the potential impact and implication of the needs of CLA. The literature

review suggested that not all CEC felt they were equally supported, with children on SGO needs being less recognised. Despite this some CLA felt that the label was not helpful and that having the label carried with it lower expectations by staff.

5.4.2.4 Personal Resonance

There were areas of divergence in the views of the DTs about their reason for joining the AASA. Two of the DTs experiences stood out as distinctive from the other DTs by their associations with personal experiences. These past events possibly suggested an experience that involved pain or emotional labour. The desire to feel more equipped in the future if a similar occurrence were to arise may have motivated them to learn from these past experiences and seek alternative ways of responding. Through the interview process, it was apparent that by having a space to reflect on past experiences the DTs recognised what was challenging for them and how they would want to respond differently. Therefore, the ability to have space to reflect and process experiences was found at different levels of the research process.

5.4.3 Factors that Facilitated the Success of the Project

Another key theme that emerged from the interviews was a desire to keep the training alive. The DTs shared that they felt a personal responsibility within their schools to keep the approach embedded. This meant that it was kept on the agenda in staff meetings, and new staff were made familiar with the approach. There was also a fear that otherwise it may appear tokenistic if they received the award, but the day-to-day reality did not reflect the ethos. Therefore, the intrinsic motivation of the DTs was regarded as an important element. DTs shared they felt both a sense of

pressure on them to keep the momentum of the project alive, as well as continuing a legacy in the longer term.

Schools interact through an evolving system that provides a foundation for other approaches to fit within. Roberts (2020) argues that change is an inevitable part of a school's ecosystem. Roberts suggests that when creating systemic change, those in positions of authority need to be aware of systemic processes, such as how systems are constantly evolving. Leaders need to be conscious of the parts of the system that get taken up and other parts which become discarded. Roberts (2023) also states that organisations need to be wary of appearing to have all the elements in place but not creating any meaningful change, much like the icing on a cake with no real substance below it.

Figure 15 illustrates the whole school approach that supported the success of the project. It is important to note that roles were not discrete and so there was a cross-over between for example SLT-Teachers-DTs, indicative of the levels of responsibility the DTs held within the schools.

The joint approach between the different components of the system meant a consistent whole-school approach was delivered with the backing of governors, headteachers and staff. Schools shared the approach with families, meaning a consistent approach was being conveyed to CYP. Schools tended to be hierarchical and so the backing of headteachers and governors appeared to be a crucial element of the success of the project and all parts of the system were involved.

This DTs comment illustrated how the approach needed to be embedded within a whole school perspective. When considering factors that helped the overall success of the AASA project this can be considered at multiple levels within the system. This

ties in with research from the literature review that states factors that contribute to facilitating systemic change need leadership from SLT, a systemic approach to monitoring the project through audits and feedback as well as policies that reflect practice through a consistent approach to behaviour by staff and safe spaces for CYP (DLHC, 2023).

From a psychoanalytic perspective, it could be suggested that all parts of the system were able to contain the experiences of CYP and offer them containment by being able to hold their emotions. This draws from Bion's (1962) theory of 'container-contained' whereby the caregiver can tolerate feelings of anxiety and uncertainty projected into them. Salzberger-Wittenberg (1999) states that 'receptiveness to another person's communication depends on the adult being in touch with feelings' (Canham, 2006 as cited in Youell, 2006 p.59) states that organisations, which can contain the CYP's emotions to help them process them and become robust 'containing' structures, that are likely to evolve and withstand difficulties from within and from outside of the organisation.

Figure 15

Whole School Approach within the AAS
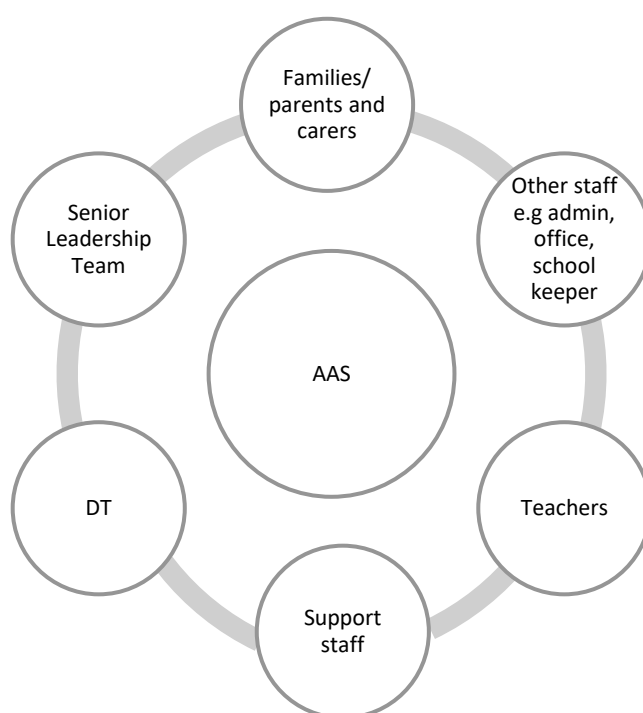
Note: The model represents key elements of systemic support for AAS.

5.4.4 Potential Barriers to the Success of the Project

When considering the potential barriers that arose, it was helpful to recognise that

some of these came from whether staff approached the training with an open and

receptive mindset. There were notable differences in the mindset of staff based on

available mental energy to take in new information. Louise noted how staff felt

drained, with the stresses of the pandemic on top of increased demands of teaching

which meant that there was an initial resistance at the start of the training, although

this shifted after the training was delivered. This tied in with literature by DLUHC

(2023) which stated the importance of capacity building within systems that are

under financial pressure and at risk of staff burnout. Themes from this research

warned against, change fatigue from staff, staff turnover, as well as a lack of

consensus of what a trauma-informed approach consisted of and resistance to the prevalence of trauma in society with organisations needing to accept a level of responsibility in addressing those needs.

Another notable barrier was what was termed cognitive dissonance. This is related to a discordance or disconnect when the theoretical side of the training does not correlate with an adult's experiences or values. For example, staff may hold positive attitudes towards a more punitive approach, which may be informed by their upbringing, values and attitude. This can then make it harder to take on a response that goes against their internal value system.

It was noted by Hannah that for staff who were more resistant to change, it helped hearing or seeing the new approach being successful for other members of staff before they were willing to implement it themselves. Therefore, there was a need to experience the new approach before in some cases being willing to adopt new practices.

Another potential barrier related to recognising the CYPs behaviour as part of a wider need. Hannah shared that for her it was important to understand why the behaviour occurred and to recognise it as a part of a wider need. The need to understand behaviour as part of a wider need was recognised in the literature reviewed, (Parker & Levinson, 2018) and is key to being able to respond appropriately to meet these needs. DTs expressed an understanding of how previous experiences could be impacting the present, and that CYP's behaviour needed to be thought about in this context.

5.4.5 What Does Change Look Like?

One of the presenting themes focuses on reflecting on changes that occurred during the project. These can be thought about in terms of observable changes as well as systemic changes such as policies and training. Systemic changes were observed as a result of the whole school training. There were notable differences throughout the participating schools, which included: a reduction in behaviour incidents, staff feeling more confident in responding to behaviour and increased confidence from parents who felt there was more trust and consequently were more likely to allow attendance on school trips.

DTs shared first-hand accounts of conversations with students who had begun to respond in new ways. These changes occurred through staff being trained in responding through a non-judgmental dialogue which encouraged thoughtful reflections on how to help the CYP respond differently in the future.

Changes in behaviour were recognised in particular groups of children, such as those who were introverted or presented with high levels of anxiety, or those who would normally respond intensely if things did not go as planned. Observable differences were shared of children modelling language used by adults, by giving specific praise to friends, and by children noticing qualities within each other that were shared and celebrated in class and assemblies. DTs shared that the school felt a calmer place in general.

5.5 Key Themes from the Research

Key themes from the literature review were: 'Defining Attachment Aware and Trauma-informed Approaches', 'AAS and Similar Ethos' 'DTs Experiences of Supporting CEC' and 'Systemic Changes' and Implications for EPs.

Previous research discussed in the literature review (Kelly et al., 2020: Rose & Gilbert, 2017) noted hard and soft indicators of improvements such as academic improvements and increases in attendance levels, as well as notable differences within the staff and students' overall well-being. Key themes in the literature review aligned closely with those that emerged from the current study. These will be discussed in further detail.

5.6 Discussion of Findings

The findings from the research will be discussed in light of the research from the literature review related to the following themes:

➢ Defining Attachment Aware and Trauma-informed Approaches

➢ AAS and Similar Ethos

➢ DTs Experiences of Supporting CEC

➢ Systemic Changes

➢ Implications for EPs

5.6.1 Defining Attachment-Aware and Trauma-informed Approaches

The literature review drew upon multiple studies that encompassed AAS approaches and trauma-informed practice. When considering these approaches key commonalities related to a system that firstly recognised the prevalence in society and the need for such an approach. One that recognised the impact on CYP, a system that responded to the need which was reflected in the policies and procedures and adapted the environment accordingly to support therapeutic measures. The ethos was one that was child-centred and built upon nurturing relationships (Rose & Gilbert, 2017). There were opportunities provided for secondary attachment figures, to build trusting relationships. This could be further expanded upon in secondary schools to incorporate a peer network for older children to form mentors. The research suggested partnerships with parents, carers and the professional network to be essential for incorporating a wider level of support (Kelly et al. 2020; Zsolnai & Szabó 2021). Interestingly, research carried out by Clunies-Ross et al. (2008) highlighted a body of strong research that endorsed preventative approaches as opposed to reactive approaches. The preventative approaches add weight to the AAS approach as this shared a similar ethos of being built upon nurturing, supportive collaborative approaches that provide coping strategies for CYP. This was found to be of great benefit overall to staff and students. Whereas the reactive approach consisted of being based on rewards and punishments and exclusions that mirror the current education system and one endorsed by the DfE (2020). Key features of the AAS approach are discussed further below.

5.6.2 AAS and Similar Ethos

A relational approach was a key theme within the literature reviewed and the findings of this study. This provides a theoretical underpinning to AAS. A relational approach is key to this ethos, which recognises the value of relationships. Rose and Gilbert's (2017) research sheds light on the underlying values of the intrinsic need to belong, when this need is met CYP were more likely to feel 'secure, safe, seen and soothed'. This approach ties in with Roger's (1951) therapeutic approach which emphasised the importance of remaining non-judgmental and providing unconditional positive regard.

Bowlby's attachment theory was also recognised as a key foundational principle to understanding attachment needs. When applied to a school context Zsolnai and Szabó (2021) outline the role school staff can play by taking on the role of a secondary attachment figure to help meet the needs of CYP. Similarly, Bergin and Bergin (2009), and Bergin and Riley (2010) argue that significant adults can provide important attachment figures for children, adding weight to the need for the role of a secondary attachment figure for CYP when previous availability has been absent or has not met the CYP's needs. This is essential as children's attachment needs are likely to affect how they engage with adults and the learning process (Geddes, 2006). Within the current research, DTs shared that they noticed changes such as calmer schools whereby CYP were able to access calming spaces and resources. A space was created where CYP could be supported to regulate their emotions and reflect with an adult to problem-solve together. Therefore, rather than punishing difficult emotions that may be seen to get in the way of learning, AAS seek to recognise and validate these emotions paving the way for a CYP to begin to process them and manage them in more constructive ways. Moreover, Honneth and Ganahl

(2012) highlighted the need for warm, nurturing, reciprocal relationships in which CYP feel valued and appreciated. To help support and improve feelings of connectedness and connections with peers, some schools in this research took steps to facilitate nurturing relationships by matching CYP with key adults. In order to target CYP who were identified as being excluded by their peers and subsequently had fewer social networks.

5.6.2.1 Student Well-being

This research was conducted at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic was impacting the whole of the UK and the rest of the world. DTs cited student well-being as top of the agenda in schools and one of the driving forces for prioritising change to support CYP. The literature review suggested that a relational approach was needed to reconnect CYP and communities and create a sense of belonging (Carpenter & Carpenter, 2020).

Another finding identified was finding ways to support 'student voice' so that CYP felt they played an active part in decision-making within their school, facilitating a sense of worth and belonging. Seeking the voice of the child can be regarded as an emancipatory tool that seeks to empower CYP within their school system (Kelly et al., 2020). Additionally, Little and Maunder's (2021) research suggested a need to move away from a performance-driven culture, which increases competition and stress on students to a relational approach that prioritises student mental health and well-being.

5.6.2.2 Neuropsychological Response to Trauma and Attachment

One of the central tenets that emerged from the DTs interviews in this research was a desire to provide an understanding of the nature of trauma and attachment to staff. This was important to reflect on when considering the needs of CEC, who have a higher prevalence of experiencing trauma and attachment difficulties, often exacerbated by multiple placements and fewer opportunities to form meaningful attachments (NICE, 2021). By understanding attachment and trauma from a theoretical perspective, educators and professionals can understand the reasons behind the response and respond accordingly. Adults within AAS receive training to understand the theoretical perspective, of what occurs when a CYP has experienced trauma as well as how to respond to meet those needs and de-escalate associated problem behaviour.

As a result of trauma and attachment needs a CYP may react in a way that is in response to those needs. An individual may become hypervigilant in response to a perceived threat and react in a fight, flight or freeze (FFF) response. When an individual perceives a threat, this activates the state of FFF. This has implications within a learning environment. When in a heightened state the CYP is unable to be receptive to learning. Adults can help to provide feelings of psychological safety through attuned relationships. In this state, the brain is able to form new neurological connections, and the stress response in the amygdala responsible for the FFF response is able to relax. Equipping staff with the skills to support the social and emotional development of CYP, helps them to express their thoughts and feelings as well as regulate their executive functioning through strategies such as EC.

It is important to therefore understand the nature of the behaviour. In this research, one DT shared that when a staff member initially viewed challenging behaviour as a conscious choice and did not know the child's background the response was often responded to by a punitive approach. Therefore, depending on the CYP's attachment pattern they may seek the help of available adults around them to meet those needs, or if they have not had positive previous experiences they may not.

5.6.3 DTs Experiences of Supporting CEC

As described in the introduction the DT role is statutory with key responsibility for LAC and PLAC (The Children and Young Persons Act, 2008). Within this research, there was a clear sense of responsibility for CEC as well as other children with presenting challenging needs. Whilst DTs showed an awareness of the needs of CEC and the need to support them and their families, DTs reflected widely on CYP within their schools and how the approach could benefit a range of needs more widely, by taking a preventative approach. It was evident that the responsibility felt by taking on the role of DT was a driver for change within their schools as well as to support staff's understanding of behaviour to help to meet CYPs needs. Additionally, the DTs held a key position within the school system, which helped to provide a contact for staff to liaise with. By being internally based, this appeared to help support the project, although the literature review did not find this to be an essential aspect to facilitate change.

Although research in AAS is limited, the literature review provided a growing evidence base in support of a relational based approach through AAS to provide CEC with a sense of belonging through trusting relationships. The literature

suggested that the effects were far reaching, with implications for increased attendance, improvements in academic abilities and improved relationships with staff and students (De La Fosse et al., 2023; Kelly et al., 2020; Mears, 2020; Parker & Levinson, 2018, Rose et al., 2019; Webber, 2017).

5.6.4 Systemic Changes

At a societal level, a cultural and psychological shift within the conceptual function of schools is needed to fully support all children. At a local government level policies need to reflect the wider scope and potential impact which schools can offer. At a local level, schools need to ensure that their policies are truly inclusive by reflecting the needs of all CYP, by acknowledging the needs of CYP who have experienced trauma and attachment difficulties, to ensure they are fully supported throughout their education. Further reflection on how best to support CYP in their education may include assessing staff confidence levels in their knowledge and understanding of key theories, as well as using restorative approaches or EC approaches. This also means that professionals may be required to consider their role beyond the immediate task and reflect on their ability to support the wider system. Working in a preventative capacity helps to deconstruct the normalisation of the punitive approach and aims to meet the Human Rights Act (Article 2, protocol 1, 2015) to ensure all CYP have equal access to an equitable education. Past literature provides a strong body of evidence for working from a preventative approach which recognised the importance of providing nurture, support and coping strategies to CYP (Clunies-Ross et al,. 2008).

When considering how to support CYP within the education system it is important to consider how organisations can function to support those within the whole school system. As described in the introduction, Winnicott's theory conceptualises the child in relation to its carer's ability to hold and contain the child's inner emotions and help them to make sense of the world. Similarly, schools can develop the capacity to acquire a 'holding mindset' (Hyman, 2012) by becoming aware of the emotions of the CYP and holding them emotionally. Additionally, the literature acknowledged the emotional labour involved in teaching. Research by Kennedy and Laverick (2019) suggests that schools could benefit from teachers being provided with opportunities for supervision. This could help to provide both a therapeutic outlet for teachers emotional labour experienced as well as provide opportunities to reflect on their practice.

Kelly et al.'s (2020) research has shown the importance of engaging in a collaborative approach so that all parts of the system work towards a shared vision where policy reflects practice. All staff involved in the AASA were informed of key theories of attachment and trauma to gain an understanding of why CYP may behave in ways which may reflect difficult past experiences. Two of the DTs observed that this was instrumental in adults' change of mindset to understand why the behaviour may be occurring resulting in a shift away from a punitive approach from the staff. Therefore, understanding there was a reason behind the behaviour changed the that way adults thought about and responded to the CYP.

Moving forwards, schools could benefit from a period of reflection to better understand which aspects worked well and those areas they would like to continue to develop. They may carry this out by reflecting on all aspects of the system by engaging with teachers, governors, staff, parents, and CYP. This will help to guide

the areas of development in terms of which aspects continue to be embedded and how further reflection and collaboration might guide future strategies and practices.

5.6.5 Implications for Educational Psychologists' Practice

EPs may be regarded as agents of change, with the overall aim of helping schools to be self-sufficient and take autonomy over the way they function. Moreover, EPs are in key positions to identify systemic barriers which may not be apparent to professionals working inside the system and may help to shed light on blind spots within the organisation. As stated in research by Mears (2020) and found within this research EPs may respond to systemic change by overseeing AAS projects through auditing and identifying areas of development within schools such as behaviour policies, staff knowledge and understanding of trauma and attachment and how it can impact behaviour. EPs can work with DTs to help monitor and support the progress of CEC. In addition, research within the Currie report (2002) provides a framework for EP practice by considering the various levels (child or family, schools and Local Authority) and functions (consultation, assessment, intervention, training and research) that EPs perform. EPs have the scope to work in preventative systemic ways, such as through delivering training on AAS, raising the profile of CEC in planning meetings and providing an understanding of the behaviour in context (Boesley, 2021).

5.7 Significance of Findings in Wider Context

As stated in the introduction in relation to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, research in the literature review also highlights the necessity to ensure that basic needs are

addressed such as ensuring children have eaten. At the time of writing the UK is experiencing economic crisis, referred to as the cost-of-living crisis. The rise of 'foodbanks', 'warm spaces' etc, have become commonplace and this is more likely to impact those who are most socially disadvantaged. Within the current education system, it is apparent that there is a lack of equity within the system, as it is not adequately meeting the needs of all children and adversely impacts those who have additional needs. Therefore, a wider question may be posed by considering what is potentially at stake if things remain the same and whether there is a greater cost of not acting to create change.

Organisations need to hold a metaphorical mirror up to themselves to reveal their blind spot as illustrated by Johari's Window (Luft,1961) (see Figure 6). Schools need to reduce the blame culture and improve staff well-being by working to address all children's needs. Research by Squires (n.d) provides evidence for the need to build up the capacity of staff in schools to meet the diverse needs of children in their care. Increasing the mental capacity of staff develops the system to be effective.

5.8 Strength and Limitations of the Study

This research found that a wide range of CYP benefited from the AAS approach; including children with SEND, CEC and those with mental health needs such as anxiety.

This research found benefits in terms of academic outcomes for students and staff well-being, an increase in staff confidence levels when responding to behaviour they found challenging and a reduction in stress levels; stress due to student behaviour was cited as a major factor in teachers leaving the profession (DfE, 2022b).

Additionally, other potential benefits that were reported by DTs were that the project was affordable as the AASA was freely available to schools within the borough via the EPS. This also appears to be common practice in many Local Authority areas throughout the country. The schools and DTs in the AASA were well supported by the EPS and Virtual School by providing resources and training, delivering workshops on key areas of interest and helping to deliver in-house training on trauma and attachment as well as through termly EP coaching sessions.

Potential disadvantages that emerged within this research and noted within the literature review were the time taken to train all staff and embed a new approach. Staff turnover posed a potential barrier to the long-term development of the project and so DTs were mindful of keeping the approach within staff consciousness by ensuring that new staff had adequate training and had access to existing resources.

Although the AASA was free to access there were some financial implications which came with the desire to transform spaces and provide resources, which included therapeutic spaces or 'non-negotiables' (e.g. Alice described all classes needing a sensory box). Another theme that many of the DTs were conscious of was the will or drive of a key person within the school to keep the project going and on the agenda. The research highlighted in the literature review by Gaffney et al. (2004) stated the need for SLT to create staff buy-in by keeping it on the agenda. As well as acknowledging the continuous nature of systemic change as it does not become self-sustaining and so requires continuous time and energy.

An open mindset where staff were receptive to taking on new training and a new approach was also something that helped to facilitate and implement the project

although DTs recalled that even more resistant staff were willing to take on the approach after seeing the results.

IPA is an idiographic approach that considers participants' experiences in-depth. Whilst this provides a rich source of data it also means that in order to satisfy aspects of homogeneity the research is limited to studying DTs experiences within a particular context i.e., primary school settings. Therefore, a limitation of the design of the research was that it was limited to one type of setting and one perspective (the DTs). Primary schools tend to be better designed to facilitate a relational approach by, for example, students being based primarily in a single classroom with a single teacher. This can help to promote familiarity with routines and expectations whilst also working to develop relationships between staff and students. However, in larger environments such as secondary schools contact time with the class teacher is greatly reduced, and students have multiple subjects taught by multiple teachers. The disadvantage of being taught by multiple teachers can make it more difficult for meaningful relationships to occur naturally. It may therefore be of interest for future research to gain further exploration of how AAS can be implemented and be of benefit within secondary school settings.

Another possible limitation of the research is the requirement within IPA for participants to be fluent in English (Smith, 2004). This may have a limiting effect on the demographic of the experiences with the voices of more marginalised groups who are less fluent in English not being heard. Although Smith (2004) suggests that it may be possible to use an interpreter, this would be subject to an additional layer of hermeneutics as the interpreter makes sense of the participants' meaning-making and may subtly alter what is translated.

IPA uses small sample sizes which are not intended to be generalisable therefore, the DTs experiences within a primary school setting are context-specific, although individuals' experiences can be used to inform wider practice.

The research used a sample of DTs who offered to volunteer for this research. These self-selecting DTs may possibly have had a positive perspective and so may have been more willing to share their experiences.

5.9 Dissemination Strategy

The researcher aims to disseminate findings and feedback to research participants and their respective schools, commissioning services and stakeholders, such as the Virtual School. The researcher has provided formal and informal presentations of the findings to the EPS involved in the research and plans to disseminate to other interested EPS and potential conferences and arising opportunities. When disseminating the study, the researcher will ensure the anonymity of the commissioning services, EPS and maintain the confidentiality of participants in disseminated materials.

It is hoped that this research will help to inform service providers such as schools, EPS and at the local government level to help inform educational policies. The research draws upon the impact of systemic change that policymakers may find beneficial when considering large-scale changes. At a local level, headteachers may also consider how such an approach may benefit their school which can fit within existing approaches.

5.10 Directions for Future Research

It would have been of interest to explore perspectives within schools where there had been more challenges to implementation, possibly the project did not develop in line with their expectations. It may therefore be of interest for future research to attempt to randomly select participants from a larger pool, to be invited for interview in an attempt to recruit a range of DTs perspectives, from those participating in the overall project.

Additionally, the research focused on the perspective of those involved in helping to implement the AASA. Currently, there is no research from the perspective of CYP. Although some of this has emerged secondhand through the reflections of DTs, it would be of great interest to capture the views of those on the receiving end of the project to understand to a greater degree the impact of the overall project and gain further insight into possible blind spots.

Lastly, an attachment and trauma-informed approach has potential to systemically strengthen different sectors. Creating a relational based approach can promote staff wellbeing and empowerment through helping to address systemic inequalities, improving communication between staff and service users, as well as values a joint and consistent approach. In settings where staff are faced with responding to challenging behaviour they are likely to benefit from understanding underlying needs related to trauma and attachment with the skills to de-escalate behaviour through restorative approaches such as EC.

 this research may have implications when considering systemic practice beyond the educational sector such as the health care system and the criminal justice system, including youth justice systems.

5.11 Researcher Reflections

The researcher first became aware of attachment research through the doctoral training course at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. The importance of this work transpired through the teachings of key theorists such as Winnicott, Bowlby, Ainsworth, Klein, and Freud. These theorists first interested the researcher in the importance of early life experiences in the formative years. The researcher's work on placements in the CAMHS and in EPS motivated the researcher to the relevance that attachment and trauma-informed practice could have when working with CEC. The understanding of the AAS project and the potential change this could have on outcomes for CEC warranted further exploration.

Additionally, from a personal perspective, the researcher has experienced different types of education systems having previously attended a challenging mainstream co-education school in the early 90s and later an international school in Hong Kong. These experiences have shaped my own education and understanding of the different education systems and the impact they can have on a person. It is through these past experiences that the researcher has learnt the importance of the individual's voice and the necessity to try to get as close as possible to their lived experience to further understand their thoughts and actions. IPA is ideal when carrying out qualitative research as this allows for the individual's voice to be thought about at multiple levels, allowing for a rich idiographic analysis of the data.

6 Conclusions

6.1 What Can Be Learnt?

The research undertaken has provided an understanding of the systemic changes which can occur in schools that undertake the AASA, informed by attachment and trauma research. The five schools participating in the AASA provided rich insights into the changes that occurred within each school through the lived experiences of the DTs.

This thesis provides notable insights into an understudied area of research. The literature review provided an understanding of research and practice relevant to AAS with similar findings in this research based on academic improvements, reduction in absences, reported improvements in teachers' relationships with students, improvements in students' behaviour and emotional regulation as well as improvement in parents' confidence levels.

6.2 What Conclusions Can Be Drawn From This Approach?

AAS have the potential to be containing systems, which can support the feelings of staff, children and parents. The approach creates a system that can withstand change and uncertainty from outside and within the system. This was particularly poignant during the unprecedented time of the COVID-19 pandemic. This research suggests that the catalyst for some schools to join was in response to the pandemic; stating the pandemic brought a level of stress and uncertainty that motivated schools to want to ensure they could meet the unprecedented demand that they were facing

at the time. Other schools were motivated in response to a previous experience, with a desire to have supportive structures in place to prevent the repetition of something similar from reoccurring. The Virtual School also provided knowledge of how a system could be used to support CEC by the system having the potential to act in a preventative and not reactive way, through being ready to receive and support CEC to help them to thrive in a system that historically they have had poorer outcomes from.

Arguably a systemic approach is needed to support CYP with attachment and trauma needs although this research also highlights scope beyond those needs. The AAS system responds to the CYPs needs by changing their internal state, through emotional regulation, holding in mind or mentalisation, and by developing relationships between CYP and supporting adults. Some of the potential barriers to AAS will be the challenge to stay current so they continue to meet needs by supporting all children and for schools to maintain focus on the ethos and principles over time as new initiatives and directives are introduced by the government.

Past research highlights how patterns of attachment from early life experiences can become transferred to other relationships. Within schools this can affect relationships with adult figures, making it harder to access learning. AAS provide opportunities to meet these needs through facilitating attuned relationships which crucially allow new relationships to be formed.

Likewise, traumatic events are not limited to any specific group and can profoundly impact a person based on that moment in time. AAS provide support through a

system that is designed to create feelings of safety which have physiological, psychological and social effects. This can allow the CYP to thrive in the environment, allowing them to take risks, access learning and create more meaningful relationships.

The researcher concludes by encouraging key stakeholders to consider opportunities that are offered by implementing such an approach which benefits the needs of students by developing a robust system that can respond to a range of needs.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Literature Review of Selected Research Papers

	Search 2 Research Papers
1	Parker.R and Levinson.M (2018) Student behaviour, motivation and the potential of attachment-aware schools to redefine the landscape
2	Rose. J, McGuire-Snieckus. R, Gilbert. L and McInnes. K (2019) Attachment Aware Schools: the impact of a targeted and collaborative intervention
3	Kelly. P, Watt. L, Giddens. S (2020) An Attachment aware schools programme: a safe space, a nurturing learning community
4	Little.S, Maunder.R (2021) Why we should train teachers on the impact of childhood trauma on classroom behaviour
5	Zsolnai.A and Szabó, (2021) Attachment aware schools and teachers

	Search 3 Research Papers
1	De La Fosse, Parsons and Kovshoff (2023) They are always in the top of our mind': Designated Teachers' views on supporting care experienced children in England
2	Kennedy and Laverick (2019) Leading Inclusion in Complex Systems: experiences of relational supervision for headteachers
3	Edwards (2016) Looking after the teacher: exploring the emotional labour experienced by teachers of looked after children
4	Langton (2017) Adopted and permanently placed children in education: from Rainbows to reality
5	Mannay, Evans, Staples, Hallett, Roberts, Rees, Andrews (2017) The consequences of being labelled 'looked after': Exploring the educational experiences of looked after children and young people in Wales
6	Matchett (2022) 'It starts when teachers are training': The role of generalist and designated teachers in the educational experiences of children in care

7	Sebba and Berridge (2019)
	The role of the Virtual School in supporting improved educational outcomes for children in care
8	Webber (2017)
	A school's journey in creating a relational environment which supports attachment and emotional security

Appendix B: Grey Literature Summary of EThOS search and hand search

Study	Relevance	Limitations	Included/excluded
Bhagvanji, K. (2020) An exploration of designated teachers work with LAC, what constrains and enables attachment aware practice	The thesis explores constraints and enabling factors of attachment practice by interviewing 7 DTs. The researcher clearly states their position and potential bias within the research by outlining their prior experiences. Provides first hand perspectives of DTs and CEC experiences.	The study is small and uses a discourse analysis with 7 DTs. This limits ability to generalise from the study.	Included
Mears, C. (2020) A Case Study Exploring Systemic Implications of implementing the Attachment Awareness Programme at Key Stages 3 and 4	This thesis looks at exploring how an Attachment Awareness programme can fit within other initiatives within a secondary school setting. Provides insight into attachment research within a UK school setting.	Limited to a secondary school setting, not directly relevant to the current research.	Included
Samul, N. (2022) Supporting looked after children: a mixed methods study exploring the role of the Educational Psychologist	The thesis explores the role of the EPs in providing support to LAC. The research is relevant to the current study as it provides implications for how schools may be better supported by EPs and also highlights some of the challenges that teachers face.	Research was collected via questionnaires and so the potential richness of in-depth interviews was not able to be further explored.	Included
Boesley. (2021) 'Sometimes you have to work hard despite the system': Exploring the role and experiences of designated teachers for looked after and previously looked after children.	The explored the relationship between statutory regulations about the designated teacher role and practice. This included an exploration of key roles and responsibilities, barriers and facilitating factors that impact the role, perceptions around personal effectiveness, and an exploration into how designated teachers work with virtual schools, social care, educational psychologists (EPs) and wider professionals. The research was conducted using a mixed-methods approach using surveys with a sample of virtual schools (n=44) and designated	The data collection provides both DT and Virtual school perspectives but survey however only DTs were interviewed limiting the amount of in-depth feedback that the virtual schools could provide. Also, the research does not seek the views of the care experienced children.	Included

	teachers (n=142), and semi-structured interviews with designated teachers (n=16). Quantitative data were analysed using a statistical analysis programme, providing descriptive statistics and exploring trends, while qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis. The research provides useful implications for the work of EPs.		
Best. (2019) Exploring the educational experiences of children and young people adopted from care: Using the voices of children and parents to inform practice?	The current study used a qualitative design to explore the lived, educational experiences of adopted children. Phase 1 investigated the difficulties experienced by adopted children in school and supportive factors which contribute to positive educational experiences, through semi-structured interviews with 11 secondary-aged adoptees and a focus group with six adopters. Thematic analysis identified five themes within the narratives of the study-adoptees and study-adopters: Inner Turmoil; Social Disconnection; Unsupportive School Contexts; Relational Repair; and Misperceptions and Prejudice. In phase 2, the findings from phase 1 were presented to 20 Designated Teachers within a workshop to explore how the voices of the study-adoptees and study-adopters can be used to inform their role. Three themes were found, which illustrate broad implications for Designated Teachers' practice with adopted children and adoptive parents in schools.	The study was reliant on a verbal exchange for data collection over one day and so was reliant on CYP feeling confident and safe enough to share personal experiences.

The CYP were from secondary school and the DTs were from primary schools. Although the CYP reflected on experiences from both secondary and primary it may have been relevant to have DTs from a secondary setting as this would have been directly relevant. | Included |

Hand search

Study	Relevance	Limitations	Included/excluded
Department for Levelling up Housing and Communities. (2023). Trauma informed	The report helps to provide a definition of trauma informed	The report reviewed existing research in this area. Problems	Included

approaches to supporting people experiencing multiple disadvantages. A rapid evidence assessment	approached and provides an understanding of how Trauma-informed approaches can support people experiencing multiple disadvantage.	identified are, a lack of agreement in defining trauma informed approaches as well as limited research in this area.	

Appendix C: Literature Review Selected Research Papers: Search 2

Research papers on Attachment Aware Schools						
Study	Aims	Relevance	Place, country of publication	Sample size/ nature of sample	Strengths	Limitations
Parker.R and Levinson.M (2018) Student behaviour, motivation and the potential of attachment-aware schools to redefine the landscape.	A positional paper which reviews several studies into attachment-aware approaches in schools. The authors discuss discourse related to the separation of emotions from learning and differentiates previous SEAL initiatives from a whole school approach.	This paper is relevant to the research as it provides context to previous political initiatives to approaching behaviour. Past criticism to AAS as well as weighs up the benefits of a relational approach.	Bath Spa University, UK	n/a	Provides a balanced argument of how past governments have viewed behaviour (e.g. from a punitive lens) and provides a critique of the theory and practice that makes up the AAS approach.	Does not provide any quantitative analysis to provide further insight into the effectiveness of AAS. No in-depth insight into qualitative analysis. Limited to providing more of a historical and theoretical overview and discussion.

Rose. J, McGuire-Snieckus. R, Gilbert. L and McInnes. K (2019) Attachment Aware Schools: the impact of a targeted and collaborative intervention	Relevant to the current research. It aimed to promote practitioner awareness of attachment in relation to child behaviours and learning. It focused on using relational-based strategies and interventions to address the needs of children and young people.	Relevant to the research. Findings provide quantitative and qualitative data.	Bath Spa university, Bath, England, UK	200 participants made up of teaching and support staff, 94 pupils aged 5 – 16 years from 40 schools.	Mixed methods – quantitative and qualitative data provides a rich picture.	Chi-squared used to analyse academic outcomes. Correlation not causation.
Kelly. P, Watt. L, Giddens. S (2020) An Attachment aware schools programme: a safe	Schools participated in the first year of the AAS programme consisting of AAS network, taught programme	Relevant to the research. Findings provide quantitative and qualitative data.	Derbyshire, England, UK	77 schools in UK, participants spanned headteachers, teachers, teaching assistants and other roles	Large sample size, range of educational provisions took part e.g. primary secondary, PRUs special schools, infant schools.	Research local to district of Derbyshire. Research limited to first year of results. First part of research

space, a nurturing learning community	and action research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to				Relevant to UK context. Positive results in schools regarding, student behaviour, staff confidence levels, more positive Ofsted's.	based on rating confidence levels, could be subject to bias.
Little.Sf, Maunder.R (2021) Why we should train teachers on the impact of childhood trauma on classroom behaviour	Provides theoretical outline of relevant literature relating to attachment theory and the role of neurobiology, stating how it can impact relationships.	Relevant to whole school inclusive practice.	UK	n/a	Provides understanding of role teachers can play in supporting attachment needs within education setting. Teacher training does not provide training on Trauma and attachment needs and so helps to fill a gap.	Criticism that relational approach conflicts with 'performative educational culture'.

| Zsolnai.A and Szabó, (2021)

Attachment aware schools and teachers	The paper aims to provide insight into the concept of attachment aware schools and to review how attachment perspective plays a role in teacher student relationships	Relevant, provides overview of attachment research and the role teachers can play as secondary attachment figures.	Budapest, Hungry	n/a	Provides an overview of key theories relating to attachment research.	Provides an overview, less critique of limitations of attachment research. No in-depth analysis of any key studies.

Included?	Paper Title and Authors	Research design and summary	Themes	Gap in the literature?
Yes, very relevant in providing an understanding views of DTs in supporting the needs of CEC (with ASD).	De La Fosse, Parsons and Kovshoff (2023) They are always in the top of our mind': Designated Teachers' views on supporting care experienced children in England	Qualitative -Online semi-structured interviews. 5 DTs (during the pandemic). Thematic analysis. The research focuses on CEC with autism. It identifies facilitators and barriers to supporting CEC. It also highlights the complexities of supporting CEC with Autism as the needs may appear similar with attachment needs. Barriers included – some training not available due to no current	DTs supporting the school systemically e.g through AASA, EC and 'Empathy Lab'. DTs noticed change in attitude of staff and shift in students behaviour. Holist child centred approach differences noted in academic attainment, social skills, sense of belonging, emotional well-being. teaching behaviour for learning and physical and sensory. ● As well as amending behaviour policies to be more attachment and trauma informed. And supporting emotional Dysregulation through providing a designated	Supports systemic approach to supporting LAC. Academic, SEMH, staff attitudes, social skills. Difference in Emotion lab and counselling also offered. Specialist unit could provide more flexibility in responding to CEC through having staff to support needs and being flexible in the timetable.

| | | LAC. Jargon used in meetings.

Facilitators included: increase in other professionals attending meetings due to virtual nature. | calming space, counselling, prioritising SEMH needs.

● DTs provided regular contact time with CEC in the form of daily check ins, important to be consistent for them and keep them in mind. Important during times of transition such as year group changes.

● DTs showed an awareness of the possibilities of home placement breakdown or CEC being educated in isolation due to behavioural needs.

● As part of their statutory duty. DTs monitored the attainment and targets towards their Personal Education Plans (PEPs).

● One DT that supports a mainstream school and specialist unit felt that the specialist unit could respond more | |

			flexibly to the CEC's needs. Such as allowing for a flexible timetable, having available staff to support the YP to regulate themselves, and being responsive to CEC with sensory needs. ● The research raised the concern that DTs had limited experience of working with CEC with Autism. There was uncertainty whether the CYP presented with ASD or Attachment needs which they felt can present similarly. A challenge with differentiating their needs. ● The research stated that LAC more likely to have mental health needs and so SEMH is prioritised. Limitation - The researchers advocate larger-scale quantitative analysis to build a	

			national picture of how best to support CEC, the research was carried out during the lockdowns and so it was not possible to capture the voices of the CEC. Facilitations included: Personal Education Plans (PEPs) Multiagency working - facilitated by virtual meetings - support from the Virtual School	
Yes, relevant to understand how systems can better support staff to support disadvantaged students.	Kennedy and Laverick (2019) Leading Inclusion in Complex Systems: experiences of relational supervision for headteachers	The research article focuses on the complex systems HTs work within. HTs provide a role of containment within their school systems. The article outlines constraints experienced by HTs in England as well as an approach to containment through	Working systemically highlights the disproportionate impact policies have on CYP who experience exclusion and discrimination e.g. SEND, Black and Minority ethnic groups, and socio-economically disadvantaged communities.	The research provided useful implications for systemic practice in educational settings acknowledging the complexity of school systems. Working at an organisational level to promote change moving away from within child focus.

		relational supervision.		
Yes, provides an understanding of Emotional Labour experienced by teaching staff of LAC and how best to support them.	Edwards (2016) Looking after the teacher: exploring the emotional labour experienced by teachers of looked after children	14 KS2 teachers of LAC completed semi-structured interviews. Research on Emotional Labour experienced by teachers supporting LAC in a Primary school setting.	A mixed picture of emotions experienced by teachers ranging from joy in overcoming a problem together to sadness, frustration and anxiety relating to their personal circumstances. As well as feelings of incompetence in managing CEC feelings and needs. Some teachers felt the need to express 'surface level' emotions as a way of containing the childs emotions particularly when they were shocked by what had been shared. Suppression of emotions was common, although at times authentic emotions were shared. This related to their sense of professional duty and	The need for systemic support when teachers experience high levels of EL, to help to mitigate the effects of burn out.

			the need to be seen as in control. Providing systemic support can help reduce the effects of teacher burnout.	
No, while the research is relevant to the debate on historical policies that have impacted adopted children, the research is not focused on the specific aspects of supporting CEC in education settings.	Garrett (2017) Ending the 'Cruel Rationing of Human Love'? Adoption Politics and Neo-Liberal Rationality	The discussion provides a political overview of the last decade preceding 2017 and how policy impacts adopted CYP.	- Neoliberal policy making, - The influence of US politics and practice, - Reforming the welfare state	n/a
No, although the paper notes the benefits of using a relational approach with pupils who	Lowri (2021) Issues in the persistent non attendance at school of autistic pupils and	One in-depth case study, 10 other non-attenders reflected on. The article focuses on supporting the	Schools keen for a quick fix approach, may use rewards or punishments for non attendance. Approach is largely unsuccessful and does not take into	n/a

have autism and non-attendance the paper was not considered highly relevant to the needs of CEC.	recommendations following the reintegration of 11 autistic pupils	needs of CYP with ASD who have prolonged absence from schools in SE of England and Wales. The author suggests a link between absence and trauma. An understanding between home and factors that contribute to worries need to be understood.	consideration underlying reasons for anxiety related to the non-attendance. The study points to masking autistic traits to fit in (e.g. stimming). This can lead to 'autistic fatigue'/burnout/trauma due to high levels of effort required. A joint planned approach between home and school is advocated.	
Yes, **provides an understanding and awareness of the continuing needs of post-adopted children and implications for education settings.**	Langton (2017) Adopted and permanently placed children in education: from Rainbows to reality	Importance of professionals understanding that children who are under special guardianship orders still face the same complexities as LAC and PLAC. Professionals also need to be mindful that when children find their 'happy endings' a term used to describe becoming adopted,	Research highlights the key role of EPS in supporting adopted CYP by working at all levels: Training (attachment, loss, neurological and psychological impact) consultation, assessment, intervention and research for children and their families school and the LA.	Implications for the roles of the EP, as they are uniquely placed as a joint role between services. EP are well placed to help schools understand the needs of CYP previously adopted and those under SGO.

		they also still face the same complexities as those whom are not adopted.		
Yes, the research provides insight into the retrospective experiences of CEC and what helped/hindered support for them when in education. **Also provides other perspectives on the perceived role of the DT.**	Mannay, Evans, Staples, Hallett, Roberts, Rees, Andrews (2017) The consequences of being labelled 'looked after': Exploring the educational experiences of looked after children and young people in Wales	The research addresses the limited research from the perspective of lived experiences of looked after children and young people (LACYP) within the education system. Qualitative research with 67 LACYP in Wales. Age 6 -27 years. 27 Female 40 Males. Research explores their educational experiences and how professional expectations affect aspirations.	Exploration of how the label of 'looked after' affects CYP aspirations among professionals. A desire amongst LACYP to reject the negative connotation that comes with the label and be pushed and challenged educationally. CYP found the label limiting and there was some rejection of the label.	Limitations: based in Wales so generalisability may have some implications for regional variations. Retrospective and so although provides insight into past experiences may not reflect the current picture.
Yes the research provides insight into the	Matchett (2022) 'It starts when teachers are training': The role of generalist and designated	Research conducted in large English city. Semi-structured interviews/ Focus groups, were used with 21 care-	Research captures the voices of CEC. Highlighting the importance of key adults keeping them in mind. Key adults could not be	Recommendations include further exploration and understanding of the role of the DT (the

| experiences of CEC | teachers in the educational experiences of children in care | experienced CYP 18-27 years and 3 senior employees in an English LA.

CYP – the importance of relationships with adults and peers.

Lack of clarity around the role of DTs by teachers and CYP in care. | imposed. CYP preferred to choose someone they liked. Having something in common was identified as building relational bonds e.g. nationality or experiences, HT could relate personally to CEC e.g. through their daughter's boyfriend.

Trusting relationships with tutor and TA. CYP did not appreciate being pitied still wanted boundaries. Support varied from DTs and other members of staff. Teachers were held in high esteem, use of positive connotations 'kind' 'caring' 'great' and 'love'. Teachers went above and beyond the remit of their role such as taking measures to minimise differences of the CYP such as buying them clothes, checking in on them regularly even after leaving school. The | system in place to support CEC).

Teacher training should cover understanding the needs of CEC. |

			relationships were deemed as authentic from the CE CYP.	
Yes, the research provides insight into how VS support DTs, CYP and other professionals.	Sebba and Berridge (2019) The role of the Virtual School in supporting improved educational outcomes for children in care	16 Virtual school head teachers in England were interviewed to explore what supports cic. Study 1 (mixed methods) focussed on factors that contribute to poor outcomes for cic. Study 2 (evaluation of an intervention) identified what improves their outcomes. Limitations – study 1 only focussed on secondary schools. Study 2 focussed on secondary and primary schools. Although DTs and foster carers and social workers were interviewed only VSH	Joint approach between school, Virtual School and foster carers and social care important – shared information and expectations. Placement stability is important for those in care. VSH contributes to the educational outcomes of CEC by minimising school changes and reduction in exclusions, although lack of data to say if CEC have improved outcomes due to VSH.	Importance of training for staff on CYP (currently or previously in care) who have experienced trauma/abuse/neglect.

		perspectives were reported on.		
Yes, the research is very relevant to understanding how a relational approach supports CYP with attachment needs.	Webber (2017) A school's journey in creating a relational environment which supports attachment and emotional security	A single case study – primary school in South West of England. Paper reports on teachers' experiences of supporting LAC and adopted CYP. Research is based on qualitative semi-structured interviews with staff and questionnaires. The case study is based on a child with insecure attachment needs within the school. Limitation -based on one school and staff's response to one child within the school, limits generalisability, although may offer elements of relatability.	Importance of developing a whole school approach to support the development of secure relationships. The approach was supported by the head and governing body. Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy (PACE) approach was used in this case study funded through Pupil Premium Plus funding. Targeted educational provision did not have any effect on child's learning until a relational approach was established resulting in an improvement in her progress to better than average progress. Facilitators to support LAC and adopted children:	The research provides an in-depth understanding of how a relational approach within a school could make a difference to the needs of a primary school child with attachment needs.

			- Communication between staff to support transitions. - Physical touch to regulate emotions. - Bespoke provision for each child. - Not shaming the child. - Working with families and multi agencies.	

Appendix E: CASP Quality Assurance Framework Search 2

	Questions	Parker and Levinson (2018)	Rose. McGuire-Snieckus., Gilbert. and McInnes (2019)	Kelly., Watt., Giddens. (2020)	Little., Maunder. (2021)	Zsolnai. and Szabó, (2021)
	A. Are the results Valid?					
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	✓	✓	✓	?	?
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	✓	✓	✓	?	?
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	✓	✓	✓	?	?
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	✓	✓	✓	?	?
6	Has the relationship	?	?	?	?	?

	between the researcher and participants been adequately considered?					
	B. **What are the results?**					
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	✓	✓	?	?	?
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	✓	✓	✓	?	?
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	✓	✓	✓	✓	?
	Section C: Will the results help locally?					
10	How valuable is the research?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Comments:	Parker and Levison's (2018) research is a positional paper drawing upon several studies using an AAS approach. The research provides an argument for the importance	Rose et al.'s research examines the findings of using an AAS framework in 40 schools (including 200 participants consisting of staff and students. The research used a	The research relates to the area of study. The research involved 77 schools within the area of Derbyshire and is in it's fifth year. It provides important research to the evidence based of AAS positively	The paper considers evidence for what therapeutically benefits young people who have experienced trauma. Exploring attachment aware approaches used in schools. The researcher's	The research aims to present the concept of AAS and explore the potential for teachers to support social emotional development by becoming an additional attachment figure. The research supports the importance of

		of not separating feelings and emotions from the learning experience, with implications at a policy level.	mixed methods approach with hard and soft indicators providing promising results on both student wellbeing and academic attainment.	impacting school development.	aim to provide a link between childhood trauma and disruptive behaviour in the classroom with implications for teacher training. the research provides a theoretical background to the context of attachment research and why it is necessary for schools to prioritise relationships to support students, reduce teacher stress and aid teacher retention.	attachment research during early infancy, primary school age and adolescence, although this changes over time. The importance of the attachment figure is highlighted as a necessary part of a young person's development to aid their social relationships, learning and development.
Key	Y = Yes N = No ? = Can't tell					

Appendix F: CASP Quality Assurance Framework Search 3

	Questions	De La Fosse, Parsons and Kovshoff (2023)	Kennedy and Laverick (2019)	Edwards (2016)	Langton (2017)	Mannay, Evans, Staples, Hallett, Roberts, Rees, Andrews (2017)	Matchett (2022)	Sebba and Berridge (2019)	Webber (2017)
	A. Are the results Valid?								
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	X	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	✓	?	✓	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	✓	?	✓	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Was the recruitm	✓	n/a	✓	n/a	✓	✓	?	✓

	ent strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?								
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	✓	✓	✓	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Has the relationship between the researcher and participants been adequately considered?	?	?	?	n/a	?	?	?	?
	B. **What are the results?**								
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	✓	n/a	?	n/a	?	✓	✓	✓
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently	✓	n/a	✓	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓

	rigorous?								
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	✓	n/a	✓	n/a	✓	?	✓	✓
	Section C: Will the results help locally?								
10	How valuable is the research?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Comments:	Qualitative - Online semi-structured interviews. 5 DTs (during the pandemic). Thematic analysis. The research focuses on CEC with autism. It identifies facilitators and barriers to supporting CEC. It	The research article focuses on the complex systems HTs work within. HTs provide a role of containment within their school systems. The article outlines constraints experienced by HTs in England as	14 KS2 teachers of LAC completed semi-structured interviews. Research on Emotional Labour experienced by teachers supporting LAC in a Primary school setting.	The research highlights the key role of EPs in supporting adopted CYP by working at all levels: Training (attachment, loss, neurological and psychological impact) consultation, assessment, intervention and research for children	The research helps to address the limited research from the perspective of lived experiences of looked after children and young people (LACYP) within the education system. Qualitative research with 67 LACYP	The research was conducted in a large English city. Semi-structured interviews/ Focus groups, were used with 21 care-experienced CYP 18-27 years and 3 senior employees in an English LA. CYP – the importa	16 Virtual School head teachers in England were interviewed to explore what supports cic. Study 1 (mixed methods) focussed on factors that contribute to poor outcomes for cic. Study 2 (evaluation of an intervention) identifie	A single case study – primary school in South West of England. Paper reports on teachers' experiences of supporting LAC and adopted CYP. Research is based on qualitative semi-structured interviews with staff and questionnaires. The case study is based on

		also highlights the complexities of supporting CEC with Autism as the needs may appear similar with attachment needs. Barriers included – some training not available due to no current LAC. Jargon used in meetings. Facilitators included: increase in other professionals attending meetings due to virtual nature.	well as an approach to containment through relational supervision.		and their families school and the LA.	in Wales. Age 6 - 27 years. 27 Female 40 Males. Research explores their educational experiences and how professional expectations affect aspirations.	nce of relationships with adults and peers. Lack of clarity around the role of DTs by teachers and CYP in care.	d what improves their outcomes. Limitations – study 1 only focussed on secondary schools. Study 2 focussed on secondary and primary schools. Although DTs and foster carers and social workers were interviewed only VSH perspectives were reported on.	a child with insecure attachment needs within the school. Limitation-based on one school and staff's response to one child within the school, limits generalisability, although may offer elements of relatability.
Key	Y = Yes N = No ? = Can't tell								

Appendix G: PRISMA Flowchart Search 2

Identification of studies via databases and registers

Identification

Records identified from*:
Databases (n =11)

Records removed *before screening*:
Exact duplicate records removed automatically.

Screening

Records screened
(n =11)

Records excluded by hand, not meeting inclusion criteria
(n = 6)

Reports assessed for eligibility
(n = 5)

Reports excluded:
Not meeting inclusion criteria
(n = 0)

Included

Studies included in review
(n =5)

Appendix H: PRISMA Flowchart search 3

Identification of studies via databases and registers

Identification

Records identified from*:
Databases (n =38)

Records removed *before screening*:
Exact duplicate records removed automatically.

Screening

Records screened
(n =38)

Records excluded by hand, not meeting inclusion criteria
(n = 28)

Reports assessed for eligibility
(n = 10)

Reports excluded:
Not meeting inclusion criteria
(n = 2)

Included

Studies included in review
(n =8)

Included

Further sources were retrieved from studies included:

ARC (n= 5)

Grey literature search (n=5)

Hand search (n=1)

Appendix I: Summary of Sources from ARC

Research author	Source of research	Relevance	Limitations	Included/ excluded
Colley, D. and Cooper, P. (2017) Attachment and Emotional Development in the Classroom: Theory and Practice	Book	Provides an overview of attachment aware research relevant to the content of AAS.	Not based on a direct study, based on researchers knowledge within their previous work within this area.	Included
Smith, M. Cameron, C. and Reimer, D. (2017) From Attachment to Recognition for Children in Care	Journal	Argues importance of attachment relationships for children in care. Highlights the importance of recognition. Uses Winnicottian theory as foundation to theory.	Focus remains narrow – based on care experienced children and young people.	Included
Parker, R. and Levinson, M. (2018) Student behaviour, motivation and the potential of attachment-aware schools to redefine the landscape	Journal	Duplicate of above search, already included.	n/a	Excluded as duplicate
Harlow,.E (2019): Attachment theory: developments, debates and recent applications in social work, social care and education	Journal of Social Work Practice	Provides in depth overview of attachment theory and how professionals can use this to support foster carers and support adoption for the benefit of cyp.	Provides a theoretical overview, no direct references made to AAS. More relevant to the work of foster carers.	Excluded
Rose, J. McGuire-Sniekus, R., Gilbert, L., and McInnes, K. (2019) Attachment Aware Schools: the impact of a	Journal	Duplicate of above search, already included.	n/a	Excluded as duplicate

targeted and collaborative intervention.				
Woolgar, M. and Simmonds, J. (2019) The diverse neurobiological processes and legacies of early adversity: implications for practice	Journal	Provides support for physiological effects between early negative experiences and the developing brain.	Limitations may include correlation between brains experience and presentation. Correlation is not causation.	Included
Carpenter, M. and Carpenter, B. (2020) A Recovery Curriculum: Loss and life for our children and schools post pandemic	Published article	Provides clear overview of provision to support the needs of children and young people following the pandemic. Acknowledges the impact of the pandemic on cyp people's feelings and emotions. Emphasises importance of emotional stability needed as a prerequisite for learning.	No time scale of how long the recovery curriculum may need to continue for.	Included
Kelly. P, Watt. L, Giddens. S (2020) An Attachment aware schools programme: a safe space, a nurturing learning community	School Development Plan	Excluded as duplicate of above search already included	n/a	Excluded

Appendix J: Interview Schedule

Semi-structured interview schedule

IPA approach allows interviews to be co-constructed with the participant and prompts will follow the participant lines of enquiry. Questions 1 and 2 may be asked as warm up questions in order to build rapport and get the participant used to speaking about their experiences before the target question (3) is asked.

Script - I am interested in what you have to say about Attachment Aware schools in as much detail as you can give.

1. Can you tell me about what first led your school to become involved with the Attachment Aware Schools Award project?

2.What changes have you noticed within your school?

3* Can you tell me about your experiences of becoming an AAS?

Appendix K: Research Information Sheet

<u>An Exploration of the Views and Experiences of Designated Teachers for CLA in Helping to Create</u>

<u>an Attachment Aware School</u>

Thank you for your interest in taking part in my research project. Below you will find further information regarding the study, such as what your participation will involve and what will happen to your data.

<u>Who am I?</u>

I am a postgraduate student studying for a Professional Doctorate in Child, Community and Educational Psychology at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust.

<u>What is the research about?</u>

I am conducting research into the Attachment Aware Schools Award project and the role of the designated teacher in helping to facilitate whole school change. This research will explore the views and opinions of the designated teacher at the end of the pilot project and aims to provide future recommendations to interested parties to help inform similar projects in the future.

<u>Ethical Approval</u>

This means that my research follows the standard of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society and has been approved by the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust Research Ethics Committee.

<u>Why have you been asked to participate?</u>

You have been invited to participate in this research because the researcher is interested in finding out your experiences as a designated teacher who has been involved in the running of the pilot Attachment Aware Schools Award project in your school. I aim to provide feedback from this research to inform the expansion of this pilot project, as well as informing similar projects in the future. Your participation would be very valuable in helping to develop this knowledge and understanding.

What if you want to withdraw?

As a participant for this research you have the right to withdraw. You are free to withdraw from the research study at any time up to the point of data analysis (2 weeks after interview) without explanation, disadvantage, or consequence.

What will your participation involve?

If you agree to participate you will be asked questions on your experiences within the Attachment Aware Schools Award pilot project. Participation will be conducted using individual interviews. After introductions and warm up conversation the individual interviews will last approximately 30-60 minutes. All interviews will be audio recorded.

Interviews will be conducted virtually or in a designated quiet room in school at a time that is convenient to you (this will be dependent on current government guidelines on social distancing).

Your taking part will be safe and confidential, but should the subject matter and experience of participating in this research leave you feeling upset there will be the opportunity for signposting to support services. Your privacy and safety will be respected at all times.

Participants will not be identified by the data collected on any written material, or in any write-up of the research. However, due to the small sample it is possible that other participants may be able to recognise your contributions as your own.

What about privacy and confidentiality?

The material you provide (from the interview) will be transcribed and analysed to provide findings for the research.

Your data will be anonymised and your contributions referred to by a pseudonym which will be then used to code your data. The names and contact details of all participants will be stored securely in line with the Data Protection Act (2018) and the Tavistock and Portman's data protection and handling policies. Raw data will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

Afterwards there will be the possibility to share the research findings with you, key stakeholders and the possibility of these being published in academic journals.

Researcher Contact Details

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or

concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Please email: ____, avi-port.nhs.uk

If participants have any concerns about the conduct of the investigator, researcher(s) or any other

aspect of this research project, they should contact:

Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance: academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk

Appendix L: Ethical Approval TREC Application

Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee (TREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW OF STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

This application should be submitted alongside copies of any supporting documentation which will be handed to participants, including a participant information sheet, consent form, self-completion survey or questionnaire.

Where a form is submitted and sections are incomplete, the form will not be considered by TREC and will be returned to the applicant for completion.

For further guidance please contact Paru Jeram (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk)

FOR ALL APPLICANTS

If you already have ethical approval from another body (including HRA/IRAS) please submit the application form and outcome letters. You need only complete sections of the TREC form which are NOT covered in your existing approval

Is your project considered as 'research' according to the HRA tool? (http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/research/index.html)	No
Will your project involve participants who are under 18 or who are classed as vulnerable? (see section 7)	No
Will your project include data collection outside of the UK?	No

SECTION A: PROJECT DETAILS

Project title	An exploration of the views and experiences of designated teachers in helping to create an Attachment Aware School		
Proposed project start date	1/7/21	**Anticipated project end date**	1/9/2022

Principle Investigator (normally your Research Supervisor): Adam Styles	
Please note: TREC approval will only be given for the length of the project as stated above up to a maximum of 6 years. Projects exceeding these timeframes will need additional ethical approval	

Has NHS or other approval been sought for this research including through submission via Research Application System (IRAS) or to the Health Research Authority (HRA)?	**YES (NRES approval)**	☐
	YES (HRA approval)	☐
	Other	☐
	NO	☒
If you already have ethical approval from another body (including HRA/IRAS) please submit the application form and outcome letters.		

SECTION B: APPLICANT DETAILS

Name of Researcher	
Programme of Study and Target Award	Child Community and educational Psychology Doctorate
Email address	@tavi-port.nhs.uk
Contact telephone number	

SECTION C: CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Will any of the researchers or their institutions receive any other benefits or incentives for taking part in this research over and above their normal salary package or the costs of undertaking the research?
YES ☐   **NO** ☒
If **YES**, please detail below:

Is there any further possibility for conflict of interest? YES ☐ **NO** ☒

Are you proposing to conduct this work in a location where you work or have a placement?

YES ☒ **NO** ☐

If **YES**, please detail below outline how you will avoid issues arising around colleagues being involved in this project:

The research is being undertaken within schools in three boroughs that my educational psychology service is situated in. However, I will not be seeking participants from any schools in my service that I directly work with. Therefore, the schools I support will not be included in my research in order to minimise any potential bias. Therefore the research will not be involving anyone that I work with.

Is your project being commissioned by and/or carried out on behalf of a body external to the Trust? (for example; commissioned by a local authority, school, care home, other NHS Trust or other organisation). *Please note that 'external' is defined as an organisation which is external to the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust (Trust)	**YES** ☐ **NO** ☒

If **YES**, please add details here:

Will you be required to get further ethical approval after receiving TREC approval? If **YES**, please supply details of the ethical approval bodies below AND include any letters of approval from the ethical approval bodies (letters received after receiving TREC approval should be submitted to complete your record):	**YES** ☒ **NO** ☐

I have gained approval for participation in the research within my Educational Psychology Service via my Principal Educational Psychologist (see attached) and senior EP involved in the Attachment Aware School project). Approval has also been gained from the Virtual School who are involved in the creation of the project (see attached).

Ethical approval will be sought by the schools participating in the project by emailing all head teachers to scope who is interested in participating in the research before emailing the designated teacher at the approved school.

If your project is being undertaken with one or more clinical services or organisations external to the Trust, please provide details of these:

n/a

If you still need to agree these arrangements or if you can only approach organisations after you have ethical approval, please identify the types of organisations (eg. schools or clinical services) you wish to approach:	
I wish to approach schools after ethical approval has been gained.	
Do you have approval from the organisations detailed above? (this includes R&D approval where relevant) Please attach approval letters to this application. Any approval letters received after TREC approval has been granted MUST be submitted to be appended to your record	**YES** ☒ **NO** ☐ **NA** ☐

SECTION D: SIGNATURES AND DECLARATIONS

APPLICANT DECLARATION	
I confirm that: • The information contained in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, correct and up to date. • I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research. • I acknowledge my obligations and commitment to upholding ethical principles and to keep my supervisor updated with the progress of my research • I am aware that for cases of proven misconduct, it may result in formal disciplinary proceedings and/or the cancellation of the proposed research. • I understand that if my project design, methodology or method of data collection changes I must seek an amendment to my ethical approvals as failure to do so, may result in a report of academic and/or research misconduct.	
Applicant (print name)	Amy Couprie
Signed	Amy Couprie
Date	06/05/2021

FOR RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENT APPLICANTS ONLY

Name of Supervisor/Principal Investigator	Adam Styles

Supervisor –
1. Does the student have the necessary skills to carry out the research?   **YES** ☒ **NO** ☐   ▪ Is the participant information sheet, consent form and any other documentation appropriate?   **YES** ☒ **NO** ☐   ▪ Are the procedures for recruitment of participants and obtaining informed consent suitable and sufficient?   **YES** ☒ **NO** ☐   ▪ Where required, does the researcher have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance?   **YES** ☒ **NO** ☐

Signed	*A Styles*
Date	09.07.21

COURSE LEAD/RESEARCH LEAD
Does the proposed research as detailed herein have your support to proceed?   YES ☒   NO ☐

Signed	*A Styles*
Date	09.07.21

SECTION E: DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

1. Provide a brief description of the proposed research, including the requirements of participants. This must be in lay terms and free from technical or discipline specific terminology or jargon. If such terms are required, please ensure they are adequately explained (Do not exceed 500 words)
The research project aims to explore the views and experiences of designated teachers in helping to create an Attachment Aware School programme. The designated teachers will be recruited from schools within three boroughs in South West London and one out of London borough in which my educational psychology service supports. I am seeking to explore the views of approximately, 4-8

designated teachers to participate in the research (Reid et al., 2005). The participants will be recruited by initially emailing schools to gain approval for designated teachers to participate in the research and outline aims and time commitments. I then aim to introduce designated teachers to the research aims in a virtual meeting. The researcher will then email all school whose headteacher has given consent for them to participate. Participants who reply and agree to participate in the research will be selected on a first come basis until the required amount of participants has been reached.

Participant views will be gathered through the use of semi-structured interview questions (drawing upon the principle of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, whereby data is gathered as a result of what the participant brings). Interviews will be semi- structured 1:1 as recommended by Reid et al. (2005) to allow the interviewee to 'think, speak and be heard' (The Psychologist, 2005. p 21). Alase, (2017) suggests a safe comfortable space, with the interview lasting approximately 60-90 minutes minutes. Questioning will aim to be open ended and will extract data rooted in the DTs experiences. The data will be recorded by audio via a laptop and kept securely in line with GDPR and the Data Protection Act. Participants' data will be anonymised, coded and kept on a password secured laptop. Participants will be informed how their data will be used and who it will be shared with. They will be informed of what will happen to the data once the programme is complete (in line with university protocols).   Strict measures to anonymise data will be implemented and participants will be reminded that possessing a combination of attributes may make it difficult to be completely unidentifiable e.g. involvement in the AAS programme, geographical location, type of school. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) will be used to analyse the data. The purpose of IPA is to gain insight into the lived experience of the participants. In applying an idiographic perspective, the research aims to hear the personal accounts of the DT. Although it may not be possible to generalise to other experiences, the research aims to raise personal insights gained by staff at the heart of the research programme. As described by Reid et al. (2005) it is a bottom up approach and does not set out to disprove hypotheses.

2. **Provide a statement on the aims and significance of the proposed research, including potential impact to knowledge and understanding in the field (where appropriate, indicate the associated hypothesis which will be tested). This should be a clear justification of the proposed research, why it should proceed and a statement on any anticipated benefits to the community. (Do not exceed 700 words)**

The Attachment Aware Schools programme is in its pilot year. It aims to inform the researcher's Educational Psychology Service and Virtual School of particular themes that have emerged from the data to steer the programme's future development. This research will be shared in collaboration with the overall evaluation of the programme taking place within the Educational Psychology Service. This will be presented to heads of Virtual Schools. At a wider level the research aims to provide insight of the programme to inform educational psychologists and local authorities of real-world experiences of creating Attachment Aware Schools, as well as sharing insights into individual experiences of designated teacher's. This may benefit schools and Educational Psychology Services who are considering alternative approaches of responding to high exclusion rates and looking for more inclusive ways of working with children in care or previously looked after. At a governmental level there are implications for recommendations for revising behavioural policies and guidance for Ofsted.

Additionally, the research is being carried out during the pandemic and so this may affect schools with an increase in bereavement, anxiety, stress, and trauma. These issues are likely to be a consideration for schools and organisations interested in running school-wide programmes during or after this context and therefore interested in exploring new ways of responding to these concerns.

This research aims to explore the role of the designated teacher in order to support the Attachment Aware Schools programme within primary schools, providing an in-depth perspective and personal insight.

The views and experiences of designated teachers are an important part of the facilitation of the Attachment Aware Schools programme. Gaining an in-depth understanding of their view will be a crucial aspect at a local level to inform the project's future development, as well as other professionals who are considering implementing a similar venture.

The literature review shows there is a clear gap in current research on both what is involved in creating an Attachment Aware School in the UK, as well as through the perspective of a designated teacher.

3.	**Provide an outline of the methodology for the proposed research, including proposed method of data collection, *tasks* assigned to participants of the research and the proposed method and duration of data analysis. If the proposed research makes use of pre-established and generally accepted techniques, please make this clear. (Do not exceed 500 words)**

I aim to utilise a relativist ontology. The research takes the perspective that there is no absolute truth, each designated teacher will hold their own perspectives of truth and reality. The research takes a constructivist epistemology which argues that designated teacher's will construct their own ideas based on their experiences and interpretations in relation to their role in creating an Attachment Aware School. The purpose of this research will therefore be exploratory as it seeks to explore this phenomenon through the experiences of designated teachers. Additionally, there is no official description of an Attachment Aware School and so this research will also help others to understand some of the components that make up an Attachment Aware School and provide further insight into defining it.

The research will use a semi structured interview to elicit the views and experiences from the designated teacher concerning the process of creating an attachment aware school. The interviews will last approximately one hour to 90 mins. The interviewer aims to ask open ended questions and prompts led by the participant. Data will be collected by audio recording and stored securely on a password protected device, before being transcribed verbatim and anonymised.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis will be used to interpretate the data. Assumptions of IPA are:

- Phenomenology, which encompasses the participants' meaning making of their own lived experience.

- Hermeneutics applies to the sense making of the participant and their own interpretation of the phenomena, in addition to double hermeneutics which considers the researcher's interpretation of the participants experience. IPA is inductive and idiographic and considers the value of the individual participants' in-depth detailed account of the phenomena, from an individual perspective rather than something to be generalised. These key components will be used to gain insight into the phenomenon of designated teachers' perceptions of their experiences of creating AAS.
- The research question aims to be exploratory, to enable participants to go into a sufficient amount of depth when exploring the phonomenon. This is appropriate analysis when using qualitative data. The procedure will involve analysing the transcript in order to connect the themes. Analysis will be carried out in line with Smith et al. (2009):
  1. Familiarisation with transcripts.
  2. Initial noting and examination of content and use of language.
  3. Development of emerging themes and reduction of details.
  4. Connections between themes to fit into similar structures.
  5. Repeat with all participants.
  6. Search for connecting themes across participants and indentation of overarching themes.

SECTION F: PARTICIPANT DETAILS

4.	Provide an explanation detailing how you will identify, approach and recruit the participants for the proposed research, including clarification on sample size and location. Please provide justification for the exclusion/inclusion criteria for this study (i.e. who will be allowed to / not allowed to participate) and explain briefly, in lay terms, why these criteria are in place. (Do not exceed 500 words)

Recruitment will take place by emailing all head teachers of primary schools involved in the AAS programme to gain consent for participation. Designated teachers will then be emailed from schools who have expressed an interest to be involved in the research. The email will specify that participants will be recruited on a first come basis, until the desired number of participants is recruited, approximately, 4-8 (Reid et al., 2005).

If the desirable number of participants do not volunteer in primary school the research will then broaden the scope to include secondary and PRU' s who are also involved in the project. Alternatively, the researcher will approach schools in different LAs who have taken part in an AAS programme and adjust the research aims and objectives accordingly.

Inclusion criteria:

➢ Participants must be proficient in English (to a fluent standard). This is important so that participants are able to fully communicate their experiences. The nuances of language will also be a valuable part of the data.
➢ The participants must have been in the role of a designated teacher for at least one year. This is required so that participants are fully informed of the designated teacher role and have had experience and understanding of the needs of looked after children.
➢ Participants must be from one of the primary schools participating in the Attachment Aware School programme. Homogeneity is an essential part of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and so participants must be from a similar type of school.
➢ Participants school will have signed up to and completed one year of the Attachment Aware Schools project being ran in the participants borough. This will ensure that all designated teachers will have successfully completed one year of AAS training being delivered by the educational psychology service.

> ➢ Consent must be given from the school the designated teacher works within. In order to ensure ethical considerations are met.
> ➢ Looked after children need to be on roll in the school (within 12 months of the time of the research is carried out), to ensure that any potential benefits or changes in the school environment can be reflected on and explored the potential impact.

---

5. Please state the location(s) of the proposed research including the location of any interviews. Please provide a Risk Assessment if required. Consideration should be given to lone working, visiting private residences, conducting research outside working hours or any other non-standard arrangements.

If any data collection is to be done online, please identify the platforms to be used.

Participants aimed to be recruited by the end of the summer term 2021. As a result of the pandemic, depending on government guidelines in the summer, interviews may be held either virtually, or face to face at the participants' school.

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6. Will the participants be from any of the following groups? *(Tick as appropriate)*

☐ Students or Staff of the Trust or Partner delivering your programme.

☒ Adults (over the age of 18 years with mental capacity to give consent to participate in the research).

☐ Children or legal minors (anyone under the age of 16 years)[1]

☐ Adults who are unconscious, severely ill or have a terminal illness.

☐ Adults who may lose mental capacity to consent during the course of the research.

☐ Adults in emergency situations.

☐ Adults[2] with mental illness - particularly those detained under the Mental Health Act (1983 & 2007).

☐ Participants who may lack capacity to consent to participate in the research under the research requirements of the Mental Capacity Act (2005).

☐ Prisoners, where ethical approval may be required from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).

☐ Young Offenders, where ethical approval may be required from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).

☐ Healthy volunteers (in high risk intervention studies).

☐ Participants who may be considered to have a pre-existing and potentially dependent[3] relationship with the investigator (e.g. those in care homes, students, colleagues, service-users, patients).

☐ Other vulnerable groups (see Question 6).

☐ Adults who are in custody, custodial care, or for whom a court has assumed responsibility.

☐ Participants who are members of the Armed Forces.

[1]*If the proposed research involves children or adults who meet the Police Act (1997) definition of vulnerability[3], any researchers who will have contact with participants must have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance.*

[2] *'Adults with a learning or physical disability, a physical or mental illness, or a reduction in physical or mental capacity, and living in a care home or home for people with learning difficulties or receiving care in their own home, or receiving hospital or social care services.' (Police Act, 1997)*

[3] *Proposed research involving participants with whom the investigator or researcher(s) shares a dependent or unequal relationships (e.g. teacher/student, clinical therapist/service-user) may compromise the ability to give informed consent which is free from any form of pressure (real or implied) arising from this relationship. TREC recommends that, wherever practicable,*

investigators choose participants with whom they have no dependent relationship. Following due scrutiny, if the investigator is confident that the research involving participants in dependent relationships is vital and defensible, TREC will require additional information setting out the case and detailing how risks inherent in the dependent relationship will be managed. TREC will also need to be reassured that refusal to participate will not result in any discrimination or penalty.

---

7. Will the study involve participants who are vulnerable? YES ☐   NO ☒

For the purposes of research, 'vulnerable' participants may be adults whose ability to protect their own interests are impaired or reduced in comparison to that of the broader population. Vulnerability may arise from:

2. the participant's personal characteristics (e.g. mental or physical impairment)
3. their social environment, context and/or disadvantage (e.g. socio-economic mobility, educational attainment, resources, substance dependence, displacement or homelessness).
4. where prospective participants are at high risk of consenting under duress, or as a result of manipulation or coercion, they must also be considered as vulnerable
5. children are automatically presumed to be vulnerable.

7.1. If YES, what special arrangements are in place to protect vulnerable participants' interests?

n/a

If YES, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check **within the last three years** is required.

Please provide details of the "clear disclosure":

Date of disclosure:	
Type of disclosure:	
Organisation that requested disclosure:	
DBS certificate number:	

*(NOTE: information concerning activities which require DBS checks can be found via https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-check-eligible-positions-guidance). Please **do not** include a copy of your DBS certificate with your application*

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8. Do you propose to make any form of payment or incentive available to participants of the research? YES ☐   NO ☒

If **YES**, please provide details taking into account that any payment or incentive should be representative of reasonable remuneration for participation and may not be of a value that could be coercive or exerting undue influence on potential participants' decision to take part in the research. Wherever possible, remuneration in a monetary form should be avoided and substituted with vouchers, coupons or equivalent. Any payment made to research participants may have benefit or HMRC implications and participants should be alerted to this in the participant information sheet as they may wish to choose to decline payment.

n/a

9. **What special arrangements are in place for eliciting informed consent from participants who may not adequately understand verbal explanations or written information provided in English; where participants have special communication needs; where participants have limited literacy; or where children are involved in the research? (Do not exceed 200 words)**

n/a

SECTION F: RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

10. Does the proposed research involve any of the following? *(Tick as appropriate)*

☐ use of a questionnaire, self-completion survey or data-collection instrument (attach copy)

☐ use of emails or the internet as a means of data collection

☐ use of written or computerised tests

☒ interviews (attach interview questions)

☐ diaries (attach diary record form)

☐ participant observation

☐ participant observation (in a non-public place) without their knowledge / covert research

☒ audio-recording interviewees or events

☒ video-recording interviewees or events

☐ access to personal and/or sensitive data (i.e. student, patient, client or service-user data) without the participant's informed consent for use of these data for research purposes

☐ administration of any questions, tasks, investigations, procedures or stimuli which may be experienced by participants as physically or mentally painful, stressful or unpleasant during or after the research process

☐ performance of any acts which might diminish the self-esteem of participants or cause them to experience discomfiture, regret or any other adverse emotional or psychological reaction

☐ Themes around extremism or radicalisation

☐ investigation of participants involved in illegal or illicit activities (e.g. use of illegal drugs)

☐ procedures that involve the deception of participants

☐ administration of any substance or agent

☐ use of non-treatment of placebo control conditions

☐ participation in a clinical trial

☐ research undertaken at an off-campus location (<u>risk assessment attached</u>)

☐ research overseas (<u>please ensure Section G is complete</u>)

11. **Does the proposed research involve any specific or anticipated risks (e.g. physical, psychological, social, legal or economic) to participants that are greater than those encountered in everyday life?** **YES** ☐　**NO** ☒ If **YES**, please describe below including details of precautionary measures.
n/a
12. **Where the procedures involve potential hazards and/or discomfort or distress for participants, please state what previous experience the investigator or researcher(s) have had in conducting this type of research.**
n/a
13. **Provide an explanation of any potential benefits to participants. Please ensure this is framed within the overall contribution of the proposed research to knowledge or practice. (Do not exceed 400 words)** **NOTE:** Where the proposed research involves students, they should be assured that accepting the offer to participate or choosing to decline will have no impact on their assessments or learning experience. Similarly, it should be made clear to participants who are patients, service-users and/or receiving any form of treatment or medication that they are not invited to participate in the belief that participation in the research will result in some relief or improvement in their condition.
Participants may find the process of speaking at length to someone cathartic after being involved in a busy project for a year and may provide a space for containment. Participants may also gain some insights in understanding thoughts and experiences that arise from their involvement as a result of having space to reflect in. Participants may find that involvement during the context of the pandemic added further dimensions that they may begin to process when given the space to reflect on their experiences.
14. **Provide an outline of any measures you have in place in the event of adverse or unexpected outcomes and the potential impact this may have on participants involved in the proposed research. (Do not exceed 300 words)**
- During the interview the researcher will be sensitive to the feelings displayed by the participants throughout the interview and remind them of their right to withdraw/take a break if they would like.   - After the interview participants will have the opportunity to debrief with the researcher afterward the interview if they feel they would benefit from further conversations about the nature of their distress.   - As a result of the interview if any distress has arisen the designated teacher will be offered a list of potential services they can seek help from if the nature of talking within the context of trauma and attachment brings up any issues within themselves.   - If an interviewee has shown distress as a result of anything that has arisen in the conversation, after 2 months I will check up on their well-being and ensure there has been no lasting adverse consequences of the interview and see if any further support is needed.

15. Provide an outline of your debriefing, support and feedback protocol for participants involved in the proposed research. This should include, for example, where participants may feel the need to discuss thoughts or feelings brought about following their participation in the research. This may involve referral to an external support or counseling service, where participation in the research has caused specific issues for participants.
Although the nature of the research is about the AAS process, the research does consider the nature of trauma and attachment. Therefore, there is the potential for the research to raise feelings from the past that may have caused the participants a level of distress. In this case participants will have opportunities to firstly debrief with the researcher to further discuss any thoughts or feelings raised. They will also be given an information sheet of services where they can seek further counseling services or support if necessary.
16. Please provide the names and nature of any external support or counselling organisations that will be suggested to participants if participation in the research has potential to raise specific issues for participants.

• Beacon house – provides support to adults for adult trauma and attachment support. https://beaconhouse.org.uk/specialist-clinics/adult-trauma-clinic/
    • Alternatively they will be able to seek support from their local G.P.
    • taafa.org.uk – Trauma support,
    • spiralcentre.org low cost counselling services
    • The Samaritans – telephone support for anyone going through a crisis,
    • Self-care tips through the Anna Freud Centre

17. Where medical aftercare may be necessary, this should include details of the treatment available to participants. Debriefing may involve the disclosure of further information on the aims of the research, the participant's performance and/or the results of the research. (Do not exceed 500 words)
n/a

FOR RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN OUTSIDE THE UK

18. Does the proposed research involve travel outside of the UK? ☐
YES ☒ NO
 	
    If YES, please confirm:
 	
        ☐ I have consulted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website for guidance/travel advice? http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/
 	
        ☐ I have completed ta RISK Assessment covering all aspects of the project including consideration of the location of the data collection and risks to participants.

All overseas project data collection will need approval from the Deputy Director of Education and Training or their nominee. Normally this will be done based on the information provided in this form. All projects approved through the TREC process will be indemnified by the Trust against claims made by third parties.

If you have any queries regarding research outside the UK, please contact academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk:

Students are required to arrange their own travel and medical insurance to cover project work outside of the UK. Please indicate what insurance cover you have or will have in place.

   n/a

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19. Please evidence how compliance with all local research ethics and research governance requirements have been assessed for the country(ies) in which the research is taking place. Please also clarify how the requirements will be met:

   n/a

SECTION G: PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND WITHDRAWAL

20. Have you attached a copy of your participant information sheet (this should be in *plain English*)? Where the research involves non-English speaking participants, please include translated materials.

YES ☒   **NO** ☐

If **NO**, please indicate what alternative arrangements are in place below:

---

21. Have you attached a copy of your participant consent form (this should be in *plain English*)? Where the research involves non-English speaking participants, please include translated materials.

YES ☒   **NO** ☐

If **NO**, please indicate what alternative arrangements are in place below:

22. The following is a <u>participant information sheet</u> checklist covering the various points that should be included in this document.

☒ Clear identification of the Trust as the sponsor for the research, the project title, the Researcher and Principal Investigator (your Research Supervisor) and other researchers along with relevant contact details.

☒ Details of what involvement in the proposed research will require (e.g., participation in interviews, completion of questionnaire, audio/video-recording of events), estimated time commitment and any risks involved.

☒ A statement confirming that the research has received formal approval from TREC or other ethics body.

☒ If the sample size is small, advice to participants that this may have implications for confidentiality / anonymity.

☐ A clear statement that where participants are in a dependent relationship with any of the researchers that participation in the research will have no impact on assessment / treatment / service-use or support.

☒ Assurance that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw consent at any time, and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.

☒ Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.

☒ A statement that the data generated in the course of the research will be retained in accordance with the Trusts 's Data Protection and handling Policies.: https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/about-us/governance/policies-and-procedures/

☒ Advice that if participants have any concerns about the conduct of the investigator, researcher(s) or any other aspect of this research project, they should contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk)

☒ Confirmation on any limitations in confidentiality where disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others may occur.

23. The following is a <u>consent form</u> checklist covering the various points that should be included in this document.

☒ Trust letterhead or logo.

☒ Title of the project (with research degree projects this need not necessarily be the title of the thesis) and names of investigators.

☒ Confirmation that the research project is part of a degree

☒ Confirmation that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw at any time, or to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.

☒ Confirmation of particular requirements of participants, including for example whether interviews are to be audio-/video-recorded, whether anonymised quotes will be used in publications advice of legal limitations to data confidentiality.

☒ If the sample size is small, confirmation that this may have implications for anonymity any other relevant information.

☒ The proposed method of publication or dissemination of the research findings.

☐ Details of any external contractors or partner institutions involved in the research.

☒ Details of any funding bodies or research councils supporting the research.

☒ Confirmation on any limitations in confidentiality where disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others may occur.

SECTION H: CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

24. Below is a checklist covering key points relating to the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Please indicate where relevant to the proposed research.

☐ Participants will be completely anonymised and their identity will not be known by the investigator or researcher(s) (i.e. the participants are part of an anonymous randomised sample and return responses with no form of personal identification)?

☐ The responses are anonymised or are an anonymised sample (i.e. a permanent process of coding has been carried out whereby direct and indirect identifiers have been removed from data and replaced by a code, with no record retained of how the code relates to the identifiers).

☒ The samples and data are de-identified (i.e. direct and indirect identifiers have been removed and replaced by a code. The investigator or researchers are able to link the code to the original identifiers and isolate the participant to whom the sample or data relates).

☐ Participants have the option of being identified in a publication that will arise from the research.

☒ Participants will be pseudo-anonymised in a publication that will arise from the research. (I.e. the researcher will endeavour to remove or alter details that would identify the participant.)

☐ The proposed research will make use of personal sensitive data.

☐ Participants consent to be identified in the study and subsequent dissemination of research findings and/or publication.

25. Participants must be made aware that the confidentiality of the information they provide is subject to legal limitations in data confidentiality (i.e. the data may be subject to a subpoena, a freedom of information request or mandated reporting by some professions). This only applies to named or de-identified data. If your participants are named or de-identified, please confirm that you will specifically state these limitations.

YES ☒   **NO** ☐

If **NO**, please indicate why this is the case below:

NOTE: WHERE THE PROPOSED RESEARCH INVOLVES A SMALL SAMPLE OR FOCUS GROUP, PARTICIPANTS SHOULD BE ADVISED THAT THERE WILL BE DISTINCT LIMITATIONS IN THE LEVEL OF ANONYMITY THEY CAN BE AFFORDED.

SECTION I: DATA ACCESS, SECURITY AND MANAGEMENT

26. **Will the Researcher/Principal Investigator be responsible for the security of all data collected in connection with the proposed research? YES** ☒ **NO** ☐

    If **NO**, please indicate what alternative arrangements are in place below:

27. **In line with the 5th principle of the Data Protection Act (1998), which states that personal data shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose or those purposes for which it was collected; please state how long data will be retained for.**

    ☐ 1-2 years ☐ 3-5 years ☒ 6-10 years ☐ 10> years

    NOTE: In line with Research Councils UK (RCUK) guidance, doctoral project data should normally be stored for 10 years and Masters level data for up to 2 years

28. Below is a checklist which relates to the management, storage and secure destruction of data for the purposes of the proposed research. Please indicate where relevant to your proposed arrangements.

☐ Research data, codes and all identifying information to be kept in separate locked filing cabinets.

☒ Research data will only be stored in the University of Essex OneDrive system and no other cloud storage location.

☒ Access to computer files to be available to research team by password only.

☐ Access to computer files to be available to individuals outside the research team by password only (See **23.1**).

☐ Research data will be encrypted and transferred electronically within the UK.

☐ Research data will be encrypted and transferred electronically outside of the UK.

NOTE: Transfer of research data via third party commercial file sharing services, such as Google Docs and YouSendIt are not necessarily secure or permanent. These systems may also be located overseas and not covered by UK law. If the system is located outside the European Economic Area (EEA) or territories deemed to have sufficient standards of data protection, transfer may also breach the Data Protection Act (1998).

Essex students also have access the 'Box' service for file transfer:
https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/it-services/box

☒ Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, e-mails or telephone numbers.

☐ Collection and storage of personal sensitive data (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political or religious beliefs or physical or mental health or condition).

☒ Use of personal data in the form of audio or video recordings.

☒ Primary data gathered on encrypted mobile devices (i.e. laptops).

NOTE: This should be transferred to secure University of Essex OneDrive at the first opportunity.

☒ All electronic data will undergo secure disposal.

NOTE: For hard drives and magnetic storage devices (HDD or SSD), deleting files does not permanently erase the data on most systems, but only deletes the reference to the file. Files can be restored when deleted in this way. Research files must be overwritten to ensure they are completely irretrievable. Software is available for the secure erasing of files from hard drives which meet recognised standards to securely scramble sensitive data. Examples of this software are BC Wipe, Wipe File, DeleteOnClick and Eraser for Windows platforms. Mac users can use the standard 'secure empty trash' option; an alternative is Permanent eraser software.

☐ All hardcopy data will undergo secure disposal.

NOTE: For shredding research data stored in hardcopy (i.e. paper), adopting DIN 3 ensures files are cut into 2mm strips or confetti like cross-cut particles of 4x40mm. The UK government requires a minimum standard of DIN 4 for its material, which ensures cross cut particles of at least 2x15mm.

29.	Please provide details of individuals outside the research team who will be given password protected access to encrypted data for the proposed research.
n/a	

30.	Please provide details on the regions and territories where research data will be electronically transferred that are external to the UK:
n/a	

SECTION J: PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

30. How will the results of the research be reported and disseminated? *(Select all that apply)*

☒ Peer reviewed journal

☒ Non-peer reviewed journal

☐ Peer reviewed books

☐ Publication in media, social media or website (including Podcasts and online videos)

☒ Conference presentation

☐ Internal report

☐ Promotional report and materials

☐ Reports compiled for or on behalf of external organisations

☒ Dissertation/Thesis

☐ Other publication

☐ Written feedback to research participants

☒ Presentation to participants or relevant community groups

☐ Other (Please specify below)

SECTION K: OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES

31. Are there any other ethical issues that have not been addressed which you would wish to bring to the attention of Tavistock Research Ethics Committee (TREC)?

No.

SECTION L: CHECKLIST FOR ATTACHED DOCUMENTS

32. Please check that the following documents are attached to your application.

☒ Letters of approval from any external ethical approval bodies (where relevant)

☐ Recruitment advertisement

☒ Participant information sheets (including easy-read where relevant)

☒ Consent forms (including easy-read where relevant)

☐ Assent form for children (where relevant)

☐ Letters of approval from locations for data collection

☐ Questionnaire

☒ Interview Schedule or topic guide
☐ Risk Assessment (where applicable)
☐ Overseas travel approval (where applicable)
34. Where it is not possible to attach the above materials, please provide an explanation below.
n/a

Appendix M: Ethical Approval confirmation Letter

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
Fax: 020 7447 3837

Amy Couprie

By Email

12 July 2021

Dear Amy,

Re: Trust Research Ethics Application

Title: An exploration of the views and experiences of designated (CLA) teachers in helping to create an Attachment Aware School

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.

Please note that any changes to the project design including changes to methodology/data collection etc, must be referred to TREC as failure to do so, may result in a report of academic and/or research misconduct.

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,

Paru Jeram
Secretary to the Trust Research Degrees Subcommittee
T: 020 938 2699
E: academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk

cc.   Course Lead, Supervisor, Course Administrator

Appendix N: Permission for Research to be Conducted by the Virtual School

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

Dear _____,

It was lovely to meet you and discuss my thesis idea with you at the end of last term and incorporate your ideas into my research design.

I am studying at the Tavistock and Portman Institute and as part of my doctorate I am interested in carrying out research within the context of the work happening on my placement at Arc. As discussed previously, the research aims to explore the role of the designated teacher in helping to facilitate the Attachment Aware Schools project. The research will take a phenomenological approach and is therefore interested in exploring the views and experiences of staff in this role. I aim to interview a sample of staff towards the end of the summer when they have completed the project.
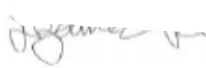
This letter is to ask for your permission for my part in carrying out research within the wider project of the Attachment Aware School Award. It aims to be carried out this year with the final thesis being concluded next year May 2022.

If you agree, kindly sign below to acknowledge your agreement for me to conduct this research.

Sincerely,

Amy Couprie
Trainee Educational Psychologist

The Tavistock

Approved by: _____

Print your name and title here:

_____
_____ cutive Headteacher
_____ ndards in Care

Appendix O: Consent Form

<u>An Exploration of the Views and Experiences of Designated Teachers for CLA in Helping to Create</u>

<u>an Attachment Aware School</u>

Please read the statements and if you agree with them sign below.

1. I have read and understood the research project explained in the information sheet and have had the chance to ask questions to the researcher.

2. I am willing to volunteer in this research and understand that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, or for unprocessed data to be withdrawn within two weeks after the interview, without giving a reason and without there being any negative consequences.

3. My interview will be audio and video recorded and be kept securely. I am happy for audio transcripts to be used in the research.

4. I understand that my interview will be used for this research and will not be accessed for any other purpose.

5. I understand that my data will be anonymised so I will not be linked to the data, but that my identification by some may be possible due to the small sample size and location of the project.

6. I understand that there may be limitations to confidentiality relating to legal duties and threat of harm to self or others.

7. I understand that findings from this research will be shared with others such as, through being published in a thesis, presented to key stakeholders or potentially in a peer reviewed journal.

Your name: Signed_____Date_____

Researcher name: Signed _____ Date_____

Appendix P: Fieldwork Risk Assessment Audit

Name: Amy C rie	School: Tavistock & Portman NHS Foundation Trust
Student number:19001883	Supervisor / Director of Studies: Adam Styles
Thesis Title: An exploration of the views and experiences of designated (CLA) teachers in helping to create an Attachment Aware School	
Fieldwork location: Primary Sch ls t in the orough of Kingston na	Type of Fieldwork: Interviewing Designated Teachers
Proposed dates or periods of Fieldwork: 18th July -30 September	
Potential hazards or risks: *(rate high medium or low)*	Low
Social risks – such as disclosure of trauma from the past.	Low
Location hazard e.g. fire, COVID-19 outbreak in school	Low/medium
Lone working	Low

Potential Consequences for each hazard: *(please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)*
- Social risks – participant may experience psychological distress.
- Location hazard – Fire is a low risk, but in the event could be exposed to burns and or smoke inhalation. May catch COVID-19 but potential consequence should be low as I have had 2 vaccines.
- Lone working – could be exposed to abuse.

Controls in place for each hazard in order of likely risk: *(please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)*

- Social risks – Participants will be advised of their consent to participate which will be signed before any interviews begin. They will also be briefed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequence and for whatever reason. Signpost participants to resources of support. Offer opportunity to talk through any feelings after the interview. Participants will be aware of what will happen to their data which will comply with the data protection act. Participants will be issued with an information sheet detailing how their data will be used and anonymised with personal identifiers being removed from the data, the nature and scope of the study, the identity of the researcher and university details and what will happen to their video recordings. Additionally, I hold an enhanced DBS to work with children/ work within proximity of children.

- Location hazard – fire. Follow the schools fire safety protocols within the schools risk assessment policies or evacuate from the building to the nearest fire assembly point. COVID-19 outbreak – Deliver the interview remotely, if I am aware of a COVID-19 outbreak

The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust

in the school. Participants will download the software in advance of the interview. Risk of catching COVID-19 – I have had 2 vaccinations which offers some protection against the virus. I will also take a test prior to arriving at the school to ensure I do not inadvertently bring the virus to the school. Remain 1 meter apart in a ventilated room, wear a mask when moving through the school and follow any current government advice to reduce risk as much as possible. • Lone working – carry out interview in a public place. Let my supervisor know if or when I am travelling to a school.	
By signing this document you are indicating that you have consulted the policy and have fully considered the risks. Signature of Student: / ᴧ Cᵃ˖ ⁻˄ Date: 6/07/2021	I agree to the assessment of risk in relation to this project. Signature of Supervisor of Studies: A Styles Date: 09.07.21

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

Appendix Q: Stages of Analysis

Extract of transcript from interview with DT 3

Speaker 2 28:11

It is quite stressful you know, it's just one of those things children are behind and they should be further ahead . I'm sure it's really stressful for EPs as well. They're quite behind with their learning the government has asked us to close the gap. We're all trying our hardest. I do think attachment awareness helps that children who aren't emotionally Okay, they're not going to learn, and definitely would agree with that. So I think I'm hoping that what we're doing is gonna help the children to be in that green zone, you know to catch up.

Speaker 1 28:41

Yeah, because they have to be sort of in that right emotional place to be able to learn.

Speaker 2 28:42

 Yeah I think there is and I think that is, I think the attachment aware schools that have already been one of those in this borough and (other boroughs) which are made to have gone on. I think that, at least, we're in a fairly good place to be able to deal with. And also like the office ladies were saying as well because obviously they've been involved the main thing it's been so valuable to deal with parents, because the parents emotional states are really heightened during the pandemic, especially, and actually it allowed them to use those scripts for parents and they said that that was really helpful. And it also interesting with the office staff, they often get children that comes in that don't feel well, they're not really you know, And so now the office ladies to be like, oh love I can see that you know what a tummy ache, you know what else is going on and that allows them to do that knowledge like you know don't actually put on me. Take a deep breath and we can go back to class and learn, because so I think actually has helped...from a, I don't even know what the word is? Front of house. House perspective as well. It's definitely good, the heads told me that she's found it useful for parents as well, because you know, they are also humans with emotions.

Data analysis: Extract of transcript showing exploratory comments;

 Descriptive: red, Linguistic: yellow and Conceptual: blue: Emergent themes: Black

Thematic Map of Developing Emergent Themes

894 895 896 897 898 899	relationship it would be awful I would probably feel worse as I should be able to do it and I think it's very difficult with students isn't it if you feel like you're failing at everything.	Acknowledges a feeling of failure when given multiple roles to fulfilled	Emphasising the context at this time is full of different stressful situations. Such as parents having to teach their children at home.	on different roles e.g. teaching your own children. Feeling of failure when different expectations are put upon herself.	perceived success of the program. Office staff are able to respond in a more relational way to the needs of parents and children, to help manage their emotions.	(892)
900 901 902	Speaker 1 30:36 Yeah.					Challenges
903 904 905 906 907 908 909 910 911 912 913	Speaker 2 31:23 ...and that you're failing everything,... you're job, teaching your child and I think everyone was incredibly stressed, and you know I think it's, you know, I think it's just about everybody acknowledging that everybody was in a bit of a tough place ...and the kids need to be given a bit of slack as well you know yes they need to catch up, but, also, like some of the	Children have missed out on social skills. Nursery children have difficulty transitioning back to school following	Children need to be given some space, less pressure on catching up		Stress related factors such as parents' home teaching.	Belief that government focus should
						Challenges