

**An Exploration of Teachers' Experiences of Managing
Challenging Behaviour in the Classroom**

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Student Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted for any degree and it is not currently being submitted for any other degrees.

This research is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of East London for the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology.

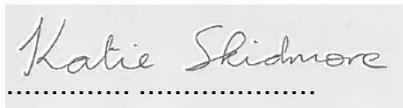
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Abstract

This study explored the experiences of primary school teachers who sought support with managing challenging behaviour in the classroom. Its aim was to consider how best to support teachers who encounter difficulties occasioned by 'behaviour that challenges' in the classroom. The approach taken was to gain teachers' perspectives on their needs in this situation, which is then considered in light of a cross-section of recent educational psychology research in this area.

In this study, the experiences of the teachers involved are considered from an eco-systemic perspective, following similar approaches advocated by Cooper and Upton (1990) and Miller (2003). Here this is achieved through considering the following interacting levels of influence that could impact a teacher in this position: their internal thoughts and feelings when dealing with the behaviour, the systems in place at school to support them, and finally the effectiveness of the support provided by the educational psychologist from their perspective.

Adopting a mixed-methods design, a purposeful sample of 11 primary school teachers responded anonymously to an online survey about their experiences of supporting a child with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD), defined here as "challenging behaviour". The survey also inquired the teachers' experiences of seeking support at school with behaviour concerns, and ultimately working with an educational psychologist. A further 6 primary school teachers participated in semi-structured interviews about their experiences, providing more in-depth insights. Their views were then analysed using thematic analysis. The findings were considered in terms of their internal thoughts and feelings, the level of perceived support at school, and the impact of working with an educational psychologist in helping them to feel supported.

The purpose of this study is add to the discussion around best practice for educational psychologists in working with schools around behaviour concerns, taking into account the multiple possible levels at which assessment and intervention can meaningfully take place. It also considers what role, if any, educational psychologists can contribute to teachers' wellbeing.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Introduction

“We appreciate the difficulty of the task facing teachers, and the fact that most of them tackle it well every day. This deserves recognition and respect. We also recognise that teachers need support from a variety of sources... Teachers suffer from quite high levels of occupational stress, and we would expect difficulties with pupils' behaviour to contribute to these.” (Elton Report, 1989, p.68)

The Elton Report, “Discipline in Schools” (1989), was a wide-ranging review commissioned by the government in response to reports of widespread deterioration of behaviour in schools, to make recommendations to address these. Despite the report being now almost thirty years old, the sentiments expressed in the above quote remain highly relevant today. Garner (2011) further notes that the Elton Report forms part of a canon of research literature that contributed to and helped shape current understanding of what matters in terms of managing children’s behaviour. This includes the importance of school leadership and ethos in upholding and exemplifying school standards across the community, lending support to teachers in their roles supporting children. It also advocates for the pivotal role played by teachers in classrooms, and school leaders in schools, in improving outcomes for children with behaviour difficulties. As such it played a part in informing the thinking underpinning the current study.

Managing children’s behaviour in schools has also remained a key agenda for successive governments since this time, as it has for teachers, parents and students, and those who support them. This present study seeks to explore a specific element of this matrix; the experience of teachers managing the behaviour of children in their classroom, and the challenges they face in achieving this.

1.1 Overview of Study

This study is conducted from an educational psychology perspective that considers what role educational psychologists (EPs) have in supporting children

with social, emotional and behavioural needs, in this context where their behaviour is defined as too complex or acute to be managed within normal classroom practice alone. More specifically this study considers the interface between teachers and educational psychologists when providing this support, within the context of the school in which the teacher works. It seeks to consider how best teachers might be supported to navigate such needs, and to contribute to the evidence base surrounding educational psychology assessment and intervention for behaviour.

This introduction considers several factors that inform the context for educational psychology research in this area. These include the current legislative context that shapes educational psychologist's work in schools with children and young people, as well as the evolving discourse around 'behaviour' that informs existing research. It briefly reviews some of the challenges inherent in conducting research in this area. It also explains why teachers were identified as the primary research focus in the context of EPs work supporting children with behaviour difficulties.

1.2 Workplace Stress and Teacher Wellbeing

"It is incumbent upon school leaders to create, where possible, the conditions within their schools which will enhance the quality of teachers' professional lives, foster increased job commitment and cause teachers to decide that they want to stay in the profession." (Rhodes, Nevill and Allan, 2004).

Workplace stress can be seen as a risk factor effecting a teacher's ability to fulfil a range of functions that contribute to effective management of behaviour, such as modelling acceptable behaviour, and fostering empathy (Visser, 2005).

Teacher wellbeing is therefore an important aspect of effective teaching and learning, and promotion of a productive learning environment. It is important therefore that educational psychologists (EPs) are mindful of teacher wellbeing within their remit working on behalf of children and young people; Gibbs & Miller (2013) highlight the importance of further educational psychology research into how EPs can help foster and develop this.

Unaddressed workplace stress has clear implications for the wellbeing of children and young people at school, as does a stable and experienced teacher workforce. Medium term retention rates highlight vividly the risks of workplace stress in achieving and maintaining this. Rhodes, Nevill and Allan (2004) study into dissatisfaction rates among teachers reported a wastage rate of between 9.8% nationally in Wales and England, and 11.7% in London. Wastage rate is the ratio of teachers leaving the profession to the number of practising teachers. According to a 2015 YouGov poll commissioned by the National Union of Teachers (NUT), which surveyed 1080 teachers, 53% had considered whether to leave the profession in the next two years. The National Union of Teachers reported in 2016 “in the 12 months to November 2014 (the most recent year for which statistics are available) almost ... one in 10 teachers leaving the profession – the highest for 10 years, and an increase of more than 25 per cent over five years”. (NUT, 2016).

The report for the School Workforce in England (DfE, 2017) suggests that these numbers are stabilizing based on full time equivalence rates, but there are still high numbers leaving the profession, particularly among teachers of 2-5 years' experience, impacting workforce development (Worth and Van den Brende, 2019). These statistics suggest a profession still struggling to attract and retain professionals. The Teacher Workload Advisory Group (2018) made several key recommendations to reducing teachers' workload through streamlining of excessive data mapping responsibilities, highlighting the role of workload in teacher dissatisfaction. Hilary, Andrade and Worth (2018) report that the government has missed recruitment targets for five years in a row since 2011, which creates further stress on the remaining teachers and schools, but also hints about negative perceptions of teaching as a profession impacting people's willingness to either join or remain working in education. Worth and Van den Brende (2019) report that work-life balance challenges, and job-related stress are particular areas of dissatisfaction for teachers.

Are teachers stressed about classroom behaviour? Research indicates that while workload remains the primary stressor for most teachers, there is widespread evidence of its impact upon management of behaviour issues and teacher resilience (Gibbs and Miller, 2013; Armstrong, 2014). While not every teacher

may identify as extremely stressed, there is a plausible basis for assuming that many experience a reduction in their capacity to manage negative emotions, or a loss of resilience in relation to their work as a result of stress. Partridge (2012) discussed the 'emotional labour' undertaken by teachers, understood as the psychosocial effort of maintaining a professional exterior that is incongruent with their internal state. If a teacher is experiencing lots of generalised stress in relation to their role, this would be an important contextual factor to consider in relation to understanding a child's emotional and behavioural needs in the classroom, even if it was not the sole factor.

What relevance does this have for educational psychology and managing children's behaviour? The implications of poor retention are significant because experienced teachers leaving the profession take with them the training and experience they have developed. Coupled with this, research indicates that newly qualified teachers are more likely to experience difficulties with managing behaviour (Elliot, 2009). Furthermore, the retention rate issue highlights the pressures and high levels of dissatisfaction bearing upon teaching professionals on a day-to-day basis. The question remains in what capacity, if any, educational psychologists might best work with schools to support these concerns. A wider question is how support for teachers with wellbeing and stress management marries with schools' priorities for EP input in terms of managing behaviour.

1.3 Legislative Context

Much of educational psychologists' work in schools is shaped by current legislation and the frameworks outlined for supporting children with special educational needs (SEN). The legislative context in the UK and its consequent impact on EPs' work supporting emotional wellbeing for children in schools is quite complex in itself to map. It has evolved several times since the Elton Report (1989) cited at the outset of this paper, including but not limited to adapting the language and terminology with which we define behaviour needs, and how pupils with these needs are positioned. (Jones, 2003; Armstrong 2014).

Goodman and Burton (2010) point to how schools' duty to pupils presenting with complex social, emotional and behavioural needs (SEBD) has evolved significantly in the past twenty years (Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, 2001; Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, 2001; Equality Act, 2010) with increasing emphasis on inclusion to mainstream settings, and the formal capturing of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) as a special educational need that they should seek to meet and support (DfEE, 1994). Implementation of fundamental changes in any organisation would clearly require consistent leadership. However Armstrong (2014) points to the conflicting tone of later government publications such as 'The Importance of Teaching' (DfE, 2010) through its re-emphasis on 'discipline' and sanction, and invoking language of exclusion, potentially leaving schools unclear in relation to bodies such as OFSTED how best to acquit themselves with potentially conflicting responsibilities. Schools must understandably experience clashes in ideology between the importance of inclusion, and the importance of consistent (rigid), whole school behaviour policies.

Within the context of the above, behaviour has been identified as a particular challenge to schools' efforts to adopt fully inclusive approaches. Jull (2008) comments on the paradox of children identified as having special educational needs for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (particularly externalising behaviours) as being at increased risk of exclusion by virtue of their special educational needs. By contrast he feels a child with cognition and learning needs not responding to a learning intervention is more likely to attract further evaluation of their needs leading to greater differentiation, rather than exclusion for having on-going complex needs. It is no surprise therefore that schools look to educational psychologists to help 'unlock' the needs of children presenting with disruptive behaviours, as there is a long tradition of complex behaviours perplexing and frustrating teachers and support staff in their perceived roles and responsibilities.

Legislation around behavioural needs evolved again with the implementation of the Children and Families Act 2014 and the revised Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (SEND COP) (DfE, 2014). The SEND COP (2014) defines social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) as an area of SEN,

removing direct reference to behaviour as a need or difficulty, as problem behaviour is considered to be an indicator or symptom of underlying SEMH needs. This hopefully encourages schools to commission support from educational psychology services, among others, in working with teachers and schools to understand these needs. While the SEMH category seeks to develop providers' understanding of the roots of behaviour difficulties, this is within the context of maintaining school expectations around behaviour management, there therefore remains the likelihood that EPs will continue to be commissioned to provide assessment and intervention around managing 'difficult' or 'challenging' behaviour despite the implications of the new legislation.

1.4 Discourse around Behaviour.

"Nomenclature matters. Terms such as 'difficult', 'unmanageable' and 'challenging' applied to young people in schools do more than describe, they also define and position". (Miller and Todd, 2002, p.82).

The language we invoke around a student's presenting needs has a strong influence on people's perceptions of the difficulty, and how responsibility is ascribed, but also over how educational psychologists will be able to assess and intervene on behalf of students. For example, Miller and Todd (2002) highlight the role of labels in shaping the conversation or even consultation around a student's presenting needs.

Armstrong (2014) discussed the advent of the term, or 'supra-category', "Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties" (SEBD) during the 1990's, which was in contrast with the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) category of "Behavioural, Social and Emotional Difficulties", highlighting that psychological research and government policy can occupy different spaces conceptually. Recent changes in legislation as described above have helped to progress the discourse about supporting children with emotional and behaviour difficulties (EBD) through the designation of the SEMH category of need (DfE, 2014) which shifts the primacy of 'behaviour' as a need. The challenge for

educational psychologists is continued reflective practice on how language use shapes outcomes for children and young people.

Terminological inconsistencies and revisions don't only have implications for the relative positioning of children in schools however, and the belief in change fostered by such labels. They also present methodical challenges for the coherent development of the research base in relation to educational psychology assessment and intervention, which shall be considered in greater depth within the literature review.

1.5 Methodological Challenges

The advent of a new SEN category cannot invalidate decades of prior research into supporting children with SEBD. Previous incarnations of labels and definitions continue to make their presence felt, and are used inconsistently within the educational psychology research community, within statutory and advisory government publications and among schools.

Rees, Farrell and Rees (2003) discuss the extensive range of behaviours incorporated within the umbrella of emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). Some examples gleaned from EPs they surveyed included "acting out", "aggression/violence" and "non-compliance/challenging behaviour", but many more are implied, suggesting why a 'consensus approach' to assessing and intervening for children with EBD has been difficult to establish (Rees, Farrell and Rees, 2003). Visser (2005) argues that there are 'common factors' that can be considered universally desirable that should be developed in every classroom when supporting children with EBD. But for many the term EBD is flawed precisely as it is applied generically, while the emotional and behavioural difficulties a child may experience are likely complex and varied. Miller and Todd (2002) point to the challenges this plurality presents for building a coherent evidence base for psychological intervention. They point to the ways behaviour labels impact upon the ontological and epistemological positions a researcher adopts, "falling across the positivist/constructivist divide" leading to EPs working in "conceptually scattered territory". (Miller and Todd, 2002).

In addition to questions about how EPs approach their work in relation to these challenges, there are questions too about where to target intervention being mindful of resisting ‘within-child’ assumptions about the nature of the difficulties. Hart (2010) notes that while the Elton Report promoted the view that teachers’ group management or classroom management skills were fundamental to the maintenance of ‘discipline’ – being the minimization of problem or disruptive behaviours by individuals - he contrasts this with the OFSTED report on challenging behaviour in 2005 which foregrounds the importance of ‘whole-school’ factors. This approximates a more organisational, or even systemic approach to behaviour that transcends the immediate classroom environment, through advocating the role of leadership, analysis, and training.

There are also issues relating to stakeholders and participation in research. Miller (2003) developed a clear rationale for a psychosocial model of intervention for classroom behaviour, with multiple layers and branches implicated in the promotion of positive behaviour outcomes for children, so there are multiple points at which a researcher may engage with the issue. Corcoran and Finney (2015) point to teachers’ central role in implementing education policy as a basis for consulting them frequently in order to effectively meet the mental health needs of young people, “sharing perspectives on how they perceive their role in relation to education policy and practice”. This foregrounds the importance of engaging teachers about their experiences in managing EBD, and contrasts with the ‘parachuting in’ of outside professional advice that is often sought by schools, and evaluation of externally developed strategies and interventions.

1.6 Improving Outcomes

“The teacher characteristics that are harder to measure, but which can be vital to student learning include ... to foster productive teacher-student relationships; to be enthusiastic and creative; and to work effectively with colleagues and parents”
Teachers Matter (OECD, 2005).

The preceding discussion addressed several factors relevant to the current research. These include:

- conceptual issues around the definition of behaviour difficulties
- methodological issues in studying something that is poorly defined
- legislative contexts that influence and shape EPs work in schools with children and staff,
- how discourse around behaviour shapes the intervention and therefore outcomes achieved for children,
- the role of teacher wellbeing as an important fundamental factor in enabling teachers to maximise their impact.

Some of the consistent messages appearing include the importance of understanding a child's underlying needs, the importance of promoting and maintaining consistent expectations within the classroom, and the challenges experienced in fulfilling the inclusion agenda for all children.

While each of these factors is important in their own right, it was felt that exploring the ways in which teachers receive support from EPs would help to understand where policy and psychological intervention meet for teachers, to better understand their experience of the issues raised, and how the demands and difficulties of fulfilling their teaching obligations act upon them. This is clearly relevant given the statistics reported on teacher stress and loss of wellbeing, but was also a point of interest in terms of how they experience the pluralistic frameworks employed by EPs in assessing and intervening with behaviour concerns (Hart, 2010).

The following section outlines a review of literature in psychological research completed with teachers, but also considers psychological interventions at levels beyond the teacher, such as school-wide factors that could affect teachers, and external professionals offering support to teachers. The research aims to consider how outcomes could be improved for teachers in their own right, but also ultimately for children and young people needing their support to be included.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2. Literature Review

This chapter presents an overview of research from an educational psychology perspective on supporting teachers effectively with managing difficult or disruptive behaviour. Providing a concise and coherent overview of such a complex topic presented various challenges in terms of capturing the breadth and diversity of research involved. The following sections provide the rationale for the eco-systemic approach to the literature adopted within this review, the conceptual issues taken into consideration in the development of the literature review and, finally, the discussion of the pertinent research literature.

2.1 Rationale for an Eco-systemic Approach

The area of interest in this study was how to best support teachers with what they perceive as “behaviour that challenges”. In this sense this study is considering to what extent existing practices and current research are effectively meeting the needs of teachers dealing with such behaviour. It was felt that devoting focus to the teacher’s role and position within a wider system when managing behaviour was a means of better understanding what support was required. This review is informed by approaches described by Cooper and Upton (1990), and Miller (2003). Both suggested that a consideration of factors that influence at various levels of the school system was a key focus, rather than a review of the evidence base for existing behaviour support strategies.

Cooper and Upton (1990) proposed an ecosystemic approach to the analysis of problem behaviours in schools through considering the “interactional patterns observable within social systems”. In so doing the authors hoped to provide teachers an option for approaching behaviour challenges in their classroom through considering the way in which different interactions within the system could be maintaining or contributing to the occurrence of problem behaviours. Such interactions are seen to take place throughout the social systems in which individuals find themselves and so focus should be given to different levels of social systems to find opportunities for change:

“Systemic processes operate at all levels in interactional systems, potentially allowing each element within a system, however small, to change the entire system.” (Cooper and Upton, 1990, p.307)

Cooper and Upton (1990) caution that while this approach draws upon concepts of family therapy, they did not propose that effective management of behaviour required teachers or EPs to develop a skill level equivalent to a practising family therapist. Rather than in approaching behaviour concerns, it is important to consider processes at different levels of the system, and be mindful of these. The term ‘ecosystemic’ in this context is intended to invoke the idea of a system with interdependent parts. Positive change can be brought about through focusing upon the interactions within the system but to achieve this it is necessary to ‘stand back’ and take a detached, non-judgemental approach to mapping the different interactions at play. This provides a constructive position from which to empower teachers and schools to consider implementing changes or taking a different approach, but also advocates for the role of the EP in working with teachers to help achieve this level of insight.

This approach has been championed elsewhere. Miller and Todd (2002) advocate an ecosystemic approach to the study of managing behaviour in schools, in order to effectively address what they term the “conceptual challenge” confronting EPs in building a coherent evidence base for their work in the area of emotional and behavioural difficulties. This implies embracing the complexities at work within a classroom/school setting, and considering the different levels of influence at play. The aim of this chapter therefore is to critically evaluate relevant research from an ecosystemic-informed perspective, in order to provide an overview of existing thinking about factors affecting teachers’ management of behaviour at distinct levels. These factors include the internal, interpersonal, and organisational aspects of their workplace, and also factors relating to the wider organisations within which schools operate in the management of behavioural difficulties.

As a precursor to the literature review proper, critical reflection on the conceptual issues encountered within the literature on teacher management of behaviour are presented below.

2.2 Conceptual Issues

Miller (2003) comments that the complex underlying themes inherent in any discussion of difficult behaviour are “often ill-disciplined in themselves, ready always to chase around the table the proponents of both the easy answer and the logical and detailed analysis” (Miller, 2003, p 11). From a research standpoint, the following conceptual factors and issues were considered while conducting this review:

- Discourse around Behaviour Difficulties
- Diversity of Theoretical Perspectives
- Cultural Differences

2.2.1 Discourse around Behaviour Difficulties

Traditionally mental health could be seen as something with which teachers were not directly involved. Teachers were trained to see behaviour difficulties through a lens, primarily, of classroom management techniques and school behaviour policies. Earlier research that informed government policy such as the Elton Report (1989) maintains similar conceptualisations. Emphasis is placed in the newest SEN Code of Practice (2015) on supporting children’s social, emotional and mental health needs, of which disruptive behaviour is considered one manifestation or indicator (DfE, 2015). This contrasts with the historical positioning of difficult behaviours as a problem to be managed, with teachers still commonly referencing the ‘behaviour’ of a student who is cause for concern, rather than their emotional needs.

Arguably perceptions of whether a child’s behaviour constitutes an emotional difficulty as opposed to being construed as ‘defiant’, ‘disruptive’ or ‘challenging’ behaviour, are likely to differ according to the individual teacher’s management skills, tolerance levels, and expectations. Its implications for the teacher’s support needs however are wide ranging. For Miller (2003), the level of impact of difficult behaviour, and its seemingly intractable nature, invites ‘personalisation’ of the problem within the child, suggestive of need for an ‘expert’ response and referral to outside professionals. He feels the construction ‘difficult behaviour’ incites a belief that expertise is required to resolve it that likely obstructs or

discourages teachers from taking ownership or acquiring the “knowledge, skills and confidence that might be of help to them”. This suggests a system of beliefs that undermines the teachers’ sense of being able to cope, or confidence to respond proactively.

While the evolving discourse around behaviour and emotional wellbeing is a welcome one, it presents its own challenges to researchers seeking to produce an overview of research in this area. Multiple versions of the terms ‘behaviour’, ‘challenging behaviour’, ‘difficult behaviour’, ‘emotional and behavioural difficulties’, ‘social emotional mental health needs’, occur in the literature. Various definitions of ‘behaviour’ are also assumed within them, from low-level disruption to incidences of aggression or harm to others. Furthermore, despite the evolving discourse, the legacy of discussing ‘behaviour’ as an area of need continues to inform educational psychology casework and research. While academic research is evolving in line with recent developments, a steady body of popular literature continues to be generated directed at ‘behaviour management’ principles and techniques.

2.2.2 Diversity of Theoretical Perspectives

Behaviour management research is not just complicated through evolving discourse; it also reflects diverse theoretical perspectives. Galvin and Costa (1994) point to the difficulties of navigating such a considerably broad theoretical base, creating challenges to coherent critique, as there is no single paradigm.

Some researchers have attempted to summarise distinct movements over time. Miller (2003) posits a summary proposed by Lane (1994) of different movements, themes and frameworks that have informed research into difficult classroom behaviour over time in the UK. Examples provided by Lane (1994) include Child Guidance clinics, or the application of behavioural and functional analysis and social learning approaches, and latterly the advent of family therapy informed approaches, and eco-systemic approaches.

This list is by no means exhaustive, and will have evolved even more in the intervening years since Lane proposed it, highlighting the challenges inherent in

producing a coherent theoretical review. More recently Cooper (2011) conducted an international review of effective intervention strategies for pupils with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, in which he suggested five distinct therapeutic intervention approaches teachers could apply in managing pupils' needs in the classroom: Psychodynamic (role of past experiences), Behaviourist (shaping of behaviour through conditioning of stimulus-response pairs), Humanistic (focus on cultivating positive relationships), Cognitive-Behavioural (role of thought processes on feelings and behaviour), and Systemic Approach (considering one's role/position within a system or systems, and adapting to enhance participation).

This theoretical diversity has implications for how educational psychologists (EPs) respond in practice to casework relating to behavioural concerns, leaving the potential for multiple strategies, approaches and frameworks to be applied in schools. This has significance for educational practice in schools being similarly diverse and pluralistic as a result. For example, Hart (2010) queried EPs' awareness of effective group management skills, which are specifically posited in the Elton Report to be key in addressing the low level disruptive behaviours that are most frequently cited by teachers as a difficulty. The responses received from EPs on effective behaviour management strategies pointed to knowledge and practice drawing from a diverse range of theoretical roots, which targeted different systemic levels within school around the teacher. Additional factors included effective differentiation, language use, nonverbal communication skills, and 'other staff'. These all point to the importance of a holistic, or eco-systemic approach to understanding and managing behaviour but synthesised with a range of other different theoretical frameworks.

2.2.3 Cultural Differences

Harden, Thomas, Evans, Scanlon, and Sinclair's (2003) review of research into supporting children with emotional and behavioural difficulties in the classroom, found clear theoretical trends in different countries. For example a predominance of behaviour analysis research being carried out in the US that is not reflected in UK based research. This has implications for searches that focus on research conducted within the UK only, and, as a consequence, not being reflective of common practice in other countries.

There are rational reasons to focus on research within the UK. Some differences in assumptions and cultural practice between countries are particularly pronounced. Preliminary searches for the present paper identified a contemporary study by Brown (2009) where a proportion of a sample of teachers from South Korea advocated the use of corporal punishment with Key Stage 3 aged children for behaviour management. This obviously contrasts markedly with research frameworks in the UK context into challenging behaviour, where corporal punishment has been illegal in schools since 1987 (Gould, 2007). A further study in India by Chaturvedi and Purushothaman (2009) suggested that marriage was a demographic factor affecting female teachers' abilities to cope with the stress of teaching, suggesting a sociocultural emphasis on the role of marriage that, it is argued, would not be considered a critical factor in the UK.

Researchers clearly need to critically reflect upon the cultural, as well as theoretical, assumptions embodied in research studies when considering evidence relating to managing behaviour. However working in an increasingly globalised context means that EP practice in the UK is invariably informed by international research, leading to certain international studies being included in this literature review, such as Roffey (2012). This was further guided by their representation in UK-based research journals.

2.3 Systematic Literature Review

A systematic literature review was conducted in February 2016 in the University of East London, using the search platform EBSCOhost. The following research databases were consulted: EBSCO, PsychInfo, Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete and ERIC.

An initial search for “teachers” and “challenging behaviour” and “experiences” as keywords returned 151 results. Informed by keyword review, the terms “problem behaviour”, and “behaviour difficulties” were also incorporated, and “experiences” was removed. This generated over 700 results and the search was limited to the years 2000-2015. Further exclusion criteria were applied

which limited the search to papers published in the UK, and the results were reduced to allow the results to be manually reviewed for relevance to factors affecting teachers.

Applying the same date and geographical limiters, separate searches were performed with EBSCOhost using just the PSYCHInfo Database to triangulate results; one with “teachers” and “challenging behaviour” or “behavioural difficulties” or “misbehaviour” as key terms (128 results), and another with “behaviour” and “working with an educational psychologist” as key terms (28 results). As discussed above these required filtering by hand for relevance and location. Many studies were replicated, but certain new studies were highlighted for consideration.

The resulting papers made references to other key papers that had not appeared in the search, which were then included. An updated literature search was completed in February 2019, which yielded some further references for consideration. The selected papers were then shortlisted and grouped thematically to comprise a systemic overview of factors affecting teachers’ management of behaviour at three distinct levels, as follows:

Level of System	Study	Origin
Internal Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="515 286 1201 488">▪ Changing Attitudes: supporting teachers in effectively including students with emotional and behavioural difficulties in mainstream education. (Scanlon and Barnes-Holmes, 2013) <li data-bbox="515 539 1201 656">▪ Private knowledge, public face: Conceptions of children with SEBD by teachers in the UK. (Armstrong and Hallett, 2012) <li data-bbox="515 707 1201 909">▪ Teacher efficacy and pupil behaviour: The structure of teachers' individual and collective beliefs and their relationship with numbers of pupils excluded from school. (Gibbs and Powell, 2011) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1233 286 1406 320">▪ Ireland <li data-bbox="1233 539 1406 573">▪ England <li data-bbox="1233 707 1406 741">▪ England
Whole School Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="515 963 1201 1041">▪ Pupil Wellbeing -Teacher Wellbeing: Two sides of the same coin. (Roffey 2012) <li data-bbox="515 1093 1201 1339">▪ Perspectives of SENCOs and support staff in England on their roles, relationships and capacity to support inclusive practice for students with behavioural emotional and social difficulties. (Burton and Goodman 2011) <li data-bbox="515 1391 1201 1547">▪ Using the Staff Sharing Scheme to support school staff in managing challenging behaviour more effectively (Jones, Monsen and Franey 2013) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1233 963 1406 996">▪ Australia <li data-bbox="1233 1093 1406 1126">▪ England <li data-bbox="1233 1391 1406 1424">▪ England
Multi-Agency work with schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="515 1601 1201 1758">▪ Introducing consultancy supervision in a primary school for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. (Austin, 2010) <li data-bbox="515 1809 1201 1966">▪ Multi-disciplinary Approaches to pupil behaviour in school – the role of evaluation in service delivery. (Hartnell 2010) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1233 1601 1406 1635">▪ England <li data-bbox="1233 1809 1406 1843">▪ England

Table 2.1 – Key Studies for Literature Review

These key studies at each level will now be critiqued, and their implications for the support needed for teachers considered.

2.4 Internal Factors

Recent publicity about difficulties with teacher retention, as discussed in the introduction, and consideration of how to support teachers specifically with managing challenging behaviour, invites us to consider what could be described as a 'within teacher' approach to managing behaviour.

Miller (2003) produced a detailed account of his proposed psychosocial approach to classroom behaviour, in which the process of attribution is widely discussed. Miller (2003) explains the social psychological theory of attributions as the action of making sense of an event or another's behaviour through assigning a cause or precipitating factor. In the case of negative behaviour, Miller, among others, has identified that teachers tend to attribute causality externally to themselves, often instead attributing causality to factors relating to the young person, or to their parents. This suggests that underlying beliefs are important in shaping how a teacher makes sense of and responds to working with children with EBD. In the following section, recent research investigating possible interventions on the beliefs and attitudes of individual teachers in relation to EBD is evaluated.

2.4.1 Role of Attitudes

Monsen, Ewing and Kwoka (2011) identified that attitude towards inclusion was a significant factor affecting the effectiveness of behaviour support. Scanlon and Barnes-Holmes (2013) explored the impact of interventions aimed at modifying teachers' implicit and explicit attitudes towards children with EBD. Implicit attitudes were defined as "introspectively unidentified (or inaccurately identified) traces of past experience that mediate ...feeling, thought and action towards a social object" (Greenwald and Banaji, in Scanlon and Barnes-Holmes, 2013, p.376). The assumption was that teachers, without being consciously aware of their own implicit negative perceptions, would be actively affected by them in responding to children with EBD. The researchers employed a software tool with

evidence of utility in measuring socially sensitive beliefs. A volunteer sample of 45 teachers were recruited, 20 teachers in training (TTs) and 25 qualified teachers (QTs). Participants completed consecutive interventions (with the order of completion counterbalanced across the sample); a behavioural intervention (BI) of four weekly skills training sessions coupled with observation to support implementation, and a stress-management intervention (SMI) using strategies outlined via a one-day workshop with no follow-up on implementation.

The study found differences between qualified and trainee teachers' implicit baseline attitudes, with qualified teachers displaying more negative implicit attitudes towards children with EBD. Qualified teachers' implicit attitudes to pupils with EBD improved following both the BI and the SMI interventions, whereas teachers in training did not increase in positivity towards children with EBD from a neutral starting point. Findings for implicit attitudes were triangulated with comprehensive concurrent pre and post measures of explicit attitudes, efficacy beliefs and affective components such as stress and acceptance. The results again indicated positive but differential impact for both groups following the BI and SMI, suggesting that relative experience significantly shapes the support needs of teachers working with children with EBD.

Participants benefited from both practical and affective interventions to help mediate their negative experiences, in order to foster greater positivity towards inclusion. It was beyond the scope of this study to capture the relative impact on behaviour outcomes or the longevity of the effects on attitudes. This study nonetheless provides support for the utility of proactive intervention to address teachers' attitudes towards inclusion for children with EBD, particularly through behavioural intervention. Hind, Larkin and Dunn (2018) found support for the role of attitudes as predictors of teachers' willingness to include, irrespective of support available to enhance inclusion. Time in the profession was also found to be a significant indicator of attitude, in line with Scanlon and Barnes-Holmes (2013).

Scanlon and Barnes-Holmes (2013) deployed a broad range of empirically supported quantitative measures to establish teachers' baseline attitudes to inclusion and their responses to intervention, enabling statistical analysis.

Armstrong and Hallett (2012) by contrast employed a qualitative approach to exploring teachers' conceptions of children with SEBD. Phenomenographic analysis was carried out on 150 5000-word accounts written by teachers about their work with children with SEBD, in the context of their completing assignments for a postgraduate qualification in SEBD and Inclusion. Phenomenography enables analysis of variations of experience and shared meaning, "focusing on people's ideas about, and experiences of, reality" (Cossham, 2017) which adds depth to the more succinctly presented constructs in Scanlon and Barnes-Holmes (2013). It is notable that the sample, though large and representing teachers from across the UK, was drawn from a set of people who had proactively sought further training on SEBD, suggesting a potential source of bias. Data collection via assignment raises some queries of how freely an individual might present their views in the context of their written accounts, although lack of detail about the design and administration of the data collection phase make this difficult to critique in detail.

The findings were reported in the form of four predominant themes from the body of texts analysed, assumed to be representative teachers' beliefs and preconceptions about the children with SEBD with whom they work. These themes included "chronic predisposition to failure" as a frequent assumption made by teachers, with evidence provided of teachers attributing this 'predisposition' to both within-child factors and parental factors in line with Miller (2003). "Unknown, and unpredictable entities" was a second theme whereby teachers indicated trepidation towards the behaviour of students, encouraging them to focus on quantifying and defining presenting behaviours at the expense of trying to develop understanding of what they may represent.

A third theme was the idea expressed by some teachers that students were "capable of renormalisation", indicating a belief in change. Armstrong and Hallett (2012) lamented nonetheless teachers' orientation to expected norms as the ideal outcome, with the pupil being expected to achieve this ideal 'with the right support'. The authors noted the relative lack of insight shown by teachers into the presenting needs of the children displaying difficult behaviours, suggesting teacher perceptions of 'the right support' however well-intended were unlikely to meet the child's needs.

A fourth and final theme paid tribute to reflections made by teachers across the sample who reflected on how children might be “disabled by educational psychology and practice”, showing capacity to move beyond within-child attributions and labels to reflect on the interaction of the person with the environment. Armstrong and Hallett (2012) adopt a critical approach to SEBD as a construct within this analysis, in line with Jones (2003), reflecting on the ways in which teachers appear to be “conceptually and emotionally unequipped to support children and young people with SEBD”. The authors acknowledge that the findings on teachers’ conceptions suggest they are mindful of the gap between discourse around inclusion and frontline practices in school, which EPs could helpfully support to raise further awareness of and empower teachers through broadening their conceptual understanding.

The phenomenographic approach taken by Armstrong and Hallett (2012) places limits on the reliability of the findings (Cossham, 2017). Other branches of research however offer further support for the importance of fostering teachers’ conceptual and emotional readiness in order to effectively support children with SEBD. There is discussion within the literature on the extent to which teacher efficacy influences how effectively a teacher approaches the needs of children with SEBD in the classroom.

2.4.2 Efficacy Beliefs

Gibbs (2007) cites Bandura’s definition of self-efficacy as the “belief in one’s capabilities to organise and execute the courses of actions required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1977 cited in Gibbs, 2007, p.49). This social learning perspective on support for teachers suggests both ‘mastery experiences’ and ‘vicarious experiences’ of successful intervention raises teachers’ expectations of success in the future (Gibbs, 2007), approximating the findings of Scanlon and Barnes-Holmes (2013). Gibbs (2007) emphasises that efficacy beliefs relate to ‘domain-specific’ perceptions of potential for success, so they are cognitive constructs similar to attitudes.

Gibbs and Powell (2012) sought to test the predictions of the impact of teacher efficacy on children's behaviour. They set out three distinct aims for their study, informed by previous research findings. These included exploring the nature of teacher efficacy beliefs and to which skills they typically related; measuring the extent to which their efficacy beliefs correlated with overall levels of collective efficacy within their school; finally analysing the impact of levels of efficacy beliefs on rates of exclusion, as a measure of outcomes for children with SEBD. Collective efficacy is a measure of the ethos and perceptions of the staff of their conjoint capability to achieve positive outcomes as a school, and is thought to influence individual teacher efficacy beliefs (Gibbs and Powell, 2012, Goddard, 2001).

An opportunity sample of 197 teachers was sourced from 31 English primary and nursery schools across a demographically diverse area, designated as 'inner-city' (57%) and 'rural' (43%). Further demographic analysis of the sample identified that it was majority female (84%) of at least 7 years experience (71%), and comprised mostly classroom teachers (74%). Teachers anonymously completed two questionnaires, relating to efficacy beliefs, and beliefs in the collective efficacy of the school respectively. The questionnaires were adapted from existing self-efficacy and collective efficacy measures of known validity and reliability, in order to better reflect a UK-based sample, and to focus the measure on efficacy relating to children's behaviour. The new measures were piloted with 12 teachers in a local primary school, and were found to meet acceptable reliability levels.

Individual teacher efficacy beliefs were found to relate primarily to efficacy with classroom management, children's engagement, and instructional strategies, with a stronger effect for the efficacy beliefs with classroom management. This supports previous findings on teacher efficacy beliefs (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2001). This finding was stable after controlling for role, years of experience and school area, which encourages schools and EPs to employ methods to promote sense of efficacy for all teachers in these areas.

In contrast to previous research, teachers' collective efficacy beliefs were found to relate to their perceived ability in three separate areas (as opposed to one),

including teacher skills, motivating pupils, and addressing external influences. In this instance, the findings were influenced by school area, specifically in terms of reduced sense of efficacy in collectively addressing external influences in areas of lower socio-economic status. Some relationships were found statistically between individual and collective efficacy beliefs, suggesting the two are related.

In terms of impact on exclusion, the results indicated that significant relationships existed between levels of exclusion, socioeconomic status, and levels of collective efficacy, but that a teacher's individual efficacy did not affect the number of exclusions that occurred, other than through its indirect relationship with collective efficacy. A reflection on this study is that exclusion as an indicator for overall effectiveness in managing the needs of children with SEBD is not unproblematic, although it is often employed as a useful statistic to gauge behaviour concerns. The paper itself acknowledges that rates of exclusion do not correspond directly to severity of or frequency of behaviour, and that rates of exclusion are known to fluctuate according to policy changes and are correlated to non-behavioural factors such as ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

Interestingly the researchers directed teachers not to consider examples of behaviours demonstrated by children with additional complex learning needs, foregrounding that SEBD as a category suggests a particular set of teacher experiences and a particular target group of students. Gibbs and Powell did not engage critically with the role of that construct, as Armstrong and Hallett (2013) did. The finding that levels of collective efficacy were a stronger predictor of exclusion rates than individual efficacy suggests the importance of whole school ethos and school culture to teachers in achieving positive outcomes. Powell and Gibbs (2018) found evidence for the following themes in promoting teachers' sense of efficacy: attitudes and expectations (communicating to staff the belief and expectation that they could manage), leadership (the principal promoting a positive and inclusive ethos), encouraging communication (in particular modelling problem-solving conversations), school ethos and practices (especially the notion of children 'learning' about behaviour). The role of whole-school factors is considered in more detail in the following section.

2.5 Whole-School Factors

The preceding research studies considered to what extent the internal or psychological resources or traits of the teacher, such as attitudes or self-efficacy, enhance or inhibit their ability to respond effectively to the needs of children with SEBD. However in each of the previous three studies discussed, findings pointed to the role of the wider school context in further mediating teachers' ability to respond, from promoting and embedding good practice (Scanlon and Barnes-Holmes, 2013), to the role of practices and policy (Armstrong and Hallett) to the impact of collective efficacy beliefs about teacher skills, motivating pupils, and addressing external influences, on the efficacy beliefs on the individual (Gibbs and Powell, 2011). In the next section research into the wider school contexts within which teachers operate is considered, and the role of those settings in promoting teacher wellbeing alongside children's wellbeing.

2.5.1 Contribution of Support Staff

Burton and Goodman (2011) highlighted the extent to which 'support staff', an umbrella term applied to the various auxiliary staff members involved in supporting pupils with SEBD (designated as BESD in this paper) at a non-management level, have become embedded in the life of the school, overseen by special educational needs coordinators (SENCO, later SENDCO post-2014). The researchers noted the disparity of status accorded to SENCOs between schools. This points to the variation in how schools administer, resource and invest in their work supporting children with SEBD. Understanding the school context within which teachers operate therefore is an important part of understanding the challenges faced in effectively supporting children with SEBD (Miller, 2003; Roffey 2011).

A small scale study incorporating a purposive sample of 4 SENCOs and 8 support staff members was carried out to explore staff perceptions. Participants were sourced from schools serving deprived areas with below average attainment, and above average SEN suggesting particular pressures on the schools. Findings from semi-structured interviews with each participant illustrated the organic ways in which the work of support staff evolves in response to the

needs they encounter. However support staff commonly reported feeling under-appreciated in terms of the complexity of their roles, and their status relative to 'teachers'. In the context of how teachers might interact with this system, if the roles of the staff supporting them do not have clearly defined roles, or the morale of these staff is low, this would appear to have implications for the effective management of resources in schools (Partridge, 2012).

The experiences of support staff highlights the low status given to embedding evidence-based practice at a whole school level, which has implications for teacher outcomes with SEBD (Cooper, 2011). Support staff reported struggling to access further professional development that might enhance their practice or their status.

Accessing the voice of support staff enriched the picture of factors operating at a whole school level of the ecosystem in which children with SEBD are supported. In the context of this study, many of the support staff were local to the area which enabled insights and links to the community that support staff felt helped facilitated them to interact with families and understand their needs. Miller (2003) talks about the importance of teachers and families building shared understandings of the difficulties presenting for a young person, suggesting that teachers stand to benefit from the relationships that support staff develop with parents. This was contrasted with more formal school interventions that teachers may engage in that tended to prioritise the needs of the school, and could potentially inhibit developing shared understanding with parents (Burton and Goodman, 2011). Fostering effective relationships with students was also a feature of the work shared by support staff.

Given the small scale of the Burton and Goodman (2011), it is not possible to generalise the experiences and perceptions of the participants interviewed to all schools. The researchers acknowledge that a mixed-methods approach would have enhanced the robustness of the data. However, the findings presented resonate with other studies into the importance of whole-school approaches, in particular in relation to fostering the wellbeing and motivation of staff. Parker and Levinson (2018) highlighted research that whole-school, flexible and compatible

approaches, supported by staff training and monitoring of outcomes, were more likely to be successful in supporting children's social and emotional needs.

Monsen, Ewing and Kwoka (2011) found evidence for teachers' perception being an important factor shaping their attitude to inclusion. Cooper (2011) points to the importance of motivational factors in predicting a teacher's actions in response to supporting a student with SEBD. Gibbs and Miller (2013) also cite research evidence that increasing wellbeing and resilience has a positive impact on children's behaviour, suggesting that research promoting whole-school approaches to fostering resilience has tangible if indirect effects on pupil wellbeing outcomes.

2.5.2 Whole School Wellbeing

Roffey (2012) gathered data from a combined sample of teachers, students, school counsellors and principals, using both semi-structured interviews and focus groups of 5-9 people. The total number of participants is not reported, however participants were purposively sampled from across 6 schools representing ethnically and socio-economically diverse areas. Roffey used a grounded-theory approach to explore and analyse themes in the data, the findings of which were presented in the form of three different papers. The current paper examines the role of teacher wellbeing in improving wellbeing outcomes for children.

A comprehensive list of factors were identified as important for teachers wellbeing: fostering a sense of belonging, acknowledging strengths, being and feeling included, being respected and cared for, creating a safe learning environment, feeling safe to make mistakes, positive communication, and positive feelings and resilience. Roffey embeds each of these themes in the context of wider contemporary research findings that supports their importance. This list provides a springboard from which to further research the relative impact of the factors suggested from this grounded theory study.

A final theme of “behavioural issues” Roffey highlights as an area where teacher wellbeing and student wellbeing are potentially not in tandem, as the act of supporting students who are being “difficult, even abusive” carries an emotional cost to the teacher. Participant feedback suggested the way forward was to adapt the environment to enable the student to experience independence and success, which would then improve the efficacy beliefs of the teacher. The implication here that mastery experience would contribute to the teacher’s efficacy beliefs and consequent wellbeing is supported by Gibbs and Powell (2011), however Roffey positions efficacy beliefs as a single component of a wider approach to fostering wellbeing in schools.

Roffey (2007) points clearly to the role of school leadership in establishing a clear vision for a ‘caring and inclusive school community’, leading by example in creating positive experiences for staff. This was seen to have an important impact on teachers’ wellbeing at work, having senior staff members interact with them positively and caringly. This can increase the social capital of a school.

Roffey (2012) discussed the role of social capital, which is defined as “the expectations and interactions that promote trust, respect, value and collaboration” (Roffey, 2012, p.8) which is felt to play a key role in promoting teacher wellbeing which Roffey posits as having an onward positive impact on student outcomes. This resonates with the issues raised by support staff in Burton and Goodman’s (2011) study of the need to be valued. Roffey (2017) has further developed this idea through the promotion of ASPIRE principles: Agency, Safety, Positivity, Inclusion, Respect and Equity, as a model for relational wellbeing at all levels of the school system. The following study looks at an intervention with the potential to increase connectedness, trust and social support for teachers in managing difficult behaviours.

2.5.3 Peer Support

Jones, Monsen and Franey (2013) discuss the role of the Staff Sharing Scheme to promote peer-support networks that would contribute to the school’s social capital while simultaneously supporting teachers in managing ‘challenging behaviours’ in school. The Staff Sharing Scheme is an approach developed in

New Zealand (Monsen and Graham, 2002) but the current study was carried out in the UK. The aim of Staff Support Schemes (SSS) is to empower and motivate teachers to reflect on the presenting difficulties with peers, rather than through consultation with an EP. Miller (2003) highlights the paradox of involving an EP to help support with behaviour having the effect of disempowering the teacher and/or school to take action out of deference to a perceived 'expert'. Initiatives such as the SSS, positioned within the problem analysis framework (Jones, Monsen and Franey, 2013) therefore theoretically help to improve teachers' ability to respond proactively.

A case study approach was adopted to explore two key issues; firstly, how useful did teachers perceive the SSS to be (Utility), and secondly, what was the wider impact on teachers perceptions of 'challenging behaviour' and the causal attributions made about it (Perceptions). Baseline data was collected via questionnaire with all of the staff in a single school, 20 participants of varying job roles, of which 16 were class teachers. Questionnaires sought self-report data on participants' perception of their ability to manage behaviour, and also on their causal attributions, adapted from the Causal Attribution Scale (Poulou and Norwich, 2002, cited in Jones, Monsen and Franey, 2013). Participants were then trained in the key principles of several different areas including problem analysis, data collection, and behaviour management, through 5 90-minute training sessions. After a six-week period for the staff to engage in the SSS, post-hoc questionnaire data was collected. In-depth interviews were also completed with a purposive sample of that recruited a cross-section of staff.

Utility: At feedback only a single SSS session had been implemented.

Participants found the session helpful through providing opportunity to 'step back' and reflect on purposes of a child's behaviour. Sharing with colleagues was also found to have a cathartic effect for some. Other benefits included having a structure or framework to discuss an issue with multiple colleagues. Feedback identified the SSS training as being helpful to facilitate informal peer conversations, which felt more accessible. Having a structured framework to discuss behaviour concerns in itself encouraged staff to be more open about such concerns, despite the staff's tentative response to implementing SSS at a whole school level. Linked with Roffey (2007) senior leaders making staff feel

welcome and valued as part of the group may have helped to mobilise staff. Quantitative analysis of the pre and post-hoc questionnaire data found significant impact for two elements of utility; training making it easier to share with colleagues, and feeling more supported.

Perceptions: Despite the absence of a control group to compare, findings suggested a positive impact on attributions, through a significant shift in emphasis to teacher factors being causal on 8 items. Interestingly, while participants interviewed noted the increase in awareness of their role in a system, this did not automatically result in a change in classroom practice, again highlighting the gap between attitude and action (Miller, 2003).

Jones, Monsen and Franey (2013) provide avenues for researchers to further explore the tentative findings proposed here, which have limited generalizability in light of the case study method employed, despite lending themselves to replication. Of further interest with the SSS is the idea of sustainable practice in schools, without requirement for the EP to be present to facilitate following initial training. This represents a distinct approach to, for example, Jackson (2008) in terms of EP-led work discussion groups, but does place greater responsibility on school leadership to embed the process. The outcomes of the study highlight the need for a minimum of social capital (Roffey 2011) to exist in schools in order to breathe life into initiatives that will hopefully later contribute to it. Participants in this study lacked sufficient trust to engage freely with the SSS from the start.

Consideration of the whole school factors detailed above highlights the complex nature of schools as organisations or workplaces. The studies detailed above foreground the importance of working effectively with the wider school team, but also the presence of psychosocial barriers that can conspire to prevent this.

2.6 Multi-Agency Work with Schools

The final section of this literature review shall briefly consider the interface of educational psychologists with teachers in supporting children with SEBD, in the context of multi-agency work with schools.

Miller (2003) reflects that the level of impact of difficult behaviour, and its seemingly intractable nature, invites 'personalisation' of the problem within the child, suggestive of the need for an 'expert' response and referral to outside professionals. Furthermore, Miller (2003) laments that the very construction of difficult behaviour incites a belief that expertise is required that likely obstructs or discourages teachers from taking ownership or acquiring the "knowledge, skills and confidence that might be of help to them". This suggests a system of beliefs that undermines the teachers' sense of being able to cope, or confidence to respond inquisitively, in deference to a potential expert seen to possess adequate skills and insights to meet their need.

However the arrival of an external support professional does not need to disempower the teacher. Gibbs and Miller (2013) suggest that applied psychologists can contribute to the wellbeing and resilience of teachers through processes such as consultation and supervision; in so doing they anticipate enabling teachers to discover motivation and opportunities for growth, to help respond more effectively to the demands of managing behaviour.

2.6.1. Supervision

Austin (2010) highlights the potential for effective supervision to improve a supervisee's understanding of their role and their clients' role in complex situations, while simultaneously providing containment for difficult emotions. A pilot study was completed to review the impact of supervision provided for teachers within a specialist provision for pupils with SEBD. Questionnaires were provided to 17 volunteer participants at the outset of a term of supervision, and follow-up questionnaires were provided at the end. 9 participants consented to take part in a further semi-structured interview about their experiences.

Questionnaire data indicated that it was necessary to experience supervision to develop a better understanding of its purpose. Based on their experiences staff reported feeling much more positive (94% in favour) about its role in their work having taken part than at the outset (53% in favour). Staff felt that supervision provided a predominately 'supportive' function, as opposed to educative or

managerial. Experience of supervision led to an evolution in the topics staff most wish to discuss, from 'children' in the beginning (71%), to the 'future' (94%) at the end, but staff felt free to discuss the full range of topics listed in the questionnaire. Supervision was described as at least 'useful' by all participants, no negative responses. This was quantified in terms of facilitating reflective practice, feeling empowered, and processing negative emotions. Interview data further explored the themes elicited through questionnaire. Staff referenced the essential basis of a supervisor being a professional external to the school, to ensure confidentiality. Supervision was felt to contribute to their sense of efficacy. Rae, Cowell and Field (2017) found more ambiguous support for EPs role in providing supervision, however the principle of access to a confidential, solution-focused intervention, which helped provide containment, was positively received. It was suggested that this could be facilitated via peer or group schemes among staff therefore.

2.6.2 Coordinating with Multiple Professionals

Hartnell (2010) focuses on the importance of maintaining a collaborative, systemic approach with service users when offering support with pupil behaviour. The study evaluated the mechanisms involved in successful multi-disciplinary support for schools, in order to reconcile some the challenges to Educational Psychology practice presented by the "competing approaches" to behaviour intervention that practitioners can draw upon. Hartnell (2010) posits evaluation of outcomes as a means of developing evidence-based practice for intervening with difficult behaviour; evaluating the work of multi-disciplinary teams additionally advocates for the importance of support services adopting a joined-up approach in order to achieve the best outcomes. Emphasis is placed on systemic approaches to behaviour in this study, actively discouraging 'within-child' formulations.

Research looking beyond pupil factors, or 'within-child factors', of problem behaviour has identified the following as being important at a school level in reducing the likelihood of exclusion: (p.188)

- *All staff in school, supported by parents and pupils, showing commitment to*

working together to support pupils at risk of exclusion.

- *A school curriculum which is flexible and differentiated, with emphasis on personal and social development.*
- *Systems of decision-making which are flexible and informed by a network of staff rather than based on hierarchical decision-making.*
- *Offering families support to adapt positively to stressful events and life circumstances.*

Considering the needs of schools in responding effectively to behaviour therefore is vital in providing an effective, systemic approach to intervention. The teams evaluated in Hartnell's (2010) study comprised EPs, specialist teachers, primary mental health workers and family support workers, who jointly offered an assessment and consultation service informed by education, health and care. Support to schools included the development of behaviour policies and behaviour management strategies, and training of teachers both whole school and individually. Evaluation involved gathering both quantitative outcomes data, and qualitative feedback from service users via interview, in order to contribute to future service development.

Findings of the outcome data and feedback from schools indicated the importance of regular multi-disciplinary behaviour consultation with staff in schools, training for senior staff in both behaviour and pastoral support plans to foster proactive responding and support of colleagues, bespoke whole school training developed in collaboration with senior staff, and finally collaboration with family support workers around working with parents effectively. This was based a range of separate measures including questionnaire feedback from a sample of 161 head teachers who had accessed support from the multi-disciplinary team; interviews with six teachers, and six child and parent pairs respectively, three of whom had experienced successful intervention from the team, and three of whom had not, and evaluation of impact through tracking rates of exclusion within the local authority in the year preceding and during intervention by the service.

Hartnell (2010) employed a multi-dimensional mixed-methods approach effectively to triangulate findings, and to enrich practice development through

analysing service users' feedback using grounded theory methodology. Miller (2003) advocates the use of grounded theory methodology for developing the evidence base relating to managing problem behaviour in schools. However, despite advocating for the importance of systemic approaches, and the reduction of within-child formulation, the vast majority of the intervention work evaluated within the study was with individual pupils (75%), with 16% of intervention work being with groups, and 9% of intervention focusing on systemic work around whole school training or work directly with staff. It is acknowledged that this ratio was dictated by the outcomes of the consultation process in each case, a process which implies 'working systemically', however it is notable that the outcomes of such work led predominately to intervention with individual pupils.

Ratings of impact of the different forms of intervention provided indicated that whole-school work most frequently attracted a rating of 'very effective' (33% of ratings given). Hartnell (2010) reflected that the positive rating perhaps reflected the potential of such work to provide preventative intervention, as opposed to reactive intervention. However the feedback was theoretically provided by head teachers of host schools, and arguably therefore prioritized a particular service user's voice, one whose impressions and experiences would have been distinct from those staff members working more directly around supporting pupil behaviour.

Themes relating to patterns in referrals received by the team were felt to have helped provide focus for whole school intervention; these included effective management of pupils during break times, and supporting newly qualified teachers who tended to be associated with a higher level of referrals for support. Hartnell (2010) also suggested that whole school training prompted by needs arising with a specific individual or class had the potential to increase levels of support and understanding among colleagues; however this assertion is not supported with specific reference to the data collected. By contrast, inferential statistical analysis of feedback carried out within the study suggested significant findings in favour of consultation and support to teachers and SENDCos, and contribution to developing pastoral support plans for individual pupils (Hartnell, 2010). The study found no significant support was indicated for contributing to the development of individual behaviour plans, and there was support of lesser

significance for liaising with other agencies and running in-class interventions such as circle of friends etc. This suggests that strategies potentially promoting the autonomy and empowerment of staff were judged to be most effective, or alternatively they were processes that enhanced staff perception of the effectiveness targeting and intervention in dynamic contexts.

Factors implicated in the overall success of interventions were identified via a 6-month follow-up of six case studies, employing a grounded theory approach. These included thorough assessment by the team that enhanced service-user understanding of the issue, “developing a range of realistic, appropriate and effective strategies” while providing support to evaluate these, and “responsiveness”. This in particular was felt to provide a sense of ‘containment’ as described by Bion (1961, in Hartnell, 2010). In fact the management of negative emotions was felt to be effective irrespective of the effectiveness of the strategies suggested. Systemic factors were also foregrounded in themes around fostering better collaboration and feedback between home and school, and improved communication around aims and outcomes.

Findings from this research did not implicate any one means of intervention in predicting effectiveness, more a thorough process of assessment around the issue being crucial, as well as responsive relationships that foster trust through availability in times of need. EPs also had a key role to provide in functioning of the multi-disciplinary team. Hartnell described a ‘key feature’ of the service being the management offered to the team by one of the EPs.

The two papers reviewed in this section provide quite contrasting views of the ways in which EPs can work supportively with teachers. The intervention described by Austin (2010) was quite specific and highly focused. This contrasts with the multi-faceted interventions described by Hartnell (2010). Key findings include the importance of encouraging staff to participate in new initiatives, and gaining support to work in different ways, at different levels. It also pointed to the role that EPs have to play in contributing to the whole-school wellbeing espoused by Roffey (2012).

2.7 Summary

This chapter took an eco-systemic approach to critiquing research aimed at supporting teachers with managing SEBD in the classroom. This meant being able to present a range of evidence applicable at different proposed 'layers' of the eco-system around the teacher (and child). The review was arranged according to three main levels: Internal Factors, Whole School Factors, and Multi-Agency Work with Schools. This was felt to best reflect the diversity of topics encountered in the systematic search, but to also foregrounded the eco-systemic nature of behaviour issues in schools, where different layers all contribute to the development of situation. In the case of this review, particular attention was paid to teachers' position within these levels. The approach indicates the different ways in which educational psychologists can provide support for teachers affected by SEBD in the classroom, which was relevant to the study's aim.

This literature review provided the basis for the proposed research questions outlined next.

2.8 Research Questions

This review of literature led to the formulation an over-arching research question:

- What is helpful for teachers dealing with challenging behaviour in the classroom?

From this starting point the points of view of teachers who had experienced difficulties with managing behaviour issues would be sought. The aim is to help inform our understanding of their support needs from their perspective, and consider in what capacity educational psychology can help meet those needs, enhancing outcomes for children with SEBD.

The following series of sub-questions emerged from the central research question to reflect the eco-systemic approach adopted with this literature review:

1. How do teachers characterise the difficulties of dealing with challenging behaviour in the classroom?
2. In what way did they feel supported by the wider school system and policies/support in place?
3. In what way do educational psychologists offering input on behaviour support contribute to this system?

The intention was that the research would contribute to better understanding issues around supporting teachers, through recognising the diversity and complexity of their experiences. The research reviewed above already points to the complexity involved in working in schools in this capacity, highlighting the need to consider teachers' perspectives of what they find helpful from an eco-systemic perspective.

The term 'challenging behaviour' is used within the research question, as while being continually mindful of how terminology can marginalise children and young people, it was felt that this term would be recognisable to teachers in the context of discussion about emotional and behavioural difficulties they have found challenging within the classroom.

The implications of these research questions for the research design are considered in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology adopted for the present research study, and details the process of data collection and data analysis undertaken to address the research questions. This includes discussion of the ontological position adopted by the researcher, and critical reflection of how this shaped the design requirements of how data was collected and analysed within the study.

- Ontological and Epistemological position of the researcher
- Research Purpose
- Design
- Ethical Issues
- Method

3.1. Ontological and Epistemological Position of the Researcher

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 1) state that research is “informed by how we view our world(s), what we take understanding to be, and what we see as the purposes of understanding.” Therefore when embarking on research it is essential for researchers to clarify their position in relation to this, to define at what level this world could be mapped and ‘known’.

The following section provides a brief summary of the different paradigms that were considered in relation to the research question, including positivist, relativist and critical realist approaches.

3.1.1 Ontological Position

Sprague (2010) describes how within the critical realist (CR) paradigm, while perceptions may vary between and within people, there are felt to be observable patterns to be noted. These patterns are seen as being situated in a world that exists independently of our thinking – in an external if complex reality. Sprague (2010) suggests that it is possible for researchers to represent others’ viewpoints with fairness and authenticity, a belief that was shared by the author of this

study. Therefore the role of the researcher within this paradigm is to engage in on-going analysis and critique, and to understand the frameworks within which their understanding is organised through reflexivity.

This paradigm best reflected the researcher's aims in investigating the proposed area of focus. Issues for teachers working with challenging behaviour will not remain fixed over time, and the particular issues revealed would be shaped through the process the participant and the researcher engaged in. It was assumed however that while there would be variation between teachers' perceptions of what constitutes challenging behaviour, and what they interpret as 'supportive' or otherwise, there would be patterns or commonalities within this experience that would be valuable to reflect upon.

Sprague (2010) sees research within the CR paradigm being grounded as a process of increasing understanding, providing a basis for informed action. Effects may be construed within CR, albeit while considering them as having multiple and interacting causes. The aim for this study therefore would not be to explain why certain support was more effective, rather to reflect on the various interacting factors that present when supporting a child with challenging behaviour, and to consider the wider context in which the participating teachers encountered this support. The exploration of such individual viewpoints and perspectives in an inductive way was a key purpose of the study, in order to allow for the 'complex, intangible, elusive and disordered' nature of human behaviour (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The inductive approach adopted in this study reflected the researcher's acceptance of such complexity and disorder, occurring both between, and within, teachers' accounts of their experiences.

3.1.2 Epistemological Considerations

Maxwell (2011) notes that while critical realism challenges the idea of multiple realities socially constructed between individuals and unable to exist independently of them, it can embrace the position that there are distinct valid perspectives on reality. Based upon a CR position therefore, the researcher

would adopt a methodology that could allow for the exploration of multiple viewpoints, which would then be analysed from a rational or relativist position.

This epistemological position enabled the researcher to address the research purpose of exploring teachers' experiences of receiving support with challenging behaviour, through adopting a generalised concept of what support with challenging behaviour encompassed, while assuming teachers' differing understandings of it could be accessed in a material way. This led the researcher to adopt an inductive, qualitative approach to the subject matter, conducting semi-structured interviews. This provided a reasonably open-ended means of exploring teachers' experiences of receiving support, allowing for the complexity of their experiences to be best accessed. This information could then be evaluated for patterns and themes. The CR epistemological position also allowed for triangulation with a more quantitative instrument such as a questionnaire, which enabled a wider range of participants to be engaged, to enrich the research data. Frost (2011) discusses triangulation within a qualitative approach represents a means of countering implicit biases and enriching the information gathered, rather than its traditional role of 'verifying' or 'confirming' findings.

3.1.3 Ontological and Epistemological Position – Summary

“Critical realists thus retain an ontological realism (there is a real world that exists independently of our perceptions, theories, and constructions) while accepting a form of epistemological constructivism and relativism (our understanding of this world is inevitably a construction from our own perspectives and standpoint).” (Maxwell, 2011, p. 5)

Following consideration of the various paradigms discussed above, the ontological position adopted by the researcher was one of Critical Realism, which Robson (2002) suggests offers a means of synthesising the competing approaches of science and interpretation. As the participants (class teachers) were not expected to present in homogenous ways, a critical realist position could acknowledge and embrace the variety of their experience, while still supporting the recognition of common patterns among them.

3.2 Research Purpose

This section clarifies the purpose of the research study, and considers how the ontological position adopted informs the ensuing research design.

The purpose of the research, as outlined earlier, was to take an exploratory approach towards teachers' experiences of receiving support with challenging behaviour, with a view to further informing Educational Psychology practice in this area. The purpose was not to evaluate particular approaches, or specific psychological frameworks, nor did the study assume that all teachers had comparable experiences of receiving support with managing challenging behaviours. Consideration of the variation in experience was considered useful to the purpose of informing and developing Educational Psychology practice.

Given the anticipated variation of experience, it was felt this purpose was best achieved by taking an inductive approach to the research question. It was not useful to proceed with the exploration based upon preconceived ideas of what 'support' entailed; rather scope had to be given to inquiring what the participants' experiences had been, and inquire their perspectives on what is helpful.

3.3 Design

In the initial section of this chapter, the ontological and epistemological position of this research was located within the critical realism paradigm. This position had a direct impact on the research design, and the conclusions that can be drawn from the data collected and analysed. The following section discusses the various factors that were considered in the research design.

3.3.1 Mixed Methods Design

Creswell (2003) notes the need to consider the match between 'problem and approach', when designing research. The 'problem', or the issue to be explored, in this study is how different teachers experience receiving support with challenging behaviour, to gain a better appreciation of the variety of experiences that they had. This assumed variety suggests that the experience of each participant is influenced by various contextual factors. Therefore the research design needed to be able to capture their scope and variety. One such approach

is to adopt a mixed methods design. Mixed methods (MM) designs can often cause tensions due to potentially undermining the stated ontological and epistemological position of the researcher. Johnson (2015) highlights the potential strengths of a pluralistic approach, which anticipates the acceptance and expectancy of difference, such as enabled by a mixed methods design.

Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017) suggested seven research elements that should be considered by a researcher for a MM design. These include: purpose, theoretical drive, timing, point of integration, typological versus interactive design approaches, planned versus emergent design, and design complexity. Based upon several purposes that point to the adoption of a MM approach proposed by Greene (2007), the rationale for adopting a MM design in this context included: triangulation – exploring where data converge or correspond between the methods, and complementarity – enhancing and elaborating findings. The theoretical drive for the study was exploration and description, therefore applying an inductive approach; as such the predominant element of the research design is a qualitative one, annotated as ‘QUAL’, with a supplementary, or complementary quantitative element, annotated as ‘quan’. In terms of timing, the phases were technically sequential, but the qualitative interview phase was not dependent on the outcomes of the initial quantitative phase. The data were integrated at the analysis stage, to explore possible convergences. As such this study is an example of an embedded MM design (Schoonenboom and Johnson, 2017) where the primary purpose of the additional ‘quan’ phase is enhancement of the overall design.

3.3.2 Validating Findings

Robson (2002) suggests that carrying out qualitative research does not mean completely rejecting the scientific approach. Consideration must be given to validity, reliability and objectivity when conducting qualitative research in order to maintain the quality, or integrity, of the findings. These concepts translate differently in the context of qualitative research as compared to traditional experimental research.

In qualitative research, validity is not seen as an intrinsic feature of data, as the data is unique rather than normative. But as the researcher further interprets it, it is important to reflect how the integrity of the findings can be protected.

The following describes the aspects taken into consideration to enhance validity.

- Authenticity
- Credibility
- Transferability
- Dependability

a) Authenticity

Authenticity relates to the outcomes of the analysis, and therefore has similar concerns as validity (Greene, 2010). To enhance authenticity, the researcher must consider their role in the research, how they position themselves as interviewer, and what that position communicates to the participants. The researcher should encourage the participant to share with them openly and honestly their concerns and difficulties.

One means to validate the authenticity of an analysis is to consider confirmability. This may be achieved through member checking – where an individual is asked to verify or accept the account recorded; it can also be achieved through peer debriefing – relating the progress of the research to a peer for them to consider, review and critique. Peer review formed part of the process of drafting and development of this thesis, through sharing initial coding thoughts with colleagues, and inviting them to code a section to compare.

This study produced verbatim accounts of the interaction between researcher and participant, to be referenced within the findings, which enables confirmability at the analysis stage through use of quotes. At point of interviewing to generate the verbatim accounts, member check can also happen by using effective clarifying questions and repeating back what has been said to the participant.

Consideration of the concepts of authenticity and confirmability lent support to the inductive approach used within this research, capturing teachers' voices in an open-ended, non-directive way within a semi-structured interview format.

b) Credibility

Credibility is the ensuring of a good fit between the accounts collected and their reconstruction; Mertens (2010) describes credibility in qualitative research as a parallel of internal validity in experimental research. This means being careful that the analysis represents the richness of the data, including negative cases.

Otherwise the researcher may introduce bias in favour of features they identify with or are salient to them. Therefore it remains for the researcher to apply care, consider their position reflexively, and anticipate blind spots or biases that might affect their analysis. Thought was given how to elicit a broad account of the teacher's experience, to capture variations that might add to the richness and individuality of the data.

c) Transferability

Transferability can be seen as a parallel to external validity as described in post-positivist research (Mertens, 2010). It is established in a qualitative context through the generation of 'thick description', where the researcher takes care to contextualise the data for the reader. Transferability is also seen as a function of the person (reader) seeking to use the research, and how it marries with their experience and understanding in terms of resonance and relevance.

The experience of stress in the classroom related to managing difficult behaviour was one that could be shared by many fellow teachers. It was important to consider factors that could impact how closely a wider audience identified with the participants, and with their context, as this impacts the transferability of the outcomes of the research.

d) Dependability

Dependability means that operationally a researcher's work can be traced and is appropriately documented. This meant planning to retain transcripts securely, and to appropriately reference and review the data during analysis. This is safeguarded within the present study through the research report, and the inclusion of appendices evidencing different aspects of the data collected and their analysis.

3.3.3 Feasibility and Resource Utilisation

A further part of the design process involved reflection on the feasibility of the study, and how to maximise the resources available. This included participant availability. The researcher's professional role as an educational psychologist provided the opportunity to consult with link educational settings about potential candidates for participation, so feasibility could be established. It was also possible to use existing information within the educational psychology service to help engage in purposeful sampling. This is outlined in more detail in the Subsection 2.4 on Method.

There was good potential access to participants in an immediate geographical area, based upon a review of referrals to the educational psychology service for behaviour support. Two feasibility issues arose however. The qualitative portion of the study would involve more in-depth, time-intensive data collection with participants. This could represent a potential barrier to participation for some participants. The quantitative portion of the study was reliant upon response rate to a survey prompt, and hence the sample size needed to be large enough to ensure an appropriate rate of responses.

A final consideration involved setting time limits on the data collection phases; the time allowed for the survey data was one term, as it was anticipated that prompts would be needed. Towards the end of the term, purposeful sampling of participants for interview was planned to begin, in preparation for the second phase of data collection. The qualitative data collection phase was then planned to take place within a further three-week period the following term.

3.3.4 Sampling Criteria

A purposeful intensity sampling technique (Mertens, 2010, p. 221) was employed. This means candidates were recruited directly via existing locality contacts, as a result of meeting certain pre-determined criteria, set out as follows:

- The sample would comprise of primary school teachers. This limit was set in order to enhance the transferability of the findings; primary school teachers'

experiences of managing difficult behaviour were anticipated to be distinctive from that of secondary school teachers. The higher rate of direct contact with pupils would influence the relative intensity of support required.

- The participant had worked with the school in making a referral to the Educational Psychology Service, to access support with teaching a child identified as exhibiting challenging behaviour. This sought to ensure 'intensive' examples were recruited, assuming a referral indicated severity of concern on behalf of the referrer, and/or school.
- The referral had been made in the previous year – this was mostly to ensure that the case was relatively current, so that although the data were mostly retrospective, the experience was not too distant for recall purposes.
- The referral did not pertain to challenging behaviours that were secondary to or associated with developmental difficulties. This was intended to focus data collection on contexts where behaviour was framed as the primary need e.g. SEBD/BESD.

No other limits were placed upon the composition of the sample in terms of selection criteria.

3.3.5 Research Purpose and Design – Section Summary

This section has outlined the rationale for a mixed methods study from a critical realist standpoint, with the purpose of exploring teachers' experiences of receiving help with managing challenging behaviour in the classroom. This was with the aim of enhancing educational psychology practice through taking an exploratory approach to the research area. The purpose was further elucidated through discussion of the sampling criteria. Aspects impacting the validity of qualitative research were also examined to ensure these concerns were addressed through the research design.

The following section explores an area fundamental to all psychological research, that of ethical issues and their considerations. This is acknowledged independently of the design process, while also forming an important part of the design and planning of the research to ensure the researcher's responsibilities are met.

3.4 Ethical Issues

The design and execution of this research was done in accordance to ethical guidelines set out by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee at the University of East London. Its proposal referenced the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009), and the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2014), which encompasses four main areas of responsibility for psychologists conducting research:

- Respect for the Autonomy and Dignity of Persons.
- Scientific value.
- Social responsibility.
- Maximising benefit and minimising harm.

The issues summarised below were considered at the planning stages of this study, and as part of the application for ethical approval.

3.4.1 Respect for the autonomy and dignity of persons.

This principle encompasses the need for the researcher to develop and follow procedures for valid consent, confidentiality, fair treatment and due process. Psychologists are expected to keep appropriate records, obtain the informed consent of their participants, restrict disclosure to professional purposes only, record and store information in a secure way, but ensure participants are aware of the limits of confidentiality.

3.4.1.i Valid Consent

“The way in which consent is sought from people to participate in or otherwise contribute data for research should be appropriate to the research topic and design, and to the ultimate outputs and uses of the analyses”.

(BPS Code of Human Research Ethics, 2014, p. 15)

There were no issues with deception in this study, and the participants were of adult age and, it is argued, had the capacity to understand the implications of taking part in the research. Therefore obtaining valid consent required being clear on the aims of the study, the time commitment and process, and where and how the findings would be disseminated. Valid consent was therefore primarily achieved through provision and review of an information sheet.

The BPS Guidelines note that ethical practice requires that participants should be empowered in self-determination, through this right being made explicit at the outset, which was achieved. In the case of face-to-face data collection, consent was achieved through signing of a consent form after the information sheet had been reviewed. In this case right to withdraw from the process at any stage was made explicit. In the case of participants contributing anonymously via an online survey, their consent was inferred through the accessing of an online link, implying acceptance of terms. It was clarified within the information provided that withdrawal would not be possible following completion of the questionnaire, given the wholly anonymous nature of the data making post-hoc withdrawal impossible. See Appendix 3 for a copy of the information provided.

3.4.1.ii Confidentiality

This was achieved in the first phase of data collection through use of an online survey engine that enabled voluntary, anonymous participation. The recruitment of volunteers for this part of the study was achieved via school SENDCos. The SENDCos were contacted by the researcher, and asked to forward an email to the teacher involved in their recent behaviour support request, as that information was not directly available to the researcher from referral records alone. Therefore participation for the target teacher was fully anonymous, as there was no direct contact between participant and researcher.

The second phase of data collection involved recording of semi-structured interviews. This had greater implications for ensuring confidentiality. The BPS guidelines (2009) stipulate that where verbatim accounts will be stored for analysis, they must be done so in a secure way, to ensure confidentiality throughout the research process. This involved anonymising interviews during transcription and assigning participants numerical codes, not producing any printed material that included any identifiable information.

It is important also to inform participants of the limits of confidentiality. As the interviews involved discussing a teacher's interaction with a particular child, safeguarding principles applied in that if concerned for any aspect of their wellbeing or that of a student in their care, it would be necessary to share this with the designated school officer, in line with normal safeguarding procedures in schools. This was outlined to the interviewed teachers at the outset of the interview, as part of obtaining informed consent. This only became of issue within one interview, where the teacher shared information relating to a child not being monitored in their television and computer game usage at home, due to lack of appropriate adult supervision. I alerted the teacher that I would need to mention this to the designated child protection officer. The participant had done this also themselves.

3.4.2 Scientific Value

“Quality relates primarily to the scientific design of the research and the consideration of potential risks of harm and protocols for addressing such difficulties (should they arise). It is important that the aims of the research are as transparent as possible to ensure that it is clear what the research intends to achieve.”

(BPS Code of Human Research Ethics, 2014, p. 9-10)

This relates closely to the valid consent information described in the previous sub-section.

Preparation is an important aspect of competence, to help manage risk competently. In this study it was necessary to prepare a response in case of

encountering a teacher in clear distress. They must also monitor their wellbeing and its impact on the research carried out. It can only be inferred from general post-interview feedback that participants did not feel pressurised or upset in taking part in the research; in fact many reported gaining a therapeutic benefit from being able to explore the situation in detail.

Psychologists must seek to be honest and accurate in conveying research conclusions, and acknowledge clearly the contributions of other research to their work. From a qualitative research point of view, this is achieved through transparency of analysis, accurate referencing, and also through critical reflection on the outcomes of the study, facilitated through supervision with peers and tutors.

In terms of data processing, data needed to be transcribed carefully, to engage comprehensively with the process. Steps taken to evidence the integrity of this piece of work include providing a verifiable literature review denoting clearly which aspects have influenced the current study, and being transparent and accountable during analysis, creating an audit trail for verification.

3.4.3 Social Responsibility

“Psychological knowledge must be generated and used for beneficial purposes. Such purposes can be broadly defined as those that not only support and reflect respect for the dignity and integrity of persons (both individually and collectively) but also contribute to the ‘common good’”.

(BPS Code of Human Research Ethics, 2014, p. 10)

Responsibility means actively considering the impact of research, and the welfare of participants, being mindful to risks and practising safely. The topic being discussed in this research involves asking participants to reveal experiences that are likely to have been difficult, and have had a negative emotional impact. Furthermore, the aim of the research study - to help better understand teachers' support needs - aims to deliver on the principle of contributing to the 'common good'.

3.4.4 Maximising benefit and minimising harm

“A difference in power inevitably exists between researchers and participants, even if researchers seek to minimise it. Sensitivity is therefore essential, and caution is usually necessary”.

(BPS Code of Human Research Ethics, 2014, p. 12)

This sensitivity was achieved through reviewing ethical issues in advance, and seeking proper supervision during the research process. In terms of the power imbalance, the researcher was in a position of privilege, and it was important for them to help manage boundaries around the time contributed by the teacher.

It was important to be prepared to engage with participants’ emotional support needs beyond the research setting, for example signposting for extra support where there were concerns about emotional wellbeing. At the end of each session, it was checked with each participant about how they were feeling following an in-depth review; they were reminded that the researcher’s contact details were on the information form. They were encouraged to get in touch if needed to discuss further support options. This did not prove necessary ultimately, to the researcher’s awareness. Participants commented positively on the experience of being able to talk at length about challenging situations.

3.5 Method

This section outlines the following aspects of the method adopted in this study:

- Sample
- Data Collection
- Procedure
- Data Analysis

3.5.1. Sample

Initially the sample was sourced from a single inner London borough. Latterly two additional participants were recruited from one school in a nearby inner London borough. Participants were all primary school teachers at both Key stage 1 and

Key Stage 2 (ages 5-11). They needed to have been involved in a referral to the Educational Psychology Service for support for behaviour in the previous 12 months. No other limits were placed, for example in terms of number of years of experience.

Recruitment Phase 1 – Survey Data:

Recruitment for an online questionnaire was achieved through sending 20 requests to relevant school SENDCos that were identified through a review of referrals made to the EPS in the year. An email was sent requesting they share the online link with the teacher involved in their recent referral to the EPS.

Recruitment Phase 2 – Semi-Structured Interviews

Recruitment for individual interviews took place later. This was conducted by contacting local SENDCos by phone or face to face to request their support in identifying relevant teachers who met the criteria provided. With SENDCos' support, recruitment information and consent forms were forwarded to prospective recruits, and confirmation relayed to the researcher.

The composition of the participant sample for Phase 2 is detailed in the following table:

Interview	School	Key Stage	Current Teacher	Known to researcher	Borough
1	A	1	Y	N	i
2	B	1	Y	N	i
3	B	2	Y	Y	i
4	C	2	Y	N	i
Withdrew	D	2	Y	N	i
SENCO did not follow up	E	1	Y	N	i
5	F	2	N	N	ii
6	F	2	Y	N	ii

Table 3.1: Composition of Participant sample – Phase 2

3.5.2. Data Collection

In keeping with a critical realist approach of this study, data collection was carried out in a mixed methods design, comprising two phases of data collection, an initial quantitative phase, and a further qualitative phase.

3.5.2.i Phase 1: Online Questionnaire

In Phase 1, information was gathered through an online questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 15 questions, and took on average 7 minutes to complete. It was piloted with 4 colleagues from a teaching background, both for the purposes of checking the accessibility of the online format, as well as the coherence of the wording of individual questions. Once edited, a link to the questionnaire was circulated via email to the SENDCos of previously identified schools. The questionnaire gathered descriptive data from relevant teachers about accessing support for children exhibiting challenging behaviour. 20 requests were sent, 11 were completed. A printed copy of this questionnaire is presented in Appendix 3.

3.5.2.ii Phase 2: Teacher Interviews

The second phase involved conducting semi-structured interviews with teachers who had received support with teaching a child identified as having challenging behaviour. The aim was to enable teachers to share their thoughts and experiences in a way that allowed for the complexity and variety of their experiences, while ensuring some consistency across the dimensions of their accounts through using a semi-structured interview format.

The interview format revolved around three themes that would be common to the experience of each participant; namely the experience of teaching a child with challenging behaviour and its impact, the experience of discussing concerns and accessing initial support in school from colleagues or line managers, and finally the experience of interacting with an external professional to access additional support or advice. This provided the basis for an interview format, but the format varied between interviews. Pre-determined lines of inquiry (Kvale, 2007) allow researchers to engage to a greater degree with the participant, helping the

researcher know when to subtly push for precision of description. A copy of the semi-structured interview schedule is provided in Appendix 5.

Kvale (2007) suggests the interviewer needs to project their genuine interest in the participant's personal account to help encourage depth of description.

Throughout the interview the researcher remained conscious of rapport building, and also tried to demonstrate interest through their responses to the participant.

3.5.3. Procedure

The following outlines the specific procedures followed during recruitment of participants and data collection. Prior to this ethical approval obtained. Please see earlier sections for overviews and explanations of the design considerations made at this stage.

3.5.3.i Quantitative Data Collection: Online Questionnaires

Phase 1 of data collection involved recruiting teachers to complete an anonymous online questionnaire. Using service records, schools were identified that had made referrals to the Educational Psychology Service in the previous year regarding behaviour concerns. This comprised 20 different referrals at the primary school level. Using this information, the SENDCos of these schools were contacted via email, referencing the date of the referral and child's initials, asking for their support with a research study. The email contained a brief outline of the purpose of the research study, and a link to an online questionnaire; this link was aimed at the class teachers of the children who had been referred. SENDCo support was requested in contacting teachers with the request, giving an indication of how long it would take to complete the questionnaire (estimated to be 5-7 minutes). The email contained copies of the study's ethical approval information; it also clarified that although it would not be possible to withdraw once the questionnaire had been completed, the anonymity meant their responses could not be linked back to them once submitted.

The questionnaire was created using Survey Monkey, an online data collection service. The questionnaire was piloted with four educational psychology colleagues to check its intelligibility, and to measure completion time. Feedback

on the wording of questions was taken into account, and a final version was created for release. The survey contained 15 questions. The responses were stored anonymously online via the Survey Monkey website, which sent notifications of completion. There was never any direct contact between the participants and the researcher during this phase.

3.5.3.b Qualitative Data Collection: Semi-structured interviews

In this phase semi-structured interviews were conducted with six teachers who had received support with teaching a child identified as having challenging behaviour. Participants were purposefully sampled to take part in the study, through contacting local SENDCos. In written invitations to take part, participants were provided an overview of the purpose of the study to participants, copies of ethical approval documents, information about the process including anonymising of data after collection, and the right to withdraw. It was also indicated that, should it be helpful, any additional support needs that arose during our interview could be further followed up.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted primarily within teachers' classrooms, and took place after school hours, or within Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time. In each case the location gave adequate privacy and the interviews were largely uninterrupted. 45 minutes to 1 hour was allowed for the interviews, with one interview continuing for 1 hour and 45 minutes. The participant in question was made aware of the time at various stages, and reminded of the option to conclude at any time.

Interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone, and QuickTime Player software on personal computer as a back up. They were then transcribed verbatim, while simultaneously anonymised. This enabled the qualitative data analysis phase to begin.

3.6 Data Analysis

The following summarises the methods of analysis employed for each phase of data collection; these comprise quantitative analysis of questionnaire data, and a qualitative analysis of interview data.

3.6.1 Questionnaire Data Analysis

The first data collection phase generated 11 responses to an online questionnaire. An electronic summary of the questionnaire data collected was compiled in the form of a report, using Survey Monkey software. The report also provided descriptive statistical detail, and is presented in the Findings chapter. Further analysis was carried out by the researcher in terms of analysis of standard deviation of the scale data, to indicate how the sample varied around the mean reported. Much of the information was presented graphically.

The descriptive data provided a representation of factors relating to the teachers' experiences of seeking support with managing challenging behaviour. These data are considered in further detail in the results section.

3.6.2 Interview Data Analysis

The following section details an overview of the critical considerations taken in approaching the qualitative analysis of the interview data gathered. It also provides an overview of the technique chosen, and some of the reflexive considerations and assumptions informing the analysis.

3.6.2.i Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis was a mode of analysis that fit the declared ontological and epistemological position of the researcher in relation to the present study. The following provides an overview of the tenets of this approach.

According to Clarke and Braun (2013), thematic analysis is “essentially a method for identifying and analysing patterns in qualitative data” (p.3). Braun and Clarke (2006) position thematic analysis as an approach to analysing qualitative data that enables the researcher to work across a variety of theoretical and epistemological frameworks, including the critical realist stance adopted in this research study.

Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that the core processes of thematic analysis provide a bedrock for approaching qualitative analysis in general that could lend itself to being used implicitly within another analytical framework, or explicitly with

another such as in mixed qualitative methods studies. Because of this variability, they caution that it is important therefore to adopt a systematic and verifiable approach to the analysing of data for themes, to ensure that both the quality of the analysis and the integrity of the researcher's ontological and epistemological position are protected. This means that while the researcher is afforded flexibility in how to approach the analysis of their data, the researcher still needs to clarify and justify the decisions made in their analysis process.

Thematic Analysis enables a discursive analysis of data; Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight that it is a 'tool' rather than a 'methodology' as it is not bounded by the theoretical constraints of approaches such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Through applying Thematic Analysis to the data collected, it was possible to approach the data in a way that did justice to the variation and complexities contained within participants' accounts, while also achieving a verifiable process of analysis within the critical realist framework adopted.

Thematic Analysis at a basic level involves a process of analysis to establish themes contained within the collected data, enabling a rich picture to be generated in a systematic way. As a basic 'recipe', Braun and Clarke (2006) advocate a stepped approach to thematic analysis that includes the following phases:

1. Familiarisation with the data: this includes the stages of transcription, repeated reading, and coding of initial responses.
2. Generating initial codes: revising initial responses to generate systematic codes for interesting features of the data as a result of a semantic and contextual reading of the data in relation to the research question.
3. Searching for themes: this is a process of reflecting on themes emerging from the codes generated, providing conceptual frames in which codes can be presented or interpreted.
4. Reviewing themes: this involves referring the generated themes back to a) the coded extracts, and b) the body of collected data for 'fit', and generating a **thematic map**. In this process, themes may be discarded or modified.

5. Defining and naming themes: On-going process of refining themes, and generating a 'story' of each theme, to be incorporated to an overall picture of the data.
6. Producing the report: Described as the 'final opportunity for analysis', this includes the selection of powerful examples that illustrate the suggested themes, leading to a research report.

Selected stages from the above process are evidence in Appendix 7.

3.6.3 Reflexivity

The reflexivity of the researcher is important. Clarke and Braun (2013) advocate the use of an exercise in 'reflexivity' prior to data analysis, in order to raise the researcher's awareness of their own preconceptions and assumptions in relation to the research area, and also to reflect on how their values and life experiences influence contribute to this.

It is expected the researcher will bring previous assumptions about the issues involved. In terms of the researcher's assumptions in this study, this was influenced by their experience practising as an educational psychologist. When anticipating the participants' accounts, it was felt that the experience of each teacher would be influenced by several possible factors; individual differences in their coping styles, their perceived support within their school, the nature of the behaviour experienced, and their sense of efficacy in dealing with it. It was important therefore to plan to remain open to factors not considered within these assumptions, and to be conscious of accounts that challenged that assumption or point of view.

There are also personal elements to reflexivity. Finlay (2010) discussed the challenge for researchers to use "personal revelation not as an end in itself but as a springboard to interpretation" (p.7). Gough (2010) notes that acknowledging the 'personal dimension' to research is frequently seen to enrich it, but that as a minimum reflexivity should entail the researcher "making visible their individuality and its effects on the research process" (p.23).

For this researcher two main areas of experience are relevant in shaping their insights and interests in this research topic; one was from early experiences working in education, and the other was from early experiences as a trainee educational psychologist.

The researcher's early professional experience involved working with children with autism in a specialist setting who presented with related social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Within the setting staff felt a general expectation to cope with and manage the evolving social, emotional and behavioural needs of the children on a daily basis. In this way if a child's behaviours escalated and they were frequently distressed, this could lead to a feeling of vulnerability for the staff member, feeling disempowered to meet the expectations of their role, or the needs of the child. As staff we sought informal support from each other to help manage the difficult moments. So emotional support was a key factor in the experience of the researcher in being able to fulfil one's role. Appeals to senior staff for additional support could result in a loss of morale if it was felt the request was not entertained, so this experience further informs the researcher's perspective of challenges in this area. The researcher experienced how this can contribute to loss of morale preventing teams from working productively together.

This experience informed the researcher's early casework experiences as a trainee EP, in that previous experience foregrounded for the researcher that the wellbeing of teachers is an important area to address, for a variety of practical, moral and ethical reasons. In completing casework in relation to referrals for 'behaviour concerns', the researcher encountered teachers in quite entrenched positions in relation to students' behaviour needs, which were often causing them visible frustration. This resonated with previous professional experiences working as support staff but now positioned as an educational psychologist, who was entrusted and expected to help provide support. This made those experiences very salient to the researcher/EP.

While identifying with teachers seeking support with behaviour concerns based on their previous experiences, the researcher/EP also had to reflect from the perspective of a professional viewing the system from the outside, essentially a more detached position. While schools appeared primarily oriented to focus on

the concerns relating to the young person, and strategies to help support them to comply with expectations, it often felt that the needs of the teacher were an important factor shaping 'what was needed', and that therefore it was important to acknowledge their needs and incorporate this into planning and next steps. This occasioned reflection on what constituted best practice in this area, which at times evoked feelings of vulnerability and uncertainty, as there did not appear to be any one coherent framework to apply. This inspired the researcher to revisit, from their new position as researcher, teachers' support needs from their perspective, in order to better understand the EP's role in facilitating this, and how this related to current research.

3.7 Methodology Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodology for the present research study, in terms the significant elements that contributed to its completion. These elements include the theoretical position adopted by the researcher in relation to the research questions, the consequent design of the study, details of the exact process of data collection, and the data analysis approach undertaken to address the research questions. In the following chapter, the findings generated from the data analysis are presented in detail.

Chapter 4: Results

4. Results

The following chapter presents the analysis of data gathered during two separate phases of data collection:

4.1 Quantitative data analysis of responses to an online questionnaire.

4.2 Thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews.

In Section 4.1, the findings relating to the participants' responses to an online survey are presented. This includes summaries of responses to open questions where applicable, and also descriptive statistics, which were applied to a selection of the response sets for more in-depth analysis.

In Section 4.2, the themes generated via thematic analysis of interview data are presented, accompanied with supporting quotes. The themes are presented in the form of a thematic map that identifies the main themes produced by the analysis.

These themes are presented independently of the research questions, which shall be discussed in the following chapter.

4.1. Quantitative Data Analysis – Questionnaire Data

The following section presents the findings from an online questionnaire generated via the Survey Monkey website. The questionnaire contained 15 questions relating to referrals for support with challenging behaviour, from the perspective of the teacher involved in the referral. A text copy of the online questionnaire is provided in Appendix 3.

For context, each set of findings outlined below are presented with the question asked in the questionnaire:

4.1.1 Questionnaire Responses

Q1. In which key stage was the student when you requested support?

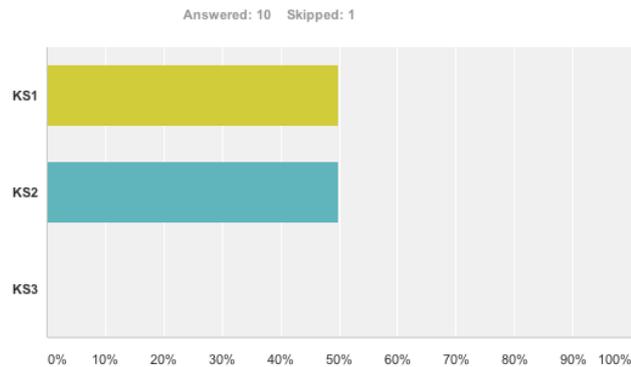


Figure 4.1 – Graph: Key Stage Distribution

The respondents’ referrals were divided evenly across both Key Stages – 5 at Key Stage 1 and 5 at Key Stage 2. One response was skipped.

Q2. With whom did you first discuss your concerns?

This question aimed to map the process of seeking support. The participants often identified more than one person. The primary people identified are shown below:

SENCO and Head teacher	5 participants
Head Teacher	1 participant
Teaching Assistant	1 participant
Educational Psychologist	2 participants
No reply	2 participants

Table 4.1 – Initial Discussions

Two participants described the educational psychologist as being the first person they discussed the concern with; which suggests that in these cases, not much discussion took place prior to referral to the educational psychology service.

Q3. Does your school provide clear guidance about how to refer behaviour concerns?

Respondents were unanimous that referral guidelines for behaviour concerns were clear.

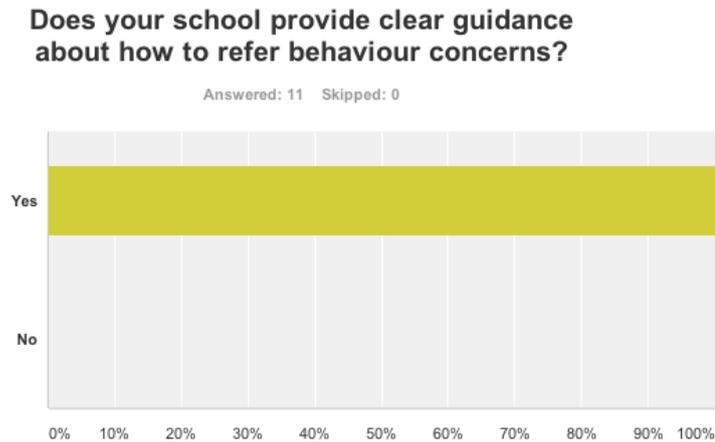


Figure 4.2 – Graph: Referral Guidance

Q4. Did you receive a prompt response to your request for support?

This question queried whether teachers felt support was offered promptly once a concern had been raised. The majority of respondents – 9 out of 11 - were satisfied with the speed with which a response was made to their concerns.

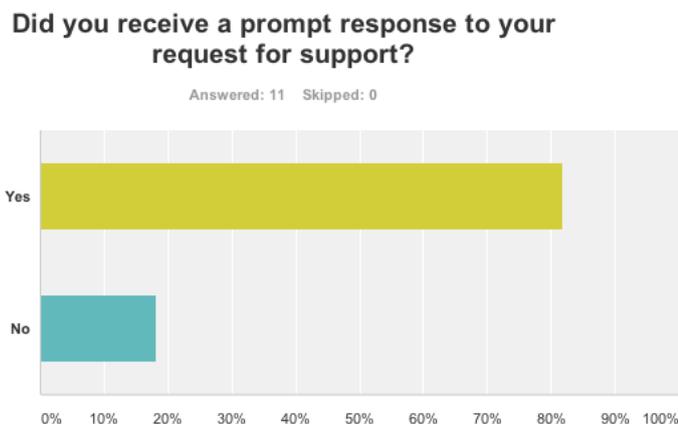


Figure 4.3 – Graph: Speed of response

Q5. How would you rate the support you received in school?

This question related to the level of support offered to respondents, but further qualified the concept of support through five suggested categories.

The respondents were asked to rate the amount of support offered on a scale of 1 (No support provided) to 5 (Ample support provided). The categories and their related responses are summarised further below (Table 4)

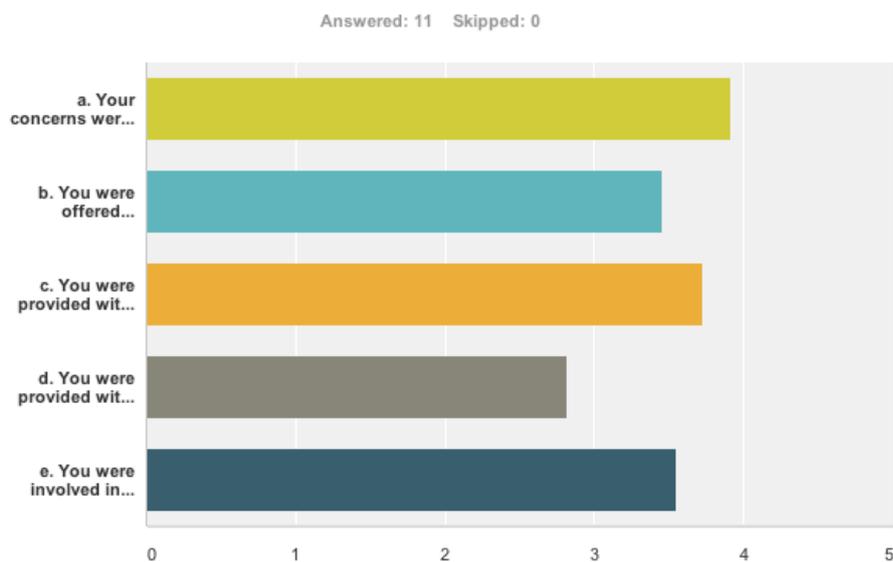


Figure 4.4 – Graph: Ratings of Support

The graphic depicts the range of different types of support teachers accessed in school, and suggests that, on average, teachers felt that at least moderate levels of support were available in each category. Further analysis of these average figures was then conducted to check how much variation existed between respondents.

	Type of Support	Average Rating	Standard Deviation
a)	Their concerns were explored in detail	3.91	0.79
b)	They were offered suggestions by colleagues/managers	3.45	1.31
c)	They were provided with practical support (e.g. additional staff resources)	3.73	1.48
d)	They were provided with emotional support	2.82	1.27
e)	They were involved with meeting with an Educational Psychologist	3.55	1.16

Table 4.2 - Ratings of Support (distribution)

The values presented in the table above show the average rating made by participants of the level of support provided, and the standard deviation. The findings indicate that support was offered in various capacities, as indicated by positive response ratings being given in each category.

The data also indicate that the support was positively rated on average, as the average values are closer to the maximum possible rating of 5, than to 1.

On average, respondents were more likely to be offered analytical support, such as a detailed exploration of their concerns, than they were to be offered emotional support. The greatest variation occurred in the provision of 'practical support' such as additional staff resources, with a standard deviation of 1.48. The least prominent type of support reported across the sample was being provided emotional support, suggesting that while there were elements of this being offered, it was not perceived as comprising a substantial element of the support they had received.

Q6. Of the forms of support identified above, which was most useful to you?

This question intended to allow participants to comment briefly on actual support they had received. Respondents cited things such as receiving ‘useful’ strategies, and ‘working with others to explore their concerns’, most frequently. Some responses challenged the assumption that the support was around ‘managing’ behaviour; for example, one teacher stated that the most useful support was partly removing the child to a special school, which may have been defined as practical support. Another response stated that no support had been particularly useful.

Q7. How long did it take from first raising your concerns in school to making a referral to an Educational Psychologist?

This question queried how much time elapsed between initial concerns being raised and the decision to access wider help. The results are summarised below:

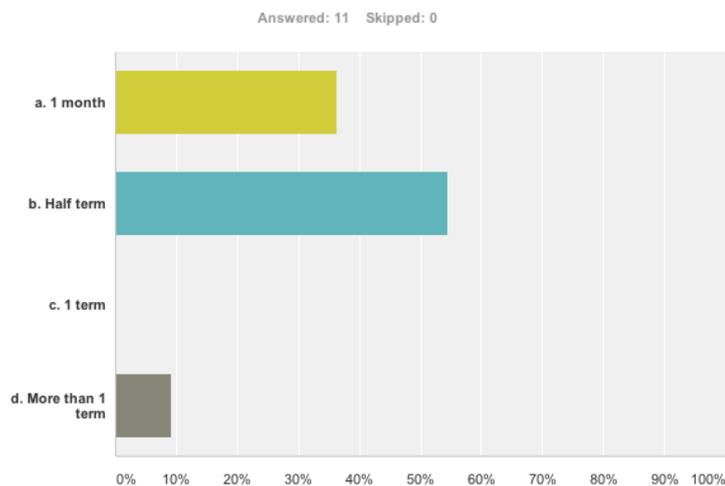


Figure 4.5 – Graph: Timelines to referral

These results suggest typically a matter of 4-6 weeks to action individual referrals, with the majority reporting that their concerns were escalated within a half term.

In Question 4, respondents were asked to comment whether they felt responses to their concerns had been prompt. An analysis of individual responses reveals that the teacher who waited more than one term for an EP referral felt that their initial request for support had been responded to promptly, whereas a teacher who had their referral made within 1 month found support was not offered 'promptly'. This could reflect differences in interim support put in place until EP referral, or differences in teacher expectations.

Q8. How many times did you meet with/speak to parents or carers prior to making a referral?

This question sought to gauge teacher-parent communication prior to escalating concerns. The results are shown in the table below:

Not at all	Once	Twice	More than twice
4	1	3	3

Table 4.3 – Contact with Parents

There was broad variation in participants' experiences of meeting parents prior to referral. 4 participants (>33%) reported that they did not meet with parents at all prior to a referral being made to the educational psychologist. This could indicate that such meetings were being handled by a SENCO; alternatively, that the parents were hard to reach, or that the participant (or school) was using the meeting with an educational psychologist to facilitate this conversation. By contrast 3 participants (>25%) reported meeting with parents multiple times. The majority (64%) did meet with parents at least once prior to referral.

Q9. Did parents share your concerns?

This question further queried to what extent teachers and families were in agreement about concerns, as an indicator of how much collaboration or mutual support was possible or available.

The results revealed an even split in the data on this issue, with approximately half achieving consensus with parents about their concerns, and half not achieving this. The half not achieving this met between 0 and 3 times with parents. Those who claim they had not met parents but did agree on the need for a referral perhaps achieved this through a conversation via the SENCo.

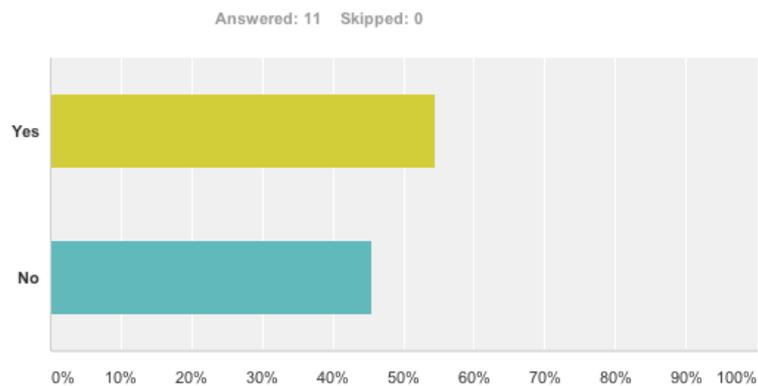


Figure 4.6 – Graph: Agreement with Parents

Q10. Indicate the type of events that lead to an EP referral being made.

Respondents were asked to identify issues they had experienced that led to or precipitated the referral, including types of behaviour that were cause for concern. It was possible for a teacher to identify more than one precipitating factor.

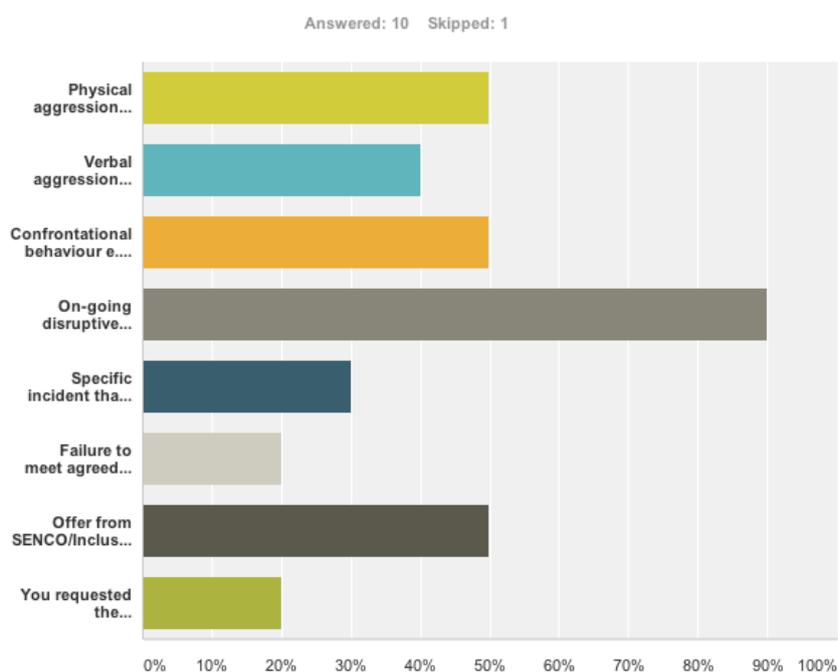


Figure 4.7 – Graph: Behaviours causing concern

The abbreviated options shown in Fig. 4.7 are reproduced in full in Table 4.4, in order of frequency, from most common to least common:

1	On-going disruptive behaviour	90%
2	Incidences of physical aggression	50%
3	Confrontational behaviour	50%
4	Referral suggested by SENCo/Inclusion Manager	50%
5	Incidences of verbal aggression	40%
6	Specific incident that prompted a referral	30%
7	Failure to meet agreed behaviour targets	20%
8	You requested the referral	20%

Table 4.4 - Behaviours causing concern

The majority of respondents (90%) identified ‘on-going disruptive behaviour’ as a key dimension of the challenging behaviour. Half of participants reported incidences of physical aggression and/or confrontational behaviour, therefore by extension half of the respondents did not experience this.

A much smaller proportion of respondents reported that failure to meet agreed behaviour targets was a factor, suggesting the decision to refer was often not made as part of a coherent behaviour management plan with target setting. Overall only two respondents report having asked personally for a referral to be made, suggesting referrals were typically prompted by other stakeholders.

Q11. Briefly describe how you felt at the following points in the process.

Respondents were asked to identify some feelings they had experienced at different stages of the referral, not in relation to the behaviours themselves. This question instead aimed to probe the emotional experience of seeking support. Both positive and negative emotions were reported, but not all participants responded to each stage. Therefore a summary to illustrate the range of possible responses is provided. The feelings identified included (compiled from responses)

Asking for help in school	Anxious/Calm/Hopeful
Making a referral to educational psychology	Relieved/Optimistic/Calm/Frustrated
Meeting with an educational psychologist	Embarrassed/Optimistic then annoyed/Calm

Table 4.5 – Typical Emotional Responses

These findings clearly highlighted that not all teachers involved in referrals for behaviour difficulties identify as being ‘distressed’, but that some of them, however, found meeting an educational psychologist aversive.

Q12. Working with an educational psychologist: Can you rate how much support they gave you in the following areas, where 1 is no support and 5 is ample support.

This question was designed to rate the amount of support that teachers were offered in schools by an educational psychologist. The options provided included:

- Exploring concerns in detail
- Offering suggestions
- Providing practical support
- Providing emotional support
- Helping discuss the case with parents
- Involving you in the assessment

The findings are detailed below:

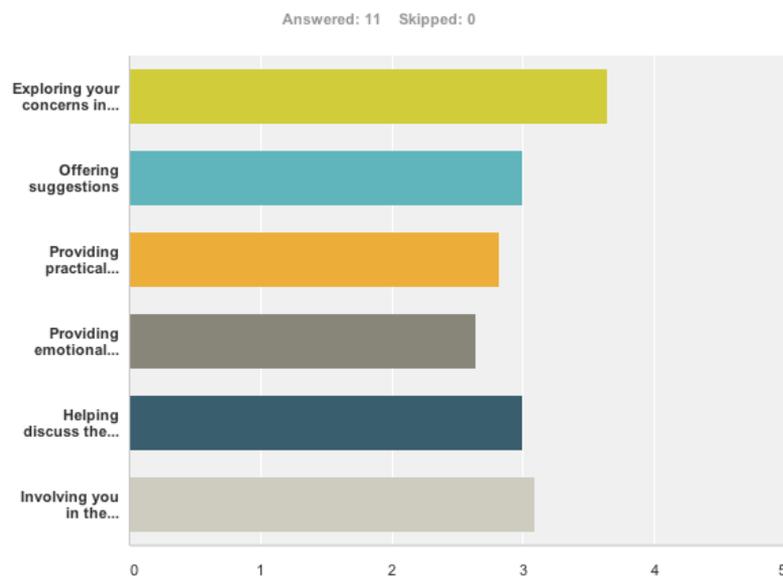


Figure 4.8 – Graph: Ratings of EP Support

The individual responses were further analysed:

	Type of Support	Average Rating	Standard Deviation
a)	Their concerns were explored in detail	3.64	1.15
b)	They were offered suggestions	3.00	1.35
c)	They were provided with practical support	2.82	1.47
d)	They were provided with emotional support	2.64	1.23
e)	They were helped to discuss the case with parents	3.00	1.55
f)	They involved you in the assessment	3.09	1.24

Table 4.6 - Ratings of EP Support (Distribution)

These responses indicate that, on average, the support from Educational Psychologists was not perceived to be as effective or intensive as support offered within school (see Question 5 responses), based upon the lower average ratings provided here, and greater standard deviation. Again individual experiences of this varied.

The greatest variation between participants occurred in being supported to discuss the case with parents. It is not possible to establish if this was for organisational issues around availability, or a reflection on the process, or indicative of communication breakdown between parents and teachers.

EPs were most likely to support a teacher through exploring their concerns in detail; they were least likely to be supportive through offering emotional support.

Q13. How do you feel about these behavioural difficulties now? Have your feelings about it changed since the referral was made?

This question invited respondents to reflect on their emotional response to the challenging behaviour situation now, since receiving support from their school and an educational psychologist. The purpose is not to evaluate the outcome but to gain the teachers' perspectives.

Respondents varied in their experiences. Some indicated that speaking up in and of itself had been a positive experience, as lots of support was then put in place.

One participant noted that the strategies provided had been positive for the class as a whole, so related to whole-class processes and general classroom management.

Not everyone identified the experience as being positive. One responded equivocally about it having been a challenging year, but that it might prove 'good experience' in the long run. Others cited continued barriers to working with the family that thwarted progress with EP advice. Some felt unclear on what the recommendations had been, so had not felt able to action any.

Q14. Thinking about the support you received overall, is there anything you would change about the support process, either in school or working with an educational psychologist?

In line with the research aim of exploring what is helpful for teachers when dealing with challenging behaviour in the classroom, this open question invited them to make suggestions for aspects they would change about the support process.

Not all participants responded in detail. Of the 8 who did, their suggestions included:

- Quicker turnaround from meeting an EP to receiving recommendations
- More “strategies” or tangible steps, a directive approach
- Better opportunity to follow up directly with the educational psychologist
- One participant cited emotional support as a desired outcome.

Three participants said there was nothing they would change about the process.

Q15. If yes (there was something you would change about the process), were you able to share this feedback with anyone?

This question checked whether respondents had been able to feed back their views about changes they would make to the process, and to whom they had addressed these comments. 9 responses were made, despite only 8 participants previously declaring that there were changes they might make.

- 55% of participants had not been able to share their feedback on the process with anyone.
- 45% had been able to share feedback at school, this included to a head teacher, a leadership team, a SENCo, and to an educational psychologist in turn.

4.1.2. Summary: Quantitative Data Analysis

The data collected via the online questionnaire provided an overview of a modest sample of 11 teachers’ experiences of requesting and receiving support with ‘challenging’ or ‘problem behaviour’. The findings are summarised as follows:

- Participants in this sample were equally likely to encounter difficult behaviour at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- SENCOs were cited as a key figure to contact when initially seeking support with a behaviour problem, but it varied.
- Participant teachers all felt confident in how to escalate behaviour concerns in their respective schools, and felt the response to this was timely. The majority of participants reported waiting half a term before a referral was made to an EP, with some waiting a month, and one waiting a whole term.
- Participants typically indicated that they received support in school, with the most common form of support entailing a detailed exploration of their concerns, and the least common form of support being emotional support. The greatest variation between participants related to the perceived amount of practical support or resources received in school.
- Of the support offered within their school, participants reported provision of strategies, and discussing a difficulty in detail, were most helpful.
- Of the participants, more than a third (>33%) reported not having an opportunity to discuss concerns with parents prior to referral, whereas about 25% met with parents several times.
- Participants reported that they were able to agree with parents on behaviour as a cause for concern 54% of the time; therefore 46% did not achieve this.
- The most common problem behaviour resulting in a referral was 'on-going disruptive behaviour', seen in 90% of cases. 50% of respondents reported physical aggression, and 50% reported confrontational behaviour. Only 20% indicated that a referral was prompted by a failure to meet agreed behaviour targets. 20% of participants reported asking for an EP referral to be made.

- Participants reported a range of emotions during the process of requesting and receiving support and input. These emotions included hope, frustration and anxiety. Emotions reportedly varied at different stages of the process.
- Participants reported that the most common form of support they received from educational psychologists was a detailed discussion of their concerns. The greatest variation among participants related to the extent to which educational psychologists helped them to discuss concerns with parents, followed by the extent to which practical support was offered. Participants did not all report positive outcomes from engaging with an educational psychologist; this related to clarity of outcomes, and perception of concrete actions being suggested.
- Participants reported that changes they would make to the process included quicker turnaround from meeting EP to feedback, and better follow-up with the EP. Approximately half of participants had been able to feed this back in school.

4.1.3 Next Steps

Information gathered from the questionnaires was informative but invited further investigation. Participants' responses to each item of the questionnaire showed marked variation that it was not possible to probe further, including the types of behaviour difficulties that led to a referral, and the perceived amount of support received. This variation highlighted the multiple factors at play in the context of each referral; variation was also seen in terms of the emotional impact of the process on teachers, and in terms of the outcomes and effectiveness of that support. In –depth exploration of these factors was indicated, in the form of semi-structured interviews with further participants.

4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis – Thematic Analysis

Section 4.2 outlines the findings of the second phase of data collection. For this phase, six teachers were interviewed about their experiences of requesting and receiving support with difficult behaviour. The data collected were analysed using the thematic analysis template proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006). A sample of transcribed interview is included in Appendix 7.

The major themes are summarised at the outset of the section, as seen in Figure 4.2.1 below. Each major theme is presented and detailed within a separate sub-section of the chapter.

The sub-themes contained within each major theme are outlined, and discussed in turn.

The themes are summarised as follows:

4.2.1 Summary of Main Themes

Following several iterations of grouping codes and refining themes, the following major themes were identified across the data:

- Theme 1: Bearing the Weight
- Theme 2: Need for validation
- Theme 3: Relationships
- Theme 4: Resources

These themes are summarised in Figure 9 below:

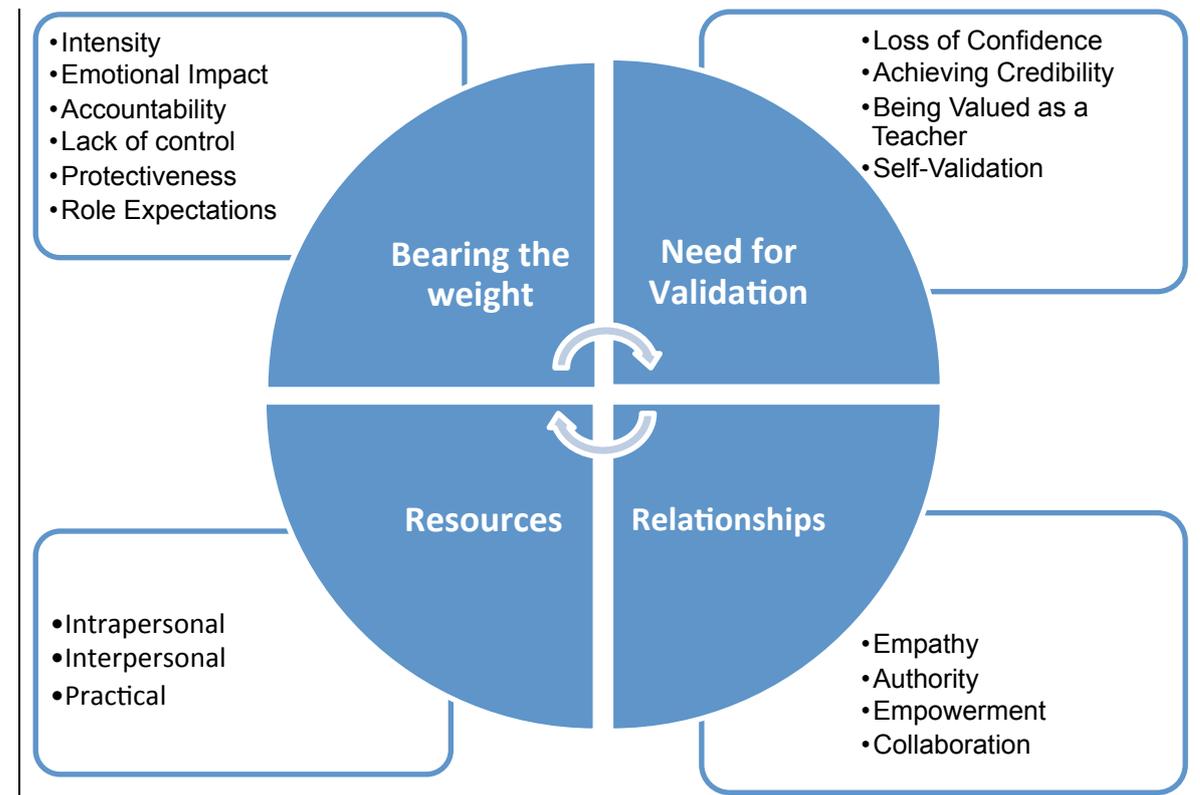


Figure 4.9 – Summary of Main Themes

4.2.2. Theme 1: Bearing the Weight

The theme “bearing the weight” was apparent across all participants’ interviews, experienced in a variety of ways. It relates to the different ways in which dealing with challenging behaviour weighed upon the teacher. The combination of these factors together presented as a burden, or weight, which teachers had to bear.

The following are the subthemes that comprised the theme:

- i. Intensity
- ii. Emotional Impact
- iii. Accountability
- iv. Lack of control
- v. Protectiveness
- vi. Role Expectations

4.2.2.i. Intensity

Certain behaviour incidences seemed particularly salient for participants, but for different reasons; some for their seriousness, and some for their frequency.

At times, the behaviours described presented serious risk to other children in the teacher's care, illustrating keenly the burden upon teachers managing these situations.

“(he) threw a chair, last year, at another one, it bounced off his foreheadand we've had fights in class – all sorts of things.”

Interview 6, p. 2

Some of the behaviours reported were targeted directly at teachers.

“It would have been three or four weeks ago, where the other teacher had to come and get him out because he was, like, full on, on top of me on the floor... he doesn't normally go for me, admittedly, normally if he's going to react violently he reacts violently with other children...”

Interview 2, p.10

Participants cited the accumulation of challenges they have to manage within a single day as a significant stressor.

“Like, even today, by the end of lunchtime I was, like, don't even want to look at you anymore, because he stabbed another child with a fork at lunchtime, and then he came back from lunch and kicked someone in the face straight away on the way in, and then he hit someone else on the hand with a bit of, like, metal stuff that he was playing with, and then, what did he do, oh, then he threw flour all over the floor...”

Interview 2, p.10

While the examples shared here probably represent the extreme end of the spectrum of behaviours described, they illustrate the intensity of the difficulties that the participants may be confronted with within the course of a school day.

4.2.2.ii. Emotional Impact

The participants all shared negative ways in which these behaviours impacted them emotionally. Some shared the 'exhausting' nature of being constantly worried and on guard:

"It's just quite draining more than anything else... there was an anxiety surrounding any time when he was in, because he had the capacity and the... often he wanted to, for whatever reason, whatever trigger it was, or whatever was happening with him, he wanted to come in and hurt other children or hurt adults. So the anxiety of the period before it happening just, like, kind of, not being in control of it at all and not knowing how to predict it either"

Interview 4, p. 1

Managing challenging behaviour invoked a variety of feelings, including vulnerability, anger and guilt. These emotions also competed with each other. For example, alongside moments of feeling genuinely overwhelmed and upset, teachers also had to contend with the wider sense of feeling responsible for their class, not just a single student:

"There were times where I would walk out of the room and go next door... and I'd say, "he's driving me mad", and I don't want to shout but I can feel it coming... and then it was guilt, that was the other thing that would come into it, it was the guilt of realising that at the end of the day sometimes that I've been so wrapped up in Darren... and it's taken away so much time from the other 29 kids".

Interview 3, p.9

"You're just absolutely livid and, like, I can see why, like, it's like, God, without making it sound like a child protection issue because it's not, like, you can dislike him, it can become... you can sort of dislike him then you feel guilty for thinking, "goodness, I really, really can't look at you today."

Interview 2, p.9

4.2.2.iii Accountability

The participant teachers all shared a sense of ‘accountability’; the ways in which they are responsible for the children. Sometimes this was conveyed as a sense of being apologetic to other adults for the child:

“And I just thought ‘Oh no, not again’, that’s what I thought...
... On the one hand I think, ‘Oh God, why is she doing this’, like, I
always have to explain her behaviour to people”

Interview 1, p.15

Conversely teachers also had a sense of feeling accountable to the child themselves, and their future outcomes:

“he wants to have friends, he just can’t seem to treat them very nicely,
and I think that’s quite sad...
...people won’t want to play with him because they know they’re going
to end up getting hurt, and it’s about tackling it now while it’s still tackle-
able”

Interview 2, p. 13

Teachers also experienced a sense of accountability to the class, who were equally sharing the impact:

“Yes, because it shouldn’t... I shouldn’t let any ‘in the moment’ anxiety
of having to... am I... I have to make sure he’s safe, okay, he’s all right.
And then I can’t let it affect the way I’m teaching the children.”

Interview 4, p.18

4.2.2.iv Lack of control

A feature that contrasted with the teachers’ sense of accountability for the student, for the class, and to other staff, was the lack of control they often experienced:

“And I think in a situation like that, even if I’d had a little reward scheme or a chart or anything that we’ve tried, I don’t think in that situation it would have done anything because he’d made that choice not to want to do it...

...It’s disheartening, because you sit there and he’s...

...you just think “I know you can do better than this, and I know you’re not trying, and until you want to try, until you honestly take on board what I’m saying and listen and try... I’m not getting through to you””

Interview 3, p. 7

Interestingly, lack of control was not just experienced in relation to the behaviours themselves. The overall process undertaken in school to respond to and deal with a child’s challenging behaviour effectively made teachers ‘passengers’ at times:

“it sounds like the most boring book in the world – about the Italian train system as a metaphor for Italy as a whole in terms of it being corrupt and... ..In terms of my maybe a metaphor for the whole situation is just of a very, very slow train and it just stops at every tiny little stop, and you can’t... you don’t even know why it’s happening, like, no one’s getting on, no one’s getting off, nothing is happening at every stop but it seems that it’s stopping there anyway, and it’s just going very, very slowly”.

Interview 4, p.17

Given that teachers are expected to be ‘in control’ in their classroom, it is remarkable the variety of ways ‘loss of control’ featured in teachers’ accounts, and this all contributed to the burden they were expected to bear.

4.2.2.v. Protectiveness

A counterintuitive but common theme was the sense of protectiveness or sympathy teachers expressed for the child who was the cause of so much frustration for them:

“I actually feel bad for the child (laughs) because I hate it that they [supply teachers] always pick her out, and I know, I know exactly what she’s like, I almost sometimes... sometimes I don’t want to warn them about it because I don’t want them to then target her”.

Interview 1, p. 8

“it’s then when you do really realise, like, this kid’s got a tough life. And you do, you can’t help, I mean, I know it’s been said, “oh [to herself] you care too much about them, you get too involved”, but I think there’s times when you realise, actually, it’s tough, he’s got it tough”.

Interview 3, p.23

4.2.2.vi Role Expectations

Role Expectations is a theme that underpins many of the subthemes around ‘bearing the weight’, in terms of what individual participants were trying to achieve, and what wider pressures they were under. Each of the participants was trying to achieve multiple goals: the progress and achievement of the class, ensuring their enjoyment of school, supporting struggling learners, and so on.

Teachers reported feeling under implicit pressure to ‘cope’, or to deal with challenges, which impacts their practice, with some teachers feeling pressure to maintain appearances:

“So some teachers can work like that, and then some teachers can be quite ... more lenient, in the sense that they don’t want to send their children out, or to be seen as a teacher who has to send their children out all the time”.

Interview 5, p.8

Sometimes external expectations were not just implied, they were made explicit. One participant described the lack of support they felt from their deputy head:

“this year, I’ve been dictated to, I’ve been told “this is how you’re going to do it, and if you don’t do it this way then you’re going to face the consequences for it”...

... when I had that observation I was, like, all I wanted to say was, “yes, but it’s Darren, and actually if he got out of his seat once in a lesson I’m quite chuffed’, I’m quite pleased, I feel like I’ve made some kind of improvement”.

Interview 3, p.14

Teachers emphasise the opinion of their classes as much as appraisal from their employers, thus placing another expectation on themselves:

“also they’re missing out on me being a bit of a nice teacher because... (both laugh)...I feel like I’m raising my voice and talking about negatives so often that they’re going to get to the end of the year and think, “well, I didn’t really like that teacher, she was really negative all year”, and I just didn’t want that to be the way it was”.

Interview 3. P.10

One teacher described being challenged by a student for not being as ‘strict’ as the student was used to, but striving to stay true to the teacher they wanted to be:

“So he was like, OK, if you’re being nice to me, you’re soft, so I’m going to just do this. That’s not teaching, the teaching should be about someone shouting at you, barking orders at you – and he got that at home, and he got that at school, as well, being told to do the right thing all the time. So he couldn’t handle it with me, so ... “Oh, OK, well”, I said that, I kind of explained it to him, and said, “no, this is my style of teaching””.

Interview 5, p.7

4.2.2.vii Summary: Bearing the Weight

The subthemes detailed above depict the interacting social, emotional and professional demands experienced by teachers, conveyed as a 'weight' upon them.

Teachers experienced a variety of negative emotional responses, however not solely negative towards the child; some more surprising responses included the feelings of protectiveness and empathy they reported towards the student in question.

While much frustration appears to result from the aim of trying to 'manage' the child's behaviours, there is also frustration stemming from feeling prevented from being the teacher they would 'like to be', challenging their teacher identity.

A further finding is that while teachers experience 'behaviours' as challenging in and of themselves, there is also evidence of challenges and frustrations experienced beyond this, through the actions of colleagues and the wider school system.

4.2.3. Theme 2 - Need for Validation

The next major theme identified was the need for validation. Validation in this sense refers to acknowledgement, a need for recognition of the challenges they faced, and also positive feedback on their practice in response to these challenges. The following subthemes were identified around the need for validation:

- i. Loss of Confidence
- ii. Achieving Credibility
- iii. Being Valued as a Teacher
- iv. Self-Validation

4.2.3.i. Loss of Confidence

Loss of confidence was found in all of the teachers' accounts of requesting additional support. This was evident through examples of ruminating on possible causes of behaviour, second-guessing themselves and experiencing self-doubt:

“Well, it goes from frustration to just... sort of, “I don't know what to do”. I'm lost, like, how do I get through to this child because I've not really, you know, I haven't been teaching for years and years but I've not... even with other children, if they're low or they have some issues you can generally get through to them on some level, but I don't know if it's because she started late and it's been hard to make that as much of a connection with her as I do with the other children, or what, but I'm just, yes, I feel lost with it, really, on how to help her”

Interview 1, p.5

It was possible to feel further deskilled by others finding success with the challenges with which they were encountering difficulty:

“And at first because I'd asked them how was she... at first they'd say, yes, she's an angel, no problem, she sits there... and I'd think, oh, God, why is she like that in the class? “

Interview 1, p.14

Sometimes having 'specialists' come in was an invalidating experience, as often, difficult behaviours did not present themselves:

“Did you see something, am I going...” like you said, “am I going mad?”... ...they could witness her on a good day, observe on a good day, and then they think nothing's wrong with her”.

Interview 1, p.21

However, the process of having outside professionals come to observe also had the power to help teachers feel reassured about their practice:

“there’s an element of reassurance for ... on my part, if someone else has said it ... seen it ... said it or seen it, then I’m not the ... ah, it’s not my teaching that’s at fault, it’s the child. Or not necessarily the child, but ... it’s not my teaching”

Interview 6, p.15

4.2.3.ii Achieving Credibility

Accounts such as the one above illustrate the potentially treacherous nature of the referral process for teachers, whereby a process designed to provide additional support and advice can become an exercise in trying, and possibly failing, to have their concerns validated:

“every time he was observed, he kind of sensed it, so he went back in with himself, and was doing his work, and kept it a low profile in the class, and they went, “oh, what’s wrong with this child, he’s not doing anything?” And we went, “no – you should read what he’s been doing”. (Interviewer: Ok – how did you feel?) A bit annoyed. Yeah, cos it’s like you haven’t seen him in his true light”.

Interval 5, p.15

In response, perhaps, to the need for validation of their trials and their efforts, teachers were seen to engage in negative attributions about children; where they assigned subversive tendencies to their behaviour:

“He’s always really bloody well behaved when she comes in. Like, it’s ridiculous how well behaved Ben can be for the hour that (EP)’s in, whereas, I would actually quite like it, like, if it was a day”

Interview 2. p.37

The frustration around brief observations not capturing the nature of the difficulties they were experiencing was demoralising for some of the teachers, who indicated that the process had potentially left them feeling not respected:

“it seemed like a fairly pointless exercise to come in and see him for 40 minutes, and, I mean, either rely on the testimony of the people who work with him or, or do a proper observation schedule. I didn’t... what was in the middle of taking what we’re saying into account but observing him once for whatever reason just seems a bit... ...Pointless”.

Interview 4, p.11

There were examples of teachers feeling anxious about their credibility with parents or colleagues. In one case a parent was felt to be challenging the teacher’s credibility to the extent that they tried to engage the mother to observe in the classroom with them. This suggests a need for validation of their struggle to teach this parent’s child, rather than a validation of their practice in managing it per se:

“I was more than willing to have mum in the class for the day and say to her, look, I don’t want you to get involved, I don’t want you to be with him, I just want you to sit and watch the day... ...but I think she needs to see him in a contextual situation where she can see the behaviour of the other children and see the difference of the other children.”

Interview 2, p.6

However the participant in Interview 2 later also proceeded to critique what they described as a political and judgemental working environment:

“I think people can get quite judgemental, like, of... especially, like, the girl who was in before me wasn’t coping very well and also wasn’t necessarily saying anything, whereas, I’m quite brutally honest about exactly what’s happening... ... it’s all political, isn’t it, like, in schools, let’s be honest. It’s a very female dominated industry and a lot of

people have children already and judge differently depending on what they've got at home..."

Interview 2, p.31

This excerpt provided an interesting dimension to 'credibility', highlighting how an individual's 'life experience' such as having children, can confer credibility. This creates a potential hierarchy among teachers, and teachers and parents.

The idea of status being related to credibility was evident in Interview 4, where the participant felt disempowered by the decisions being made by the senior leadership team regarding expulsion of a student who had punched them.

"I can understand the decisions that are being made and I can understand the pressure that leadership are under, and, you know, statistics ruling everything, one of which is an explicit measuring of performance based on behaviour as a statistic, but, at the same time, there have to be times when you have to use it [expulsion], surely, otherwise it's not worth it".

Interview 4, p.14

Difference in status is a fundamental feature of the additional support process, that involves referral to a 'specialist' or an 'expert', which is how specialist teachers and educational psychologists tend to be positioned.

"Yes, to see what she thought because it's all about, you know, you just want to check, am I, is it an issue? Is it me making an issue of it? I knew it was an issue but you just don't know if other people are going to...
...Yes, 'am I going mad?' "

Interview 1, p.20

4.2.3.iii Being Valued as a Teacher

This sub-theme relates to the ways in which teachers need to feel valued as well as respected. The process of seeking support is not always validating for the teacher involved through their role in the process not being valued:

“we’re the ones who are referring them. We’re the ones that have the issue of dealing with them everyday like, once it’s referred not that you’re out of the loop but you are, kind of, out of the loop until they’ve made their decision and decide what they’re going to do...”

Interview 1, p. 22

Some, but not all, participants experienced strained relationships with parents, resulting in an unmet need for the parent to value their efforts:

“I’m investing my energy and my time in what is best for your child and you can’t see it at all. And I’m like... that makes me rage more than his behaviour does, to be fair, because I think it’s really unfair”

Interview 2, p.27

A need to be valued, rather than just acknowledged, was also conveyed, for example through pleas to senior colleagues for more input:

“I’ve said to, like, the deputy head a few times, will you just come down and just sit in and see what you think, or, like, at least observe, because (EP) said, like, I can’t really suggest any more than you’re already doing, and I was, like, f*** sake”.

Interview 2, p.35

This suggests that a primary need was recognition of the struggle to manage the behaviour. Latterly, the teacher did reflect proudly on the positive feedback:

“but then I felt really good because (X) told me ‘oh you’re doing a really good job with him’ and like no one had told me that before”

Interview 2, p.37

The need to be recognised as being ‘good’ at what they do was present in some of the participants’ interviews:

“when I was in secondary school, that if you spoke to them now would say, oh, do you remember Mr ... or do you remember Miss ... they really sorted me out because it was them that, like, really put, like, a boundary in place for me”

Interview 2, p.14

This account contrasted with another teacher’s experience that highlighted that teachers can feel undervalued by students:

“Yeah. [Learning mentors are] on their side, where teachers, you’re kind of on the other side, you’re kind of seen as the kind ... you can be seen as the bad guy, cos you’re going to have to make them do all this boring work and stuff, like that ... and you’re the one who’s always nagging, and telling them off, and sending them out”.

Interview 5, p.21

Being positioned as the ‘bad guy’ who makes them do boring things is not suggestive of feeling valued. This highlights the barriers to building relationships that teachers may experience, which shall be discussed in a later theme.

4.2.3.iv Self-Validation

The interview process meant teachers engaged in a process of reflection, a retelling of the challenging events that had led to seeking additional support. This

resulted in moments of self-validation where, with hindsight, teachers were able to acknowledge things they had achieved, and that they had done the best they could.

One participant was able to reflect on the difference in approach they would take now, having developed a greater sense of confidence in their role and abilities:

“...probably I would have been more sure of myself, the stuff that we ... to have tried out... if I was experienced enough, I would have known to start that from the beginning... I would have done a lot more, like support with him and his mum, and stuff like that, or I would have tried to ... and, yeah, more confidence in my ability with him”

Interview 5, p.20

This suggests that expertise matters to teachers. Others, however, provided a contrasting source of validation for the teacher that belied the role of expertise:

“Having said that, he sounds significantly worse now [in PRU], so whatever we were doing ... seems to have been doing something positive.

(Interviewer: How does it feel hearing that?)

The first time I heard, I was a little ... I was really happy. Cos they said, “we don’t know how he stayed in mainstream education for so long”. Yes – **we** kept him.”

Interview 6, p.18

4.2.3.v – Summary: Need for Validation

Working in a climate that places a variety of demands on them undermined teachers’ confidence in their ability to fulfil their role. This was associated with a variety of negative emotions and thought processes, including fear of not being believed (credibility), and feeling unvalued and powerless. Loss of confidence and anxiety meant they had to pursue reassurance via external sources, through feedback. Acknowledgement was not sufficient, teachers needed to feel valued

by colleagues, parents and students. Teachers showed the ability to self-validate, through reflecting on the situation, but often after the fact.

4.2.4 Theme 3: Relationships

The theme 'relationships' reflects the complex social relationships that the participants experienced, and how these complexities shaped their experiences. The participants' relationships with those around them affected their access to encouragement and reassurance, advice and resources.

Each participant displayed different patterns of relating to others. However there were overarching features of these patterns that applied across participants. The main dimensions identified were:

- i. Empathy
- ii. Authority
- iii. Empowerment
- iv. Consultation

4.2.4.i. Empathy

The subtheme of empathy in relationships relates to how effectively the people involved were able to relate to one another as individuals, and to acknowledge one another's needs.

It implies the responsiveness of participants not only to the child, but also other stakeholders in the process. This responsiveness had an impact on how the participant coped with demands experienced with the child they were teaching.

For Participant 1, difficulties in relating to the child and getting to know them led to a loss of motivation to engage the child:

"I don't want to say I ignore her because I do work with her, but I feel like, em, you know, perhaps during independent times I'll access other

children rather than her, or leave her more to be independent and accessing her activities.”

Interview 1, p.6

Whereas getting in to the mindset of their pupils and relating to them was a common strategy for Participant 2, who was able to modify their practice as a result of seeing the world from the pupils' point of view:

...“what do you think you're doing?” is a really abstract question and they have absolutely no idea what you're talking about... it's not that they don't know what you're saying but, like, 'why?' questions are really very difficult...

Interview 2, p.34

Empathy enabled patience and perseverance for other participants too, who were able to acknowledge that a relationship was important but would take time:

“You've got to build up a relationship with him, you've got to decide what that relationship is with him straight away, and be prepared that it takes Darren a long time to adjust. So it's not taking a term to get for you to do the right thing, it's taking a term for Darren to adjust.”

Interview 3, p.11

The process of fostering empathy and understanding in relationships over time provided participants and their students with a better platform to communicate:

“Actually, he's openly admitting something, or he's come back after something's happened and said, actually, that's not quite what happened... ...I feel like they've done more for him because we've talked about it and he's understood that experience.”

Interview 3, p.4

The participants' efforts to see the world from their pupils' perspective were not always acknowledged or reciprocated by others. This led to situations where there was a mutual lack of empathy in relationships, for example with parents:

"I could feel myself getting angry, I thought if I speak I'm going to say something really silly. But she said, "oh, he's just a normal boy ...
...I don't really see why all of this is necessary to be honest"

Interview 2, p.26

Likewise negative affective states impacted their ability to relate to others effectively:

I found it very, very difficult to deal with the mum, because, even during parents' evening, which is meant to be ten minutes long at the most, she would exhibit all of the behavioural difficulties that I've witnessed in Callum...

Interview 4, p.7

Some participants reported that their role as teacher created a barrier to relating to their students more effectively, as students could not empathise with the expectations on the teacher to observe certain behaviour policies:

"... you can be seen as the bad guy, cos you're going to have to make them do all this boring work and stuff, like that ... and you're the one who's always nagging, and telling them off, and sending them out."

Interview 5, p.21

Another impact of lack of empathy described was where senior management expressed a lack of awareness or appreciation for the challenges being experienced by the participant. This led some participants to limit their communications with them, because they showed lack of empathy:

“Because it [planning behaviour support] just needs to be done at this level, and just be a conversation between a class teacher and the SENCO and any other teachers involved, because I think further up than that there’s an attitude of just get on with it”

Interview 3, p.15

4.2.4.ii Authority

Authority represents the ways in which individuals sought to have power over another, to influence them and their behaviour. Interestingly this dynamic was not exclusive to the teacher and the child, but also affected senior managers’ relationships with teachers, and parents’ relationship with the teachers.

The participants reported multiple challenges to their implied authority. A typical experience was to feel challenged by a loss of authority over the child:

“And I think in a situation like that, even if I’d had a little reward scheme or a chart or anything that we’ve tried, I don’t think in that situation it would have done anything because he’d made that choice not to want to do it”

Interview 3, p.7

This experience illustrates the limits of ‘authority’ as a tool to manage that situation. However good behaviour management was often seen as synonymous with control and wielding authority:

“It teaches them that actually, no I don’t care if you’re up there 25 times, if I want you to line up in silence then that’s what you need to do. Whereas, now, I don’t ever have to send them back to the carpet.”

Interview 2, p.43

Authority was experienced differently between participants, and across contexts; for some, for example, this extended to physical authority:

“I think he realised I was able to physically restrain him a lot more than the other people that worked with him would... for months he didn't really end up... he didn't go for me.”

Interview 4, p.3

Authority, in the sense of exerting power over the children in the class, was an expectation placed on the participants in their role. On-going behaviour difficulties therefore were often attributed to the participants' perceived inability to wield power over the child, as seen in this exchange with a child's parent:

“I think with me, she was quite positive, apart from, I think, near the end, she kind of thought it was me, that I wasn't strict enough. Like I wasn't strong enough a teacher”

Interview 5, p.10

However the participants frequently identified that effective management of the situation entailed much more nuanced relating than purely establishing authority over a child presenting with behavioural difficulties. In short, authoritative stances were promoted but participants often recognised their limits.

4.2.4.iii Empowerment

Ironically, the expectation placed on participants of having to control a child's behaviour in line with a school's behaviour policy, often coincided with a loss of power. Some participants experienced disempowerment through the management styles they encountered:

“anything that happens has to go through the head-teacher, and, actually, I find I report less than I would...

...because I know I will get pulled up for not having sent him to the head's office, which I don't think is [effective]”

Interview 2, p. 29

The management style in this example resulted in barriers to communication for the teachers, not having their voice acknowledged, or not empowering them to make decisions in the classroom.

Unequal or non-democratic relationships disempower teachers in their role of 'managing' behaviour, as indicated by the phrase 'if they asked me' below:

"Some of the things I don't... some of the things that they have in place for him and some of the, like, if they asked me, I don't think it's helpful, I don't think it's good enough."

Interview 2, p.30

Disempowerment also resulted from the process of applying for additional support. Most participants' depictions of this process indicated a passive role, suggesting that this was not empowering for them:

"I didn't really know the process I was just going along with it thinking, okay, so someone's going to come in and observe her and then we'll... maybe they can suggest some strategies for me, that's what I was looking for."

Interview 1, p.12

Educational Psychology support was often administrated and discussed outside of the classroom, via the SENCO, which was neither supportive nor empowering for the teacher:

"They would come and ask the same questions, and they would do the same observation then talk to me afterwards in pretty much the same way. I mean, in terms of their findings I wasn't, kind of, wasn't actually in the loop with those."

Interview 4, p.11

Throughout the process of requesting and receiving support therefore, there are example of teachers being disempowered, rather than empowered. This is frequently a function of their relationship to their employer, and the access facilitated to the educational psychologist providing support.

Contrasting examples were seen where participants reported exchanges with staff that helped them to feel more empowered:

“I spoke to my deputy head, who was my mentor through the ... through that... Yeah, he was helpful, like, well have you tried this? And there was more that coming across - that I had more power.”

Interview 5, p. 12

Developing a sense of possibilities helped this participant to feel more empowered, by virtue of a supportive mentoring relationship that offered suggestions, but ultimately recognised the participant’s role in managing the situation.

In the absence of supportive or empowering relationships in school, some participants gave examples of empowering themselves:

“Either friends – I still keep up with a lot of my teacher-training friends...
...and on the Internet, there’s a lot on the Internet, so I think I get the most - when stuck for help, that’s where - I would go outside completely.”

Interview 6, p.25

This contrasts with the disempowering position this participant was otherwise placed in through a relatively anonymous, non-collaborative relationship with an external professional:

“I’ve never really... still don’t know quite what the person does [laughter]... but the school has somebody called (Tom) – I’ve no

idea what his title is ... he comes in, and observes some of the ...
he specialises in boys' behaviour".

Interview 6, p.21

4.2.4.iv Collaboration

The preceding excerpt highlights how lack of collaboration or discussion was often a feature of the working relationships teachers reported with other staff, parents and educational psychologists. This is an issue in terms of teachers' positioning in the behaviour support process, and the importance placed on effective joint working. This would ideally include the child themselves also.

There were lots of examples of how poor communication and lack of collaboration between stakeholders had the potential to exacerbate or prolong difficulties.

This participant noted that lack of consultation on transition had resulted in a teaching assistant being reassigned to support a particular student:

"he hates my TA with absolute...
...but she's going into year two with them next year, and we only just found out today, and if they'd have asked me, and I told her that as well, I said, look, I'm sorry but I just don't think that's a good idea, you're not compatible with each other."

Interview 2, p.11

Lack of consultation is evident in participants' thoughts about the existing behaviour policies in schools, and how effective and relevant they felt they were:

"children not sitting properly is something the school's quite big on, but I couldn't give two hoots about...
...Like for their safety I'd rather they not sit and rock on their chair – but it doesn't bother me if they do."

Interview 6, p.11

While it can be argued that behaviour policies help to promote consistency, or shared understanding, there were multiple of examples of participants having to bypass 'agreed' guidelines, in order achieve greater collaboration:

“the official school policy is to go to the Special Needs Co-ordinator, and then it might get moved on toward the head teacher. What I think most of the staff do is actually speak to the previous class teacher”

Interview 6, p.14

Working collaboratively with families was challenging for various reasons, for example where a teacher and a parent had very different points of view, or a parent was hard to engage, discussion of next steps became difficult to achieve:

“I haven't seen her at any parents' evening. I know she works, she's a working mum and that she does shift work, so it's sometimes very difficult, but I have other parents who will come in the morning or on a different day. There's no... I have no contact with her.”

Interview 3, p.16

“His mum is fairly difficult to deal with anyway but there was, there seemed to be a lack of – of any understanding that what... of trying to show him what he was doing was wrong”

Interview 4, p.7

While the relationship between parent and teacher may understandably be strained, even between teachers and educational psychologists there was a surprising lack of collaboration and discussion.

For some participants lack of discussion meant they were unsure the aim or purpose of an observation, which was anxiety-provoking for them:

“Because if it was a case of they wanted to see how much support Darren needed, then maybe I wouldn’t have been so hands on with him, I would have let him, kind of, show his true characteristics...
...But I wasn’t really clear what they were coming in to do, and I think that’s what made it harder to know how I should present.”

Interview 3, p.21

For others, lack of collaboration over outcomes made them feel invisible or undervalued by the educational psychologist, resulting in ineffective working:

“you saw me do it, so by recommending it, you’ve not watched, you’re not paying attention – you’ve wasted our time, and you’re wasting my time [laughs] doing so – making me read it, making me attend a meeting about it, making ... so I find some of the things really quite ... really not helpful”

Interview 6, p.23

4.2.4.v – Summary: Relationships

This theme aimed to capture several subthemes that emerged around difficulties with communication, status, authority and consideration of others’ points of view. These difficulties were all influenced by how participants relate to other stakeholders in the process, and by extension how those stakeholders related to them.

It is argued that the patterns in the relationships experienced by the participants had a significant impact on their experiences of requesting and receiving help with challenging behaviour. Key features of these patterns were relationships’ power to foster empathy, to reinforce or undermine authority, to empower, and their importance to collaborating effectively with others (communication).

4.2.5 Theme 4 - Resources

The theme 'Resources' was prevalent across interviews, in terms of the advice, strategies and support participants sought to help them manage behaviour in their classroom. When asked what they thought would have been helpful in managing behaviour difficulties, the vast majority explicitly identified obtaining 'resources' as being their aim when seeking support. What was interesting however was the complex ways in which 'resources' manifested themselves in the participants' accounts, suggesting resources exist in a much more complex way than was typically recognised by the participants.

Typically when a participant referred to a 'resource', they were referring to a strategy, method or technique that may have a positive impact on behaviour. Resources implied 'tricks of the trade', and were perceived as being the domain particularly of educational psychologists to provide.

Conversely, participants also frequently indicated where such tricks of the trade did not have long term impact, or were not appropriate; moreover, they also frequently identified the need for wider resources such as personal support or organisational support, which are distinct from standalone strategies that are applied in the classroom. Participants gave lots of examples of how through their own initiatives they sourced forms of support that were important to help them cope, that again were distinct from the narrower conception of 'resources' they seemed to emphasise in their interviews.

The theme 'Resources' therefore is considered in terms of three subthemes:

- i. Intrapersonal Resources
- ii. Interpersonal Resources
- iii. Practical Resources

4.2.5.i Intrapersonal Resources

When participants identified parts of the behaviour support process that had helped, it included having a reason to feel more positive about the situation:

“But there was hope, so when she was observed and the lady wrote the report, she emailed and said, you know, can we have a meeting with the parents to feedback on everything.”

Interview 1, p.19

Other participants showed understanding of what works for them, and adapting the situation to ensure they could take advantage of those strengths:

“that’s why it’s best for me to just be honest about what’s happening in the room, exactly how I’m dealing with it, exactly what’s been said, because that gives other people more knowledge about, okay, right, well...”

Interview 2, p.32

The same participant also mentioned the importance of moving forward:

“my rule is even if I take it home with me I don’t bring it back the next day. So I don’t, like, I can live with taking it home and bitching to my mum or my partner or whatever but I never it bring it back in the next day.”

Interview 2, p.41

Participants described moments of insight that helped them to recognise that their own personal resources probably gave them more influence over the situation than the strategies that may have been suggested:

“it became quite clear straightaway that, actually, what made more difference was just me and my- how I controlled myself and dealt with situations...”

Interview 3, p.3

Some accounts indicated situations where participants had lost so much faith in the additional support process that they felt they had no choice but to remain detached from it to maintain their peace of mind:

“it wasn’t really a conscious decision so much as I realised that I could either become very much invested in it and bang my head against a brick wall, and just gouge my eyes out with frustration, or I could try and deal with Callum as best I could and answer any questions that were necessary in the process but ultimately just let that take its course.”

Interview 4, p.15

The same participant acknowledged that such a stance might appear to suggest a lack of commitment to change:

“it can come across as not caring, but I don’t think it is, because I still care about what happens it’s just that the ability to care about something and then the ability for it to make you upset are two very different things.”

Interview 4, p.18

In this respect the participant gave an example of how setting boundaries, in this case emotional boundaries, was an important resource that had enabled them to cope. However in such situations intrapersonal resources had limits to their helpfulness.

4.2.5.ii Interpersonal Resources

Participants gave examples of needing the support of other people in their social network, both personal and professional, to cope with the demands presented by certain behaviours:

“it gets to that point there should be some sort of mentor system or buddy system in place for the teacher to be able to say, ‘right, okay, do you know what, don’t worry, I’m your mentor and we don’t have

to have an appointment, we don't have to have, you know, but come and find me.”

Interview 2, p.33

Often this sort of interpersonal support did not need to be formalised, but participants appreciated when it was there. One participant recognised the importance of having someone help them to remain positive, in this case the classroom teaching assistant:

“and if I've not been in she'll often report back to me. But she also says, no, she was, you know, she does the positive side as well, it's not always bad.”

Interview 1, p.17

Participants often cited people from their personal network as providing support, such as partners, friends, parents:

“I think it was a mixture, I think with myself, I would probably go to my girlfriend and vent about the day, and think, oh, what am I doing? And then my mum...
...Cos she's kind of ... her experiences, of her raising me, and stuff like that.”

Interview 5, p.11

Of interest in the previous excerpt, is that it mentioned both the 'venting' associated with emotional frustration, but also the comfort of a familiar, supportive communication partner.

That reassurance was often sought from outside the school team, which further suggests the need for a safe, non-judgemental space rather than 'expertise':

“sometimes I'll ask my mum, like, what she might have done, or, like, I'll say to my mum, this happened today and this is what I did, what do you think? Like, just to see if she thinks, like, if it was her, like, if it was my

brother would she appreciate the teacher doing the same thing, if that makes sense?”

Interview 2, p.20

For some participants having an educational psychologist involved provided partial interpersonal support:

“It was helpful at the beginning, like, yeah, I’ve got something, at least I feel like someone outside is coming ...[I: Why was that helpful?] ...I think it was the case that it wasn’t just me, that someone else ... it was the case that, oh, there’s a problem that someone outside had to come and deal with, so it isn’t ... the kind of the problem was, it wasn’t just some ... me suffering alone.”

Interview 5, p.17

What was interesting about this comment is that it also implies not being ‘alone’, the participant looked forward to someone coming to help carry the burden.

4.2.5.iii Practical Resources

Practical resources relates to the measures, processes and policies that were described by teachers. These appeared to group into four separate areas:

- Co-ordination of support
- Time and space
- Leadership
- Knowledge and experience

Co-ordination of support

‘Co-ordination of support’ highlights how despite receiving multi-agency support with tackling difficult behaviour, participants experienced poor co-ordination and communication within the process. The majority of participants had interacted with a wide range of professionals on an on-going basis.

“you’ll fill out the general... CAMHS referral form, and then you suggested what they ... what you think, what service that you need. Then ... yeah, (outreach support) came in and observed him, and an educational psychologist came in and observed him as well.”

Interview 5, p.15

The referral process often suffered from poor organisation and communication:

“it was such a slow moving process anyway that I, kind of, resigned myself to these necessary steps because it’s such a bureaucratic, kind of, mishmash of different agencies and everyone...”

Interview 4, p.11

This ‘mishmash’ effect of multi-agency involvement could sometimes erode the impact and clarity of the recommendations made:

“I think we got a report, I’m not ... I’m ... I think there was a ... I don’t, I’m not 100% certain whether there was a meeting, if there was a meeting, I can’t remember everything that was said. Yeah. That means it most probably wasn’t that great, for me to ...”

Interview 5, p.17

Participants recognised the shortcomings of this process, and highlighted the need for better co-ordination:

“Yes, better communication, I think, just every step of the way... just more clarity on what happens, what are the steps, what’s going to happen next, and, yes, and then ultimately how we’re going to put something in place for them.”

Interview 1, p.23

Time and Space

Teachers report lacking the time and space needed to effect changes, to sustain interventions, or to even stand back and reflect on a problem situation:

“if he’s come to me at break time or lunch time then it’s fine, we’ve got the time to talk about this and explore what’s going on and why it’s good that he’s seen what he’s done wrong, but if that happens in the middle of lesson you can’t do that, so you miss those opportunities.”

Interview 3, p.5

(On withdrawing a student to the same room for timeout and for reward time) “I probably could have come up with something better it’s just that we didn’t have any, we didn’t really have any option for, anything better because the school’s so short on space.”

Interview 4, p.7

The participants in this study also reported problems being released to speak with the educational psychologist, implying this had not been planned in advance:

(On 2nd visit) “Again, it was a crazy day, I think I was out when she first came, so I briefly... she just observed, I didn’t get to really speak to her, I don’t think from what I can remember, I’m sure I didn’t the first time. I just said, “I’m really sorry I’m not in class”. ”

Interview 1, p.20

Leadership

The previous excerpt raises questions about the role of school leadership teams in administering additional support. While participants were typically clear on how to refer for additional support, there were indications of a desire for more in-house leadership and support:

“I think that that would be the difference between having a behaviour mentor and having the SENCO to speak to because, actually, the

SENCO's got far more in terms of children with communication and language difficulties, children with dyslexia."

Interview 2, p.35

This participant made frequent reference to the need for better in-house support from senior members of staff, in terms of supervision and advice:

"sometimes it's really good to be able to, like, go to your, like, head or deputy head and go, right, this week we've done this, this, this and this, and at my wit's end I'm literally going home crying because I can't cope, what do you think... what's the next thing?"

Interview 2, p.32

They also pointed to how supportive having clear leadership around behaviour management could be:

"the school that I was at (previously) had a very consistent behaviour management policy that was, like, followed through the whole school from nursery to year six, and they always had the same behaviour management strategy in every year group, and every teacher did it and I think it made a real difference learning that way."

Interview 2, p.2

Knowledge and Experience

Participants placed a lot of value on the role of experience, and the knowledge that they perceived resulted from this experience.

"having conversations with my ... the fellow Year 3 teacher, and he would be like ... it was good, because he was more experienced... so it was like, OK, I know it's tough, but you ... this has happened to me – so it's kind of good to talk to someone in the same ..."

Interview 5, p.12

Experience was reassuring as others' experiences provided hope for the participants that they too would get to grips with the presenting difficulties. However others looked to the support system for much more specific insight and direction:

“Do you know what it is that I wanted, actually, even if I didn't get an extra adult I could have used my TA or used me, you know, to do it, I wanted some suggestions of what activities or what do you do, you know, to help children with this issue?”

Interview 1, p.24

Other participants described being disappointed when they did not receive alternative strategies in their feedback from the educational psychologist, and instead were validated for their efforts:

“you're trying this and you're trying that, which was really, really nice, there were some compliments in there, which was lovely to hear, but then I was, like, but what else, I need something from you.”

Interview 3, p.20

“there will always be something you could do, or something that you could do differently, or that you could improve on to make you better... And I think because I have that that I was expecting, like, a list of, like, alternatives”

Interview 5, p.12

Overall participants reported an absence of direction or constructive feedback, which is what they expected from the process; this often left them feeling cheated or anxious. They were focused on obtaining practical support in terms of 'strategies'.

4.2.5.iv Summary – Resources

Resources for all the participants was a by-word for ‘strategies’, also synonymous with tools, methods or ‘tricks of the trade’ that would help them to change a child’s behaviour. However, in terms of their practice, their expressed needs, and the challenges they experienced in accessing support, ‘resources’ could also represent the various steps taken by participants to manage or cope in the situation, or to compensate shortcomings in the support they received. Examples of this include cultivating their own supervision through talking to peers, or even self-talk to help contain difficult emotions they were experiencing in the classroom. This led to the theme ‘resources’ being presented in intrapersonal, interpersonal and practical terms.

Educational psychologists, alongside other professionals offering advice, were positioned as being the experts offering ‘practical’ resources; ‘support’ in this sense was therefore identified as being the provision of alternative strategies. This led to disillusionment when such suggestions were not forthcoming, or not felt to be ‘alternative’ enough.

Where suggestions were implemented, participants often commented on the stresses of implementation, such as having the ‘time and space’, and accessing school support to review and adapt strategies as situations evolved. Some participants also identified challenges adhering to a behaviour policy, suggesting such ‘practical’ resources were simply starting points.

The barriers that emerged to accessing or implementing resources was notable, and warrant further reflection. The role of schools to provide leadership in managing behaviour, to liaise effectively with teachers when external professionals visit, and to enable effective follow-up post-involvement was crucial. Educational psychologists aim to be mindful of the complex nature of certain difficulties, however this analysis highlighted just how complex the interacting factors within schools can be.

4.2.6 Thematic Analysis - Summary

The analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with six participating teachers yielded four primary themes:

- Bearing the weight
- Need for validation
- Relationships
- Resources

These themes encapsulated the important factors that emerged from the data relating to teachers' experiences of requesting and receiving support with challenging behaviour.

Bearing the Weight

The data left a strong impression of the burden on teachers managing challenging behaviour in the classroom, which this analysis identified as comprising complex and competing demands.

Need for Validation

The isolation of their role, and the performance pressures experienced, meant teachers were often stressed and downcast about their ability to cope. This highlighted the importance of validation of their efforts, to empower them to continue to problem-solve and persist with the difficulties they experienced. This contrasted with indications from the initial survey, where teachers did not routinely report being exasperated by behaviour or at their "wits' end".

Relationships

Schools theoretically provide access to a wide network of fellow professionals with whom to discuss and reflect upon any difficulties being experienced. However the relationship dynamics experienced with peers, managers, and even parents, were not always conducive to discussion, to accessing

reassurance, or to debating of strategies. Participants gave examples of having to persist with strategies they knew were ineffective; they also commented on the role of getting to know the child they were working with as a strategy, and developing communication with their parents. Supportive relationships were essential to help continue to bear the weight of the difficulties, and came in various forms.

Resources

The idea of 'resources' is pervasive in the data, however this analysis identified a wider classification of resources than was perhaps typically intended by the participants. Resources in terms of this theme related to any practice, relationship or information that helped the participants to cope with managing challenging behaviour in the classroom. Participants gave multiple examples of internal processes that helped them to manage or cope, as well as the external support theoretically offered by schools and educational psychologists.

According to these participants' accounts however, the process of providing support was frequently undermined by a lack of wider practical resources such as good communication, time and space for development, and capacity to implement necessary strategies. Arguably the notion of 'capacity' was present in various guises throughout the data. This relates to participants' emotional resources to contain the stresses (resilience), having the time and space to really get to know key children and reflect on them, and schools' organisational capacity to facilitate effective educational psychologist involvement.

In the following chapter, the presenting themes shall be considered explicitly in relation to the research questions, alongside the findings from the quantitative data, and further critical reflection on the findings shall be completed in relation to the research literature presented in Chapter 2.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5. Discussion

The following section considers the findings of both the questionnaire data and the thematic analysis of interview data in further depth. The implications of the findings for the research questions are considered, and their position in relation to the existing literature is reviewed. Further critical reflection is made on the limitations of the current study, and the implications for future research and the role of the educational psychology in this field are discussed.

- Aims of the research.
- Review of findings in relation to research questions.
- Link back to the literature review.
- Critique of the approach.
- Implication for Future Research / EP Practice.
- Conclusion.

5.1 Aims of the research

The aim of this study was to explore teachers' experiences of seeking support with behaviour they found difficult, disruptive or challenging, in order to better understand the different forms of support that could be afforded them. This therefore assumes a joint responsibility to assist teachers in their role supporting a young person in their class, despite the fact that this sense of joint responsibility is not always shared by the teacher 'at the chalk face' (Miller, 2003). It is precisely why in this study that the experiences of the support given were reviewed from the perspective of the teachers seeking and receiving it, to consider how contemporary research married with the needs they expressed.

5.2 Findings in relation to research questions

The following section summarises the findings from the analysis in relation to the research questions that were posed at the outset of the study, detailed below.

The overarching question posed:

What is helpful for teachers dealing with challenging behaviour in the classroom?

Sub-questions:

1. How do teachers characterise the difficulties of dealing with challenging behaviour in the classroom?
2. In what way did they feel supported by the wider school system and policies/support in place?
3. In what way do educational psychologists offering input on behaviour support contribute to this system?

The following sections review the findings in terms of each research question in turn.

5.3 How do teachers characterise the difficulties of dealing with challenging behaviour in the classroom?

5.3.1 Sources of challenge

Questionnaire data indicated that teachers escalated a range of presenting concerns in search of further support. The most commonly identified difficulties were 'on-going disruptive behaviour', seen in 90% of cases, with 50% of respondents reporting physical aggression, and 50% reporting confrontational behaviour. The emotional state reported by teachers at the point of referral

varied, so while a sense of frustration or even anxiety was reported, it is important to note that escalation or referral did not appear to reflect a 'last resort' measure. Nonetheless thematic analysis highlighted the acute sense of burden shared by teachers in terms of the intensity of the incidences.

5.3.2 Conflicting Accountabilities

The interview data left a strong impression of the complexity of the pressures experienced by teachers in managing challenging behaviour, and how this weighed upon them. Teachers uniformly relayed the sense of conflicting emotions and responsibilities acting upon them. A strong sense that acted upon teachers was the conflicting accountabilities they experienced. They cared for the young person but found it increasingly difficult to keep caring due to other responsibilities, which then occasioned guilt. They acknowledged the vulnerabilities of the young person, but equally felt accountable to not let this person's needs detract from 'the rest of the class'. Teachers were not just affected by factors and events inside the classroom.

5.3.3. Stigma

A sense of social stigma and judgment was shared by some of the teachers, a sense of not wanting to be found lacking by peers or managers. In other cases this sense of judgment was externalized onto managers for their perceived absence of support, leading one teacher to reject accountability. Accountability and feeling deskilled by the presenting behaviours feature strongly in the teachers' accounts of their difficulties, in some cases this leads to chronic stress, or to depersonalization- a feeling of detachment. Therefore there is a role for those supporting teachers to ensure they access timely but appropriate emotional support. The most vital aspect of this appears to be helping them to feel they are not alone through acknowledging joint accountability, and assuring them that they have the support of their school. This difficulty emerged in various parts of the analysis. EPs can contribute to this by reviewing which factors are relevant to the teacher, as well as engaging in joint problem solving so that the sense of being deskilled is shared or alleviated where possible.

5.3.4 Need for control

Teachers reporting difficulties with managing behaviour frequently shared a sense of loss of control with the situation, suggestive of issues related to power. It also echoes discourse issues highlighted by Wright (2009) that the concept of behaviour management suggests that behaviour is something to be controlled by the teacher, which significantly contributes to their burden. Different teachers showed different capacity to manage this burden. Some teachers located their difficulties within the wider school system and the ways it obstructs the teacher from taking control, however this in itself did not create a platform from which to pursue change, or adapt to the needs of a young person. So an area for reflection for EPs is how to explore and address notions of being in control, and how to distinguish this from meeting the needs of the child.

5.3.5 Emotional Investment

Some teachers reported a sense of betrayal when setbacks occurred because of their sense of personal investment. Arguably, greater detachment was a slight protective factor from stress for some teachers through a reduced sense of accountability. However teachers who formed a relationship with the student were more committed to effecting change and achieving better outcomes together. So it is important to consider with the teacher the attachment aspects of the situation, and the importance of developing a relationship with the student beyond their behaviours. For example, empathy for others, such as the child or their parents, could have the effect of energising and motivating the teacher; whereas in cases where the teacher experienced barriers to relating to the child or their parent, a loss of energy and motivation was observed.

5.3.6 Summary of difficulties faced

In summary, teachers characterised the difficulties of dealing with challenging behaviour not in just in terms of the impact of individual behaviours. They spoke uniformly of the often conflicting loyalties they experienced in terms of supporting the needs of the young person, while managing the not inconsiderable impact of their behaviour on the rest of the class, as well as managing the perceived and actual expectations imposed on them from the wider school. Some of the

difficulties described implied lack of agency and empowerment, this resulted from both reduced efficacy in the face of a specific child's needs (described as lack of control), but also in terms of operating within a system that placed counterintuitive expectations upon them. Teachers did not feel uniformly supported within their school as an organisation, and therefore it was the interaction of different factors and events around a young person's behaviour that contributed to the overall burden borne. As outlined in the previous chapter, these findings were captured within the theme "Bearing the Weight". Ways in which school can contribute to managing this weight are explored in the next section.

5.4 In what way did they feel supported by the wider school system and policies/support in place?

5.4.1. Perceived Support

Teachers' experiences of managing difficult behaviour in the classroom were burdensome, but this was mediated strongly by the culture of the school in terms of inclusivity, access by the teacher to social, emotional and instrumental support, and the teacher's sense of efficacy. Schools that did not provide sufficient emotional, social or instrumental support appeared to inhibit the teachers' ability to form a relationship with the student, potentially through affecting their attitude towards the young person's inclusion. Teachers varied in their emotional responses to the presenting behaviours of the young person, but teachers who felt protective of the child or young person inevitably did so at an emotional cost to themselves, which eroded goodwill over time.

5.4.2. Mutual Respect

Teachers often recognised when strategies were not working, but they experienced varying levels of organisational support and did not always feel able to challenge this effectively. While factors such as self-efficacy can be seen to play a role in teachers' management of the situation, the potential of self-efficacy to mediate their difficulties is constrained by their perceived position within the organisation. For example, highly directive leadership can impact their sense of efficacy in moving the situation forward, as hierarchically they feel bound to persist with measures or policies that are not working. In this sense the school

leadership has an important responsibility to ensure that teachers feel valued, that their ideas are given a forum, and that their concerns are shared. The second theme discussed in the thematic analysis, “Need for Validation” captures many of these tensions experienced by teachers having to manage a child’s behaviour in order to ensure effective learning takes place.

5.4.3 Social Capital

Relationships within school have a key role to play in supporting teachers and providing validation, but teachers within this study were found to cultivate different relationships for different purposes – not all seek an outlet for their frustrations and insecurities in school. In fact general consensus indicated the use of family and friends outside of school to process difficult emotions. Positive relationships with colleagues needed to be pre-existing to lend themselves as a viable source of emotional support, and be distinct from any kind of appraisal relationship. Senior leadership in schools had a powerful role to play in terms of validation of the teachers’ efforts, and acknowledging the difficulties to make them feel valued and seen. Responding proactively to the teachers’ difficulties with material resources as well as social support helped the teacher to feel heard, regardless of the impact of the resources themselves.

5.4.4. Sources of Support

Questionnaire feedback from the sample of teachers approached indicated they considered a range of possible people to first share their concerns with, which could highlight that different settings offer different opportunities for supportive discussions in terms of availability or acceptability. Two respondents suggested that the educational psychologist was the first person with whom they discussed their concerns, suggesting either a very hands-off approach within school to exploring the difficulty, or a sense that this was perhaps the first time they felt heard. This provides immediate insights that would prove useful to share with school leadership about ensuring these options are available and acceptable for their staff members. Teachers advocated for mentors, or buddy teachers, someone to bounce ideas off and share frustrations with.

5.4.5 Empathy

Differences in status create barriers when trying to approach someone for support. And this will relate strongly to school ethos and culture in approaching behavior. Schools had a powerful effect on teachers in terms of how they responded to the teachers concerns. Responses that validated the teachers concerned made them feel a valued member of the team and 'credible' enough to have their concerns referred to an external professional. Responses could have a negative impact by being either too directive, resulting in a loss of validation, or too vague, and they did not suggest the concerns were being taken seriously. Overly formal responses were described as being not helpful, equally slow reactions and responses from senior teams also undermined the teacher's sense of coping. This indicates that the organisation meeting the teacher at the level of their concerns and engaging with these, is an important factor in helping a teacher to feel supported and empowered to confront a problematic situation.

5.4.6 Collective Efficacy

One of the tensions borne out in the analysis was between the notion of "authority", that teachers were expected to invoke in the classroom through implementing behaviour policies, with "empowerment", where teachers were given freedom and confidence to suggest and implement their own strategies, and for their reflections to be taking on board in the context of planning. Several teachers described experiencing a lack of voice to discuss or question decisions made by senior members of staff, such as blind adherence to a behaviour policy that perhaps was not suitable for meeting a child's needs, or a SENDCO meeting with an EP without them. A culture that encourages open discussion among colleagues has a better chance of developed a shared understanding of best practice, which will contribute to an overall sense of collective efficacy.

5.5 In what way do educational psychologists offering input on behaviour concerns contribute to this system?

5.5.1 Increasing Capacity

One of the key themes that were highlighted from the data was the idea of "resources", where EPs could be identified as both being a resource, and as providing them. This was seen as their major contribution or purpose, to add

something new and potentially powerful, to take the difficulties away. Educational psychologists were systematically identified with 'strategies' within both the questionnaire and interview data, and teachers frequently reported feeling disappointed if they were not provided with new or different 'solutions' to manage the behaviours following a consultation, as these are a source of 'hope' to them. An interesting contrast to this in the interview data is where teachers notice and appreciate moments they were empowered to decide on the best way forward, as opposed to having strategies proscribed by senior members of staff.

5.5.2. Consultation and Supervision

One of the positives shared by teachers in relation to working with an educational psychologist was the ability to be heard in depth, for someone to pay close attention to their concerns and to acknowledge their difficulties. In light of the need for validation expressed within the interview data, this is a key way in which EPs can contribute to helping the teacher feel supported, and as a result to have the mental space to reflect on the situation. In this way offering a consultation approach has a key role to play in helping increase a teacher's 'resilience' and sense of efficacy, or at the very least to instill a sense of hopefulness. For some schools this could mean embracing a more formal supervision arrangement. However this is not necessarily the expectation teachers have having of meeting an educational psychologist, nor what a piece of work with them may entail.

5.5.3 Advocacy

Another aspect of working with an EP highlighted by the teachers was the conferring of credibility on their concerns, hoping for an ultimate validation from the EP that the behaviours were objectively challenging, and more importantly that they as teachers were not found to be lacking or at fault in any respect. In this way, although some viewed the referral process to an outside agency as helping to achieve credibility, it had implications for their professional identity, in that validation came from without, rather from their own judgement. It is notable that according to the questionnaire data, often the decision to refer occurred further up the leadership ladder. EP support was therefore sometimes directed to the teacher rather than offered or sought, so a key finding from this research is

the various possible positions a teacher engaging in consultation with an educational psychologist about behaviour may occupy.

5.5.4 Negotiating the EP Role

Lots of opportunities for organizational level work were suggested through this research to ensure school processes relating to EPs, as a minimum, run smoothly, and expectations of the process of working with an educational psychologist are clear to all stakeholders. Teachers' relationships and interactions with EPs were time limited, often poorly supported at an organisational level, and framed strongly to access to resources. In other words, the expected outcome for the teacher in meeting an EP was accessing more resources through confirmation of their concern, rather than a primary focus on effecting change. More interesting again was the finding that while EPs typically enabled teachers to discuss their concerns in detail; there was variation in the extent to which this was conducted with the child's parents present.

The finding that teachers' experiences of engaging with an EP suffered by virtue of unclear recommendations being generated, or the outcomes of the assessment not being shared clearly further contributes to the sense that the process schools and EPs engage in is not meeting the needs of teachers efficiently or effectively at the simplest of levels for a considerable proportion of the participants consulted. It is queried how often 'consultation' was seen as an aim of the meeting, as opposed to a one way divulging of strategies and knowledge for the teacher to take away.

5.6 Summary of findings in relation to the research questions

The preceding sections summarise the findings in relation to the research question posed at the outset of the study, "What is helpful for teachers dealing with challenging behaviour in the classroom?".

Key findings included the interconnectivity of factors inside the classroom with factors outside the classroom to contribute to the burden felt by teachers. For example, at school various hierarchical and reporting structures can leave the teacher feeling isolated, disempowered, and even detached from the difficulties.

Although the challenges borne by teachers have an emotional impact, teachers do not typically seek dedicated emotional support at school. However the power of social support was strongly indicated, from management showing faith in their abilities and helping teachers to feel valued, to cultivating mentor relationships with trusted colleagues who can both listen and offer non-directive advice.

Although the presence of the EP was important in this process, there were lots of examples of unsatisfactory collaborations, and a lack of clear expectations about the process being shared. This has implications for both the role of the EP, and how EP assessment and intervention is implemented in the real world.

5.7 Review of findings in context of the literature review

5.7.1 Internal Factors

The findings definitely showed evidence of teachers' attributing causality externally to themselves, as discussed by Miller (2003). Their motivations and beliefs in doing so were not necessarily directly apparent to the researcher, but there were differences perceived between participants in terms of how engaged they were with the child and their outcomes, with one participant reporting significant detachment. While this study would take an eco-systemic position on factors influencing their detachment, this resonates with the work of Scanlon and Barnes-Holmes (2013) in terms of explicit and implicit attitudes to inclusion, and how they might impact the teacher's behavioural responses.

The findings gave a lot of support for the role of self-efficacy in shaping teacher's responses to challenging situations, but they also referenced in several situations the role of the wider school to curtail or undermine the teacher's motivation through overly critical or directive approaches. So increasing self-efficacy was not always the key to moving a stuck situation, but in fact wider school factors affected their ability to respond at times. This resonated with the findings of Armstrong and Hallett (2012) that teachers perceived at times that children were "disabled by educational policy and practice".

What are the implications of this for educational psychologists working with teachers impacted by these internal factors? There is a role for EPs to feedback on or elucidate processes such as attribution to teachers in either a training or consultation capacity, to highlight that these processes are often unconscious, to enable the teacher to be mindful that externalising the root of the problem could inadvertently lead to a sense of not being able to address the problem or bring about change. This would have implications for a teacher's self-efficacy. The findings of the impact of the organisation on a teacher's self-efficacy however suggests the importance of the EP working with the wider school to highlight the importance of self-efficacy and how it can be fostered; findings suggest that this could have a positive effect on teachers at an internal level, providing a good illustration of the interaction between different parts of the system implied by an ecosystemic approach.

5.7.2 Whole-School Factors

Arguably the predominant theme coming from the findings was the importance of whole-school factors in facilitating and supporting a teacher's response to behaviour they find challenging, and how the school culture affects how stigmatising challenging behaviours can feel for a teacher. There is lots of support from this analysis for developing what Roffey (2012) refers to as social capital, so that schools can become more supportive and respectful. This has implications for teacher-wellbeing, which is seen as important for the overall attitude that teachers cultivate towards children whose inclusion requires patience, perseverance and personal investment.

The findings lend support for initiatives such as the Staff Sharing Scheme, albeit as indicated by Jones, Monsen and Franey (2013) that the participants found greater value from applying the framework on a more one-to-one, informal basis, rather than as a formal whole-school forum. Teachers frequently invoked the importance of support staff in the work they perform, and mutual respect among co-workers emerged as an important facet of enhancing teachers' capacity to respond to challenging behaviours, as highlighted by Burton and Goodman (2011). Given the frequent references to issues of power imbalance and credibility, which were also highlighted in Burton and Goodman (2011) from a support staff perspective, there is growing evidence of the key role school

leaders play in maximising their staff potential by reflecting on teachers needs in this respect, and considering how empowered teachers are.

Based upon the findings of the thematic analysis, key elements for school leaders to consider and develop are factors such as making explicit the support available to teachers, and ensuring to foster mutual respect for staff members. This also extends to support staff, but with the proviso that such support should be coordinated via the teacher to ensure enhanced communication. School leaders should reflect on the empathy shown to staff in challenging situations, and also reflect on the presence of staff and pupil voices within school policy development and decision-making. In schools where empathy is harder to develop (potentially due to capacity issues within the system as a whole) schools should consider what additional supports can be offered to teachers to help build capacity. Examples include the staff sharing schemes, and/or access to supervision (discussed further in the next section) for teachers to access additional interpersonal support, and to supplement capacity.

5.7.3 Multi-Agency Support

EPs were positioned at the outset of this study in terms of an outer layer of influence, but the title of this section highlights the fact that EPs are one of many possible external professionals that might engage with a school around behaviour support. However from the point of view of this research the role of the EP is of particular relevance. Findings from Austin (2010) indicated the positive role EPs can have through facilitating skilled intervention such as supervision. In practice it is acknowledged, in line with the perception indicated by most of the participants in the study, EPs are frequently identified with 'provision' and endowed with the expectation that they will have 'strategies' to help prevent or minimise the problem. This suggests that in the context of this study and its locality, raising awareness of an EP's wider ways of working continues to be a focus.

By contrast, the multi-faceted system of intervention described in Hartnell (2010), placed the EP at the heart of a matrix of support including training, group problem-solving, and individual work with children. The findings suggested that

whole-school work was most positively received, but only made up 9% of the overall work completed. 75% of work centred around individual children, showing that while EPs have lots to offer in terms of developing effective work at a whole-school level, it will mean working proactively to move schools away from within-child formulations, which is it argued will require self-efficacy on behalf of the EP.

Developing the range and scope of the work carried out by educational psychologists in schools has the potential to benefit teachers supporting children with challenging behaviours, much beyond the role often ascribed to EPs in terms of traditional casework, where the expectation is of providing 'strategies' which often teachers describe falling short of their expectations and needs. However in order to effectively support teachers, in line with the multi-agency context of this section, neither schools nor EPs should consider the EP role in isolation, rather reflect upon on how the services available to a school can integrate and collaborate effectively to provide for the needs of young people, and the teachers supporting them. This requires a joined-up approach that an EP can be instrumental in encouraging and advocating, through encouraging schools to link professionals. From an ecosystemic point of view, a broader range of EP services has the potential to impact at multiple levels of the system, enhancing the support and impact for teachers, and optimising outcomes for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

5.7.4. Summary of findings in the context of the literature review

This section reviewed the findings of the study in the context of the literature review, which adopted an ecosystemic structure reflecting the different levels at which teacher might access effective support for working with children with behaviours that challenge. These levels were internal factors (with a focus on attitudes to inclusion and self-efficacy), whole-school factors (considering peer support mechanisms, social capital, and leadership), and multi-agency factors in terms of the work EPs carry out in schools and how this meets the needs of the school, the teacher and ultimately the young person. In line with the ecosystemic perspective taken, it is apparent from the findings the interacting nature of factors affecting teacher across the system which serve to impact the effectiveness of the support they access, and as a result can provide to a young person.

5.8 Critical reflections on the approach taken in this study.

5.8.1 Limits of Methodology

This was a small scale, predominately qualitative study, which was intended to develop the researcher's understanding of a key but complex element of their role, effectively supporting teachers to manage behaviour they find challenging. While the findings of this study can be usefully considered in relation to existing research, there are limits to their generalizability.

The questionnaires produced quantitative data that was analysed with some descriptive statistics. Given the small sample size of questionnaire respondents, these statistics were employed descriptively only as a means to present the data in a concise way; the findings could not be generalised to other teachers. Mean values and standard deviations values reported do not imply any assumption that the data were at all parametric, or enabled that form of analysis. Moreover a flaw was identified within the design of the questionnaire, whereby respondents were asked to reply based on their experience working with either an educational psychologist or a behaviour support teacher. This introduced ambiguity to the findings, which undermines the coherence and validity of the feedback in terms of describing support received from an educational psychologist. Also, it was not possible to know from the questionnaire data how closely involved the respondent was with a child's support needs. This was indicated by two respondents suggesting the EP was the first person with which they had discussed the child's needs, which suggests either a peripheral role or an extremely efficient referral. It is also not possible to verify whether the teacher themselves completed the questionnaire given the complex nature of schools and the layers of staff involved.

From a validity viewpoint, it was important to consider the researcher's dual status as an educational psychologist at the time in the local area, in terms of the participants feeling comfortable to share honestly as this could impact the authenticity of the findings.

A further reflection from reviewing research literature was to consider the value of using or adapting existing validated tools for future questionnaire designs, to

avert the irregularities that occurred through developing a bespoke one, although this may have not been possible in this context of this study.

5.8.2 Terminology and Discourse

Wright (2009) in review of the ‘discourses’ around challenging behaviour notes that the notion of ‘management’ implies teachers/schools have both the power and the responsibility to change children’s behaviour through discipline and authority. This is echoed in government circulars espousing advice on discipline in schools. In considering ‘challenging behaviour’ it is important to note the complex underlying factors that have been indicated in this study relating to what aspects of behaviour are challenging for teachers, some of which relates to stigma and lack of social support.

There are unresolved issues in this study within both the literature review and the methodology relating to indeterminate use of terminology. Cooper (2011) identified 26 separate search terms in constructing his international review of literature on “teacher strategies for effective intervention with students presenting social, emotional and behavioural difficulties”. Within the studies reviewed for this research study, a variety of terms were accepted, reflecting different years of publication. In the analysis section and discussion of findings, more frequent reference is made to ‘difficult behaviour’ or ‘challenging behaviour’ as this was the context of the conversation with teachers, but this now feels conceptually like turning one’s back on points raised in the literature review. Jones (2003) notes how “the language used to describe behaviour problems shapes not only beliefs about the manifest problem, but also perceptions of what could be done about it, and whose responsibility it is to do it”. Jones (2003) also laments the co-opting of psychological terminology for educational agendas. Therefore the language adopted in this study has implications for how teachers felt positioned during the interviews, and how the child was positioned in our discussion.

5.8.3 Presence and absence of resilience as a key concept.

Resilience as a construct was not explicitly addressed as an internal factor within the literature review, precisely as review of research in this area highlighted the

amorphous nature of the construct and how it is defined. Beltman, Mansfield and Price (2010) provide an overview of empirical research into resilience specifically for early career teachers, noting that resilience is a multi-faceted and complex construct. They point to the need to consider multiple contexts in exploring how the different factors interact with one another according to the individual's experience in different settings. Nonetheless the general idea of 'resilience' occurs frequently among the themes identified, which invites consideration of how this can be approached or captured through our work supporting teachers.

This research study helps to map the interaction of different factors within the school as a system where difficult behaviour occurs. The way schools approach a teacher in need of support can decrease their resilience as a result of measures taken. Fostering resilience forms an important part of the process of creating a context where necessary reflection and consultation can take place to help change to occur. However following this review, promotion of resilience could mostly be captured at a whole school level in terms of a whole-school wellbeing/social capital model, rather than focusing on individual affective states, which teachers tended to keep for home.

5.9 Implication for Future Research and EP Practice.

In line with the broad overview taken in this study of teachers' experiences of seeking support with managing difficult behaviour, the findings are consequently wide-ranging. While this presented challenges for coherent analysis and reflection, a clear underlying finding from this study is that within these different and distinct elements of the process of seeking support, it is important to acknowledge the inter-related nature of the different factors shaping the teacher's experience. This reinforces the systemic nature of teachers' difficulties with managing behaviour. As a consequence those seeking to help could well adopt a systemic approach or lens to understanding behaviour issues while we seek to empower the teacher to respond and support the child. Fox (2009) describes family therapists shifting to a systemic approach to 'problems', which "was no longer to stop a problem but rather to see it in a different way". As a consequence those seeking to adopt a systemic approach or lens to understanding behaviour issues in schools will need to systematically work with

schools to establish a new way of working to the one expected by participants in this study.

Feedback from participants suggesting that, for them, outcomes were not well communicated between stakeholders, is important to consider in making support more effective, but also raises issues about defining aims and outcomes, and dissemination in casework. There was also disparity in how holistically schools worked with parents. From an educational psychologist's perspective, knowledge of whether parents are in agreement, or have met with the teacher prior to the casework is highly relevant. Awareness that this does not happen as standard is important for future casework.

In terms of avenues for future research, ideas around whole-school wellbeing are relevant to the feedback from teachers in this study, so this is an area for further development. Participants commented frequently for example during the research on the positive impact of being to talk freely about their experiences, but also indicated that this could often be difficult to achieve in a work context. This potentially indicates the need for more work around peer support schemes (e.g. Jones, Monsen and Franey, 2013) although teachers indicated their preference for more informal approaches. Developing evidence-based practice through rigorous outcome evaluation, as advocated by Hartnell (2010), remains a perennial issue for EPs within their work, as does the issue of effective joint working.

Conceptual issues around behaviour remain topical, and the most recent SEN legislation will demark a new wave of research within the SEBD sphere with the advent of the social, emotional and mental health category of need (DfE, 2014).

5.10 Conclusion

“And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time”

(Eliot, 1943)

This study has enabled me to explore in depth an area that has both interested me, and challenged me in my practice. Completing this study has helped me to appreciate afresh the conceptual and political issues relating to behaviour that contributed to that sense of challenge. In reflecting upon it, I am trying to balance my awareness of the practical limitations of the findings from a methodological point of view, with the powerful impact speaking to teachers about their difficulties has had. I felt privileged for them to open up about their difficulties. Speaking with them meant acknowledging how challenging the emotions they encounter are. However, although the study has provided many insights and enabled me to engage more deeply with a broad range of research, there is a renewed recognition that – as in the beginning – my role as an EP is not to approach their situation proffering solutions or fixes. However this research has reinforced my awareness of the importance of listening, of allowing people to be heard, in increasing their capacity and their ‘resilience’.

Despite having approached this study expecting to encounter negative emotions, the range of emotions has been remarkable, and the complexity of the situations involved has left the strongest impression of all. Away from the economic arguments about recruitment and retention, there is a moral responsibility to these teachers, and children and young people, to continue to show awareness of the conflicting and unrealistic expectations placed upon them. This process has encouraged me to build upon these insights and to continue to develop my practice, as much out of acknowledgement for the efforts made by these participants in their classrooms day to day.

The challenge to achieving this involves continued navigation of multiple strands of research; highlighting the way discourse about behaviour can disadvantage and children and young people; while retaining empathy for teachers working ‘at the chalk face’. It also means personal challenge to establish new ways of working, and developing a sense of efficacy about this. While our primary responsibility as EPs will be in meeting the needs of the child, the role of teachers remains very salient to me, albeit as a key element of a much more complex system.

Chapter 6. References

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethical Approval

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dean: Professor Mark N. O. Davies, PhD, CPsychol, CBiol.



School of Psychology Professional Doctorate Programmes

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to confirm that the Professional Doctorate candidate named in the attached ethics approval is conducting research as part of the requirements of the Professional Doctorate programme on which he/she is enrolled.

The Research Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology, University of East London, has approved this candidate's research ethics application and he/she is therefore covered by the University's indemnity insurance policy while conducting the research. This policy should normally cover for any untoward event. The University does not offer 'no fault' cover, so in the event of an untoward occurrence leading to a claim against the institution, the claimant would be obliged to bring an action against the University and seek compensation through the courts.

As the candidate is a student of the University of East London, the University will act as the sponsor of his/her research. UEL will also fund expenses arising from the research, such as photocopying and postage.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Finn', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Dr. Mark Finn

Chair of the School of Psychology Ethics Sub-Committee

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Appendix 2: Information for Participants (Interviews)

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Phone: 07XXXXXXXXXX

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in a research study. The study is being conducted as part of my Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology at the University of East London.

Project Title

An exploration of teachers' experiences of dealing with challenging behaviour in the classroom.

Project Description

The aim of this project is to interview teachers in detail about their experiences of dealing with challenging behaviour in the classroom with a view to:

- Giving teachers an opportunity to give voice to their experiences in a personalized way that might not normally be possible in a work context.
- Adding to existing research in relation to challenging behaviour by exploring the issue from the perspective of individual teachers.
- Improving the services that educational psychologists provide schools in terms of supporting teachers with children with behavioural difficulties that prompted wider agency involvement from services such as Educational Psychology or the Behaviour Support Service.

Each interview will take 45 minutes – 1 hour. The aim is to collect a series of accounts from teachers to better understand how different individuals make sense of the experience of teaching a child with challenging behaviour, and how it impacts them. For this I will ask a series of general questions about the situation you have been experiencing, how you feel it has affected you, and what kinds of support you have may have accessed. I will then analyse each interview individually and reflect closely on the experiences you share, and interpret how you make sense of them.

The purpose of these interviews is not to provide psychological advice about the issues discussed, however it is recognized that the interview will be focusing on difficult situations, which may trigger various emotions. This is completely

understandable. Following the interview, time will be given to reflecting on how you feel after discussing these issues and, should you wish, we can identify together any further support you feel would be appropriate and helpful.

Confidentiality of the Data

The interviews will be recorded to allow me to transcribe them precisely for my research. When I transcribe them any identifying information such as names etc. will be changed or removed so your participation will be kept anonymous. The interview recordings will be kept securely until the research is completed, after which point they shall be deleted. In accordance with best practice the contents of the interview shall not be shared with anyone unless an issue raised during the interview causes well-being concerns. In this case I would need to share information with my supervisor and, if relevant, the school's child protection officer.

Location

Interviews will be held in school. A quiet location will be needed for the interview.

Disclaimer

You are not obliged to take part in this study. You are free to withdraw at any time. Should you choose to withdraw from the study you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason. Your recording and transcript would be deleted.

Please feel free to ask me any questions. If you are happy to continue you will be asked to sign a consent form prior to your participation. Please retain this invitation letter for reference.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the study has been conducted, please contact the study's supervisor:

Dr. Mary Robinson, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. (Tel: 020 8223 4455. Email: m.robinson@uel.ac.uk)

or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee:

Dr. Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.

(Tel: 020 8223 4493. Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

Katie Skidmore



Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 3: Online Questionnaire

Questionnaire – Teachers’ Experiences of Requesting and Receiving Support Offline Version

This questionnaire relates to a referral that was made about concerns with the behaviour of a child in your class. By providing anonymous feedback of your experience of making this referral, you will be helping a research study about teachers’ experiences of seeking and receiving support with challenging behaviour in the classroom.

1. In which key stage was this student when you requested support with managing their behaviour?

KS1

KS2

KS3

2. With whom did you first discuss your concerns?
-

3. Does your school provide clear guidance about how to refer behaviour concerns?
Yes/No

4. Did you receive a prompt response to your request for support? Yes/No

5. How would you rate the support you received in school in the following areas (where 1 means no support was provided, and 5 means ample support was provided)

- a. Your concerns were explored in detail
- b. You were offered suggestions by colleagues/managers
- c. You were provided with practical support (e.g. extra staff, behaviour plans)
- d. You were provided with emotional support
- e. You were Involved in meeting with an outside agency (e.g. Educational Psychology, Behaviour Support)

6. Which of the above forms of support was most useful to you?

7. How long did it take from first raising your concerns to making a referral to an outside agency (e.g. Educational Psychology, Behaviour Support Service?)

- a. 1 month
- b. Half term
- c. 1 term
- d. More than 1 term

8. How many times did you meet with/speak to parents/carers prior to referral?

9. Did parents share your concerns? Yes/No

10. I'm interested to understand more about the type of events that lead to a referral being made to an outside agency. Please tick all issues/events that applied to this case?

- a. Physical aggression against peers and/or staff
- b. Verbal aggression against peers and/or staff
- c. Confrontational behaviour e.g. refusing to listen or stop
- d. On-going disruptive behaviour
- e. Specific incident that pushed the school to act
- f. Failure to meet agreed behaviour targets over a set time period
- g. Offer from SENCO/Inclusion Manager/Senior member of staff to refer
- h. You requested the SENCO/Inclusion Manager to refer

11. In order to explore the kind of support that staff need at these times, can you briefly describe how you felt at the following points in the process? (For example, calm, anxious, annoyed, optimistic, etc.):

a. Asking for help in school

....

b. Making a referral to an outside agency

....

c. Meeting with a psychologist or specialist teacher

....

12. Some of you may have been able to meet with an Educational Psychologist or Behaviour Support Specialist. If so, can you rate how much support they gave you in the following areas, where 1 is no support, and 5 is ample support

- a. Exploring your concerns in detail
- b. Offering suggestions
- c. Providing practical support (e.g. strategies/resources)
- d. Providing emotional support
- e. Helping discuss the case with parents
- f. Involving you in the assessment

13. Thinking back on your experiences with this case, how do you feel about these behaviour difficulties now? Have your feelings changed since the referral was made?

....

14. Thinking about the support you received OVERALL, is there anything you would change about the support process, either in school or with the psychologist?

a) School

....

b) Outside Agency (e.g. educational psychologist)

....

15. If yes, did you have an opportunity to feed this back to anyone?

Yes, I fed this back to _____

No, I was not able to feedback my thoughts to anyone

Thank-you!!

Thank-you for completing this questionnaire. It is really useful to have feedback from teachers about their experiences in order to make sure we offer the right kind of support.

This topic is the basis of a research study that forms part of my doctorate in educational psychology at the University of East London.

Katie Skidmore, Trainee Educational Psychologist:

xxxxxxx@uel.ac.uk

Appendix 4: Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Introduction:

Tell me about your job here at _____ .

Tell me about your class?

What's it like for you at working at this school?

Describing the behaviours:

I understand that you are currently experiencing some challenges in this class, can you tell me about them? (Prompts: When you're dealing with challenging behaviour in the classroom, what do you see/what do you think/what do you feel?)

Notice that moment, what do you notice about how you feel in that moment? What is it about this that you experience as a challenge?

What is like to be a teacher experiencing that? I'm interested in your experience of this. (Prompt: Can you think of an image or metaphor that describes what this feels like?)

Thinking of the children you deal with, how do you make sense of it?

Seeking support:

What was the experience that triggered you to ask for support? How did that work? (internal referral process)

Dealing with challenging behaviour in this school, how does being a member of staff here impact that?

Meeting the EP

What was it like meeting an EP to talk about things?

What was it like to receive support? Did you find it helpful?

Other aspects:

What's the difference between a day you feel on top of it and a day you find it harder to manage?

How do you think other people view your situation? How do you think other people see you dealing with challenging behaviour? E.g. colleagues, managers, family, friends (also then providing a bridge to the outside world discussion)

Is there anything you feel that you need to do in terms of the next steps? What would you like to happen next in this situation?

Cool down questions: *[Bring them back into the here and now by discussing something less close, give them positive feedback and thanks]*

Appendix 5: Sample interview transcript - extract

Respondent: But when the behaviour's just put a block to it you're just, like, what am I going to do here, I can't break through that unless you want to, and then you realise that it's a little bit out of your hands but it's still your responsibility, and that's what hard with it is that you think, oh, my God, even though this is the case, and I know this is the case, I can justify it to myself, I've still got to show that this pupil's made progress in the year. And then you, sort of, think... and then you end up back in a vicious cycle because you think, right, I've got to implement something here, I've got to try something else, and it just starts the whole game again, it feels like. And then you think actually it's got to come from them, a lot of it has got to come from them wanting to, and then you can give as much as you can give when you're getting a little bit back.

Interviewer: Getting even the smallest bit back, isn't it, it can really drive you on?

R: Yes, and then it feels positive rather than an anti-climax, because sometimes you see that you've tried and tried and tried and it's not really gone anywhere, and you feel deflated from it really because you just... it's time... it is, it's just exhausting and draining, and I think I can deal with it better now but at the start of the year it was really grinding me down.

I: Well I'm really interested because in everything that you're saying it still sounds tough to this day. But you're also commenting on the fact that you've made progress, and even together in your relationship you've come a long way.

R: Yes.

I: Is it possible to get back into the shoes of how you felt in those early days?

R: Yes, I mean, I remember saying to (SENCO), the SENCO, that I just don't know what to do, it was that, I don't know how else to say something or what else to sort of... where else to go with these things, and I would say to her about... I said to her, I would say those words constantly, it's exhausting, keeping up with him and at the same time managing my own emotions, like, it was... I suppose when I have my own children it will be such a good experience, because I was, like, don't rise to it, don't rise to it, don't rise to it, and it was such little things and I would feel my temper just starting to build up and fray a little bit, and I was just keep it under control, just relax, don't rise to it, and knowing when... at that point I didn't know the times I would just block it out, it's just Darren doing one of his things just block it out. And I would think I don't know what to do, and I'd, sort of, walk out of the class and I remember Laura saying to me there were times last year when she had to walk into another class and say, can you just please go in there, I need five minutes to be away from it because otherwise I'm just going to get angry and then the whole situation is going to bubble over into something it doesn't need to be.

And there were times I'd walk out of my room and go next door, to Christina next door, and I'd say, he's driving me mad and I don't want to shout but I can feel it coming, and he would and I would just have to step outside, just take five minutes, breathe, and go

back in there and bring my voice down and say it really calmly, and it was that... it didn't feel like that inside but I knew I had to keep my outside and my voice at that level so that it didn't escalate. But that in itself was so hard because you expect to lose your temper, well, not lose your temper but you expect to, sort of, raise your voice and have an environment sometimes where it's not as happy and positive it's always going to be in a class, because children need sometimes, sort of, to understand that you're annoyed or frustrated but it would be the case that I could feel he knew what he was doing, he knew he could sense my irritation sometimes. And I'd go to him and I'd say I'm getting so caught up in him and his behaviour that it's impacting on the other class, on the rest of the class, sorry, and that made me feel...

And then it was guilt, that was the other thing that would come into it was the guilt that would come in from realising at the end of the day sometimes I've been so wrapped up in Darren and his behaviour, and what he did at break time, and what he did at lunch time, and it's taken away so much time from the other 29 kids who, bless them, are trying so hard to get on without this. And at the start of the year hadn't had Darren in their class...

I: Of course.

R: And so it was as much a shock to them to deal with as it was to me, and I was realising that it was affecting the dynamics in the class, and there were certain children picking up on his behaviour and, sort of, replicating it and copying him a little bit. And I think it was when I realised that, and when that really started to play on my mind that I was like something's got to be done because it's not fair. Yes, it's not fair on me but I'm an adult, but these other 29 kids are clearly missing out, they're missing out on stuff I can give to them, and also they're missing out on me being a bit of a nice teacher because... (both laugh)

I feel like I'm raising my voice and talking about negatives so often that they're going to get to the end of the year and think, well, I didn't really like that teacher, she was really negative all year, and I just didn't want that to be the way it was. And I think it was a mixture of just exhaustion and frustration with Darren, and realising that I couldn't keep being like that because it wasn't doing him any good and I was just emotionally drained from it, and then the 29 other kids who were clearly, come Christmas time, a bit like... and they were saying things like, 'oh, that's what Darren's like', and they were aware of it. And I was aware that they were aware of it and I just thought it's not fair because they're going to remember this experience. And, also, they're going to start seeing Darren for somebody and they're going to make their judgements and that's not going to do him any good either.

So I think that's when... I mean, (SENCO) was very aware that I was struggling with it, and she knew that I was trying things and I'd quite happily go and ask her for advice and help, and when something did go wrong, no, when something did go right, sorry, I would be, sort of, like, 'oh, Darren did this day', and she was like, 'oh, you're smiling', and I was like, yes, because it's a little, mini breakthrough. So she knew that it was a, sort of, proving as difficult as I'd anticipated it to be.

I: But did you have an insight into the fact that other people were aware that it might be difficult?

R: Yes, I mean, I think those teachers that have come into contact with Darren know that he is particularly difficult, and Laura was very aware of how difficult he was, and she said to me, I don't know how I made it through that first term, so really now when I speak to Darren's teacher next year I will probably say those same words to her.

.....

I: This might be a tricky thing to do, so don't worry if nothing comes to mind but if you were to, kind of, give a metaphor or an image for what this situation, not necessarily for Darren but for the situation, how would you describe it? So you're having to explain to this teacher and you want to try and put it into words for them what it's been like.

R: What is it like? It's more than it just being a rollercoaster because it's not just up and down, it's not just there's good days there's bad days, it's kind of like... oh, what is it like? I think it's a bit like when you're an adult and you, kind of, you think you know something about someone and you make that pre-conceived judgement about them, and you might work with them, spend quite a bit of time with them, and you think you've got the handle on them, and whether that be good or bad, maybe you like them, you don't like them, but it's not until that time has past and you've actually physically had to get through weeks or months with them that you actually really start to understand them, and you, sort of, think actually probably what I was thinking at the start of the year, I understand why I was thinking it but it's not really that way.

And it's something about just having time, and it is a bit of a vicious cycle at the start, you are in a sort of... he's understanding me, he's not understanding me, let's try this, let's try that, and you feel like you're going round and round and round and round, and I suppose it's that kind of, more of a metaphor is being on a merry-go-round really.

And sometimes you just have to get off because you just think I'm going to be sick, I feel really dizzy, and then other times you just feel like you need to spin it in the opposite direction because you just need a change, and then sometimes it just feels like, actually, at the moment, or these last two days or this week, feels like it's going okay and we just get on this merry-go-round and we can just go round.

And then I think it's never going to be that rollercoaster of going forward, up, down, up, down, but always moving forward, I think it felt, for me, like it was just... we were going round but sometimes we were going round at a nice speed than other times, and sometimes it was a more pleasant experience than others. Because I think if you think of it a bit like a rollercoaster you presume that you're going forward constantly, and I didn't always feel like I was going forward, I felt more like it was around and around and off and on.

Appendix 6: Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to participate in a research study

An exploration of teachers' experiences of dealing with challenging behaviour in the classroom.

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

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

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant's Signature

.....

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

KATIE SKIDMORE.....

Researcher's Signature

Katie Skidmore

Date:

Appendix 7: Selected Stages of Thematic Analysis

Image 1 depicts different stages of analysis including initial coding of the text (highlighter), secondary coding of the text (notes in margin), and development of themes (coloured post-its)

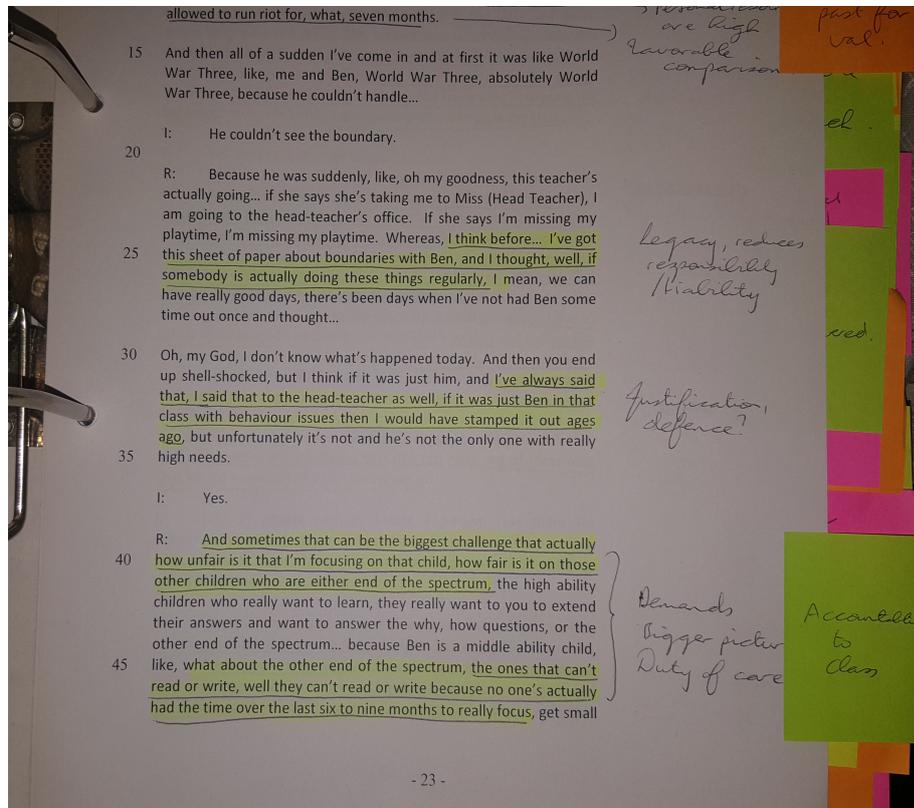


Image 2 represents later grouping of codes within overarching themes – in this case the early development of Theme 1: Bearing the Weight

