

**What can be learned from pupils and staff in
Key Stage 3 & 4 Pupil Referral Units about
processes leading to permanent exclusion?
Opportunities for improving practice.**

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University of East London for the degree of Professional Doctorate in
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Jo Natasha Blanchard

U2064588

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Abstract

It is well-documented that permanent exclusion from school can have several adverse consequences. Government statistics show that permanent exclusion disproportionately affects disadvantaged and vulnerable students, particularly those with special educational needs, thus exacerbating educational inequalities. Furthermore, the cycle of disadvantage is perpetuated by the negative onward trajectory for excluded pupils, such as reduced educational attainment and increased likelihood of engaging in criminal activities.

Additionally, the lack of effective alternatives to exclusion and inconsistencies in decision-making processes in schools contribute to the wider issue. The systemic complexities and emotional toll on students and families, coupled with the long-term societal costs, underline the urgent need for comprehensive reform in the way permanent exclusion is addressed within the education system.

This study explored the critical insights that can be gained from the perspectives, views and experiences of both students and staff members in Key Stage 3 and 4 Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and begins by examining the national context and acknowledging the often-negative outcomes associated with permanent exclusion from mainstream educational settings. A systematic literature review identified a gap in the research focussing on pupils' and PRU staff's retrospective views, thus, prompting an examination of the experiences of permanently excluded students who have been placed in PRUs. The study also aimed to add to an existing body of literature supporting the need for changes to permanent exclusion processes.

A qualitative research design was utilised. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven members of staff and five secondary-aged pupils within two pupil referral units from one local authority. The study investigated the lived experiences of pupils and the views of dedicated PRU staff who have developed deep insights into the processes and impact of permanent exclusion from mainstream school. The epistemological underpinning of this study lies within social constructivism and aligns with a critical realist ontology. Thematic analysis identifies several key findings, including the paramount importance of relationships within educational environments, the significance of effective communication, and the necessity for early identification of special needs among students. Additionally, the research considered the effectiveness of punitive measures and zero tolerance policies in addressing the issue of weapons carrying among these often-vulnerable students.

By integrating these insights, this study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding the processes of permanent exclusions and consider opportunities for improving practice.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1- Introduction	1
1.1 Chapter Overview.....	1
1.2 Aims	1
1.3 National Context	1
1.3.1 Permanent Exclusion Trends within the National Context	2
1.3.2 Special Educational Needs	3
1.4 Consequences and Impact of Permanent Exclusion	3
1.5 Local Context	3
1.6 Researcher's Position	4
1.7 Aims of Researcher	4
1.8 Critical Exploration of Psychological Frameworks	5
1.9 Chapter Summary	5
Chapter 2- Literature Review	6
2.1 Introduction to Chapter	6
2.2 Literature Search Process	6
2.3 Literature Search Questions	6
2.4 Search Strategies	6
2.5 Overview of the Literature	7
2.5.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria	7
2.6 Critical Review of Previous Research	9
2.6.1 The Studies	9
2.6.2 Quality Assessment	9
2.7 Thematic Synthesis of Literature	10
2.7.1 Relationships	10
2.7.2 Special Educational Needs	11
2.7.3 School Support	12
2.7.4 The Use and Impact of Labels	13
2.7.5 Environmental Factors	14
2.7.6 Interacting Themes	15
2.8 Summary of the Literature	15
2.9 Rationale for Current Research	16

2.9.1 Research Questions	17
2.10 Chapter Summary	17
Chapter 3- Methodology	17
3.1 Chapter Overview	17
3.2 Ontological and Epistemological Position	17
3.2.1 Critical Realism	18
3.2.2 Social Constructivism	19
3.3 Research Purpose	19
3.4 Theoretical Underpinnings and Conceptual Framework	20
3.4.1 The Power Threat Meaning Framework	20
3.4.2 Self-Determination Theory	21
3.5 Pupil Voice	21
3.6 Research Design	22
3.6.1 Qualitative Research	22
3.6.2 Semi-structured Interviews	22
3.6.3 Research Questions	23
3.7 Data Collection	23
3.7.1 Interview Schedules	23
3.7.1.1 Staff Interview Schedule	23
3.7.1.2 Pupil Interview Schedule	24
3.7.2 Participants	24
3.7.2.1 Recruitment of Participants	24
3.7.2.2 Participant Characteristics	25
3.7.2.3 Timeline of Data Collection	26
3.8 Ethical Considerations	26
3.9 Power Dynamics	27
3.10 Data Analysis	28
3.10.1 Reflexive Thematic Analysis	28
3.10.1.1 Familiarising self with the dataset	29
3.10.1.2 Coding	29
3.10.1.3 Generating initial themes	30

3.10.1.4 Reviewing, naming and defining themes	31
3.10.1.5 Producing the report	31
3.11 Validity and Trustworthiness	31
3.12 Chapter Summary	32
Chapter 4: Research Findings	32
4.1 Chapter Overview	32
4.2 Analytic Narrative	33
4.3 Themes Within Staff data	33
4.3.1 Theme 1- “Mainstream schools just don’t have the capacity”.	34
Subtheme 4.3.1.1- Identification of and support for Special Educational Needs	
Subtheme 4.3.3.2- Schools are under pressure.....	38
Subtheme 4.3.1.3- Pupil Referral Units as a “double-edged sword”.....	39
4.3.2 Theme 2- “Relationships are exceedingly important”.	41
4.3.3 Theme 3- “Communication is the most powerful tool any of us have”.	42
Subtheme 4.3.3.1- Information sharing	42
Subtheme 4.3.3.2- Pupil voice	44
4.3.4 Theme 4- “If we know a child has needs, why are we not meeting them in a reasonable time?”	46
4.3.5 Summary of Staff Themes	47
4.4 Themes Within Pupil Data	48
4.4.1 Theme 1- Pupil perceptions of staff attitudes and approaches	48
Subtheme 4.4.1.1 Pupils feel disrespected by teachers	49
4.4.2 Theme 2- None of us can handle mainstream	51
4.4.3 Theme 3- Pupils thrive in PRUs	54
Subtheme 4.4.3.1- Positive relationships make a big difference	55
4.4.4 Summary of Pupil Themes	57
4.5 Integrated Thematic Analysis	57
4.5.1 Theme 1- The emotional impact of permanent exclusion	57
Subtheme 4.5.1.1- Trauma, rejection, and betrayal	
4.5.2 Theme 2- “Labels are powerful”	59
Subtheme 4.5.2.1- SEN labels	
Subtheme 4.5.2.2- General labels	

4.5.3 Theme 3- Punitive measures	64
Subtheme 4.5.3.1- school punishments are not effective in reducing unwanted behaviours.	
Subtheme 4.5.3.2- Implications of zero tolerance policies.	
4.5.4 Theme 4- Feeling safe in school	68
4.5.5 Summary of Integrated Themes	69
4.6 Chapter Summary	70
Chapter 5: Discussion	70
5.1 Introduction	70
5.2 Aims and Research Questions	70
5.3 Theoretical Links	70
5.3.1 The Power Threat Meaning Framework	71
5.3.2 Self-Determination Theory	72
5.4 Exploring themes in relation to research questions	72
5.4.1 Research Question 1	72
5.4.1.1 Mainstream secondary schools are under too much pressure	72
5.4.1.2 Earlier identification of SEN is needed	73
5.4.1.3 Communication is a key factor	74
5.4.2 Research Question 2	75
5.4.2.1 The importance of building positive relationships	75
5.4.2.2 Sanctions and punitive measures don't improve behaviour	75
5.4.3 What can be learned from pupils and staff in PRUs?	76
5.4.3.1 Language and labels should be carefully considered	76
5.4.3.2 Trauma-informed practice can improve support for young people ...	76
5.4.3.2 Zero-tolerance policies should be given further consideration	77
5.5 Implications for Educational Psychologists	77
5.6 Strengths of the study	78
5.7 Limitations of the study	79
5.8 Reflexivity	79
5.9 Implications for further research	81
5.10 Dissemination Strategies	81
5.11 Conclusion- Opportunities for improving practice	82

References	83
Appendices	87

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 TAPUPAS Weight of Evidence Table	85-93
Appendix 2 Staff interview schedule	93
Appendix 3 Pupil interview schedule	94
Appendix 4 Ethical approval from university	95
Appendix 5 Ethical approval from local authority	99
Appendix 6 Head Teacher of PRU collegiate approval form	101
Appendix 7 Parent information sheet	102
Appendix 8 Staff information sheet	106
Appendix 9 Pupil information sheet	110
Appendix 10 Parent consent form	114
Appendix 11 Participant consent form	116
Appendix 12 Staff participant debrief sheet	117
Appendix 13 Pupil participant debrief sheet	119
Appendix 14 Extract from an interview transcript	121
Appendix 15 Examples of coding process during thematic analysis	122

List of Tables and Figures

Tables

Table 1.	Permanent exclusion trends by pupil characteristics.	p.2
Table 2.	Inclusion and exclusion criteria for literature search	p.7-8
Table 3.	Staff participant details	p.24
Table 4.	Pupil participant details	p.25

Figures

Figure 1.	Interacting themes within literature search.	p.14
Figure 2.	Example of initial coding process	p.28
Figure 3.	Example image of generation of themes.	p.29
Figure 4.	Further refinement of themes.	p.30
Figure 5.	Thematic map for research question 1.	p.32
Figure 6.	Thematic map for research question 2.	p.47
Figure 7.	Thematic map of integrated thematic analysis.	p.56

List of Abbreviations

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
CAMHS	Childhood and Adolescent Mental Health Service
DfE	Department for Education
EHCP	Education and Health Care Plan
EOTAS	Education Other Than At School
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
FAP	Fair Access Protocol
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
LA	Local Authority
PEX	Permanent Exclusion
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PTMF	Power Threat Meaning Framework
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
SEBD	Social and Emotional Behavioural Difficulties
SEMH	Social and Emotional Mental Health
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
TA	Teaching Assistant
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
UK	United Kingdom

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter outlines the study's aims and explores permanent exclusion practice within the United Kingdom, focussing on data, trends, exclusionary processes, and the consequences and impact of permanent exclusion on young people and wider society. References to international exclusionary practises are made. The chapter will then focus on the processes of exclusion and consider unmet special educational needs, the impact this can have on behaviour and, in many cases, permanent exclusion. Theoretical perspectives are critiqued. The local context for the research is explored, and the researcher's position and aims are outlined.

1.2 Study Aims

The purpose of this study was to explore secondary-aged pupils' experiences of permanent exclusion from mainstream schools, and gain insight from staff who work in the Key Stage 3 and 4 Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) that the young people attend post-exclusion. By understanding pupil experiences and the views of PRU staff, the current study seeks to contribute to previous literature on permanent exclusion, and the processes that typically lead to this outcome. Ultimately, the study aimed to identify areas to support the reduction of permanent exclusions.

1.3 National Context

Permanent exclusion is a severe disciplinary measure taken by schools to remove a pupil from the school's roll without the option of returning. This generally happens due to pupil behaviour that the school deems unacceptable, or which goes against the school's behaviour policy. The Department for Education lists typical reasons reported for permanent exclusions, such as 'persistent disruptive behaviour', physical assault against pupils and/or adults, bullying, possession of weapons, damage to property, drug and alcohol-related incidents, and abuse relating to a person's social or personal identity (such as sexual orientation or gender identity, racism, and disability). 'Persistent disruptive behaviour' features in the data as the most common reason for permanent exclusion, although it is also common to be permanently excluded due to a one-off serious incident such as possession of a weapon, which, according to government statistics based in London is increasingly for carrying a knife (DfE, 2019).

Within the UK Education system, there are various disciplinary measures a school may use prior to permanent exclusion, including "fixed-term" exclusions (sometimes referred to as 'suspensions'), which are effectively a temporary exclusion from school for a specific amount of time in response to behaviour that the schools find unacceptable (DfE, 2023a) A fixed term exclusion may be for one or more days and be up to a maximum of 45 school days in a consecutive academic year. Managed moves are another option. A managed move is an agreement between schools, parents, and pupils that the pupil may change schools under specific circumstances. Managed moves are often used as an alternative to permanent exclusions, with the aims of giving the pupil a fresh start in a different mainstream educational provision.

It is not uncommon for permanently excluded pupils to have received one or numerous fixed-term exclusions or attempted managed moves prior to being permanently excluded from school. However, in some cases, a pupil is permanently excluded without prior attempts at the aforementioned options.

When a pupil is permanently excluded from school, the Local Authority is responsible for ensuring the pupil accesses suitable full-time education. This is often through placing the pupil on roll at an alternative provision known as a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). The UK saw an introduction to Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) during the 1960s as a provision for children who struggled to cope in mainstream schools. Initially referred to as “disruptive units” (Garner, 1996), PRUs were originally created in response to children and young people who displayed behaviour viewed as challenging and considered disruptive to the mainstream teaching agenda. The Education Act of 1981 placed a statutory duty of care on local authorities to provide appropriate education for children who could not attend mainstream schools due to illness, exclusion, or other reasons. (*Education Act 1981*, n.d.) This led to an increase in the number of PRUs across the UK.

According to Tillson & Oxley (2020), the UK’s school exclusion rate is ten times higher than that of any other country in Europe. Education systems in Norway, Italy, Sweden and Finland are known for their inclusive school policies and their rejection of permanent exclusion (Corral-Granados et al, 2023, Blossing et al, 2014, Schleicher, 2019), however there are some criticisms regarding inclusion and marginalisation in Nordic countries (Pihl et al, 2018). It's important to note that even in countries with inclusive policies, there may be circumstances where school exclusion is considered necessary in extreme cases of misconduct or danger and for children with additional needs, education systems must consider how inclusive their inclusion policies are.

1.3.1 Permanent Exclusion Trends Within the National Context

According to government statistics, permanent exclusion figures in England have continued to rise over the past decade. Compared to the Autumn term 2021/22, permanent exclusions have since increased for secondary pupils (+2%). The following table (Table 1) indicates the characteristics of pupils permanently excluded from school in the Spring term of 2021/22 (DfE, 2022).

Table 1. *Permanent exclusion trends by pupil characteristics*

Pupil Characteristics	No. of Permanent Exclusions 2021/22 Spring Term
Female	613
Male	1,566
Eligible for FSM	1,318
Not eligible for FSM	861
SEN with EHCP	138
SEN without EHCP	871
No recorded SEN	1,170

The data indicates that male pupils were excluded at a rate much higher than females, and those eligible for free school meals (FSM) were much more likely to be permanently excluded

than those not eligible for the scheme. Regarding special educational needs (SEN), the data indicates that 871 pupils with SEN and without an education and health care plan (EHCP) were permanently excluded compared to 138 pupils with an Education and Health Care Plan. 1,170 permanently excluded pupils had no recorded SEN; however, it is important to acknowledge that this refers only to pupils not highlighted by the school as having SEN and may not reflect the *actual* need.

1.3.2 Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Children with SEN are particularly vulnerable to being permanently excluded due to behaviour often perceived by school staff as 'difficult' or 'challenging'. However, these behaviours typically indicate unmet needs (Nash, 2016). The Children and Families Act (2014) defines SEN as referring to a learning need or disability that requires special educational provision to be made for the child or young person. This includes children with learning difficulties, communication needs, behaviour, or physical and sensory needs. The SEND Code of Practice (2001) refers to SEN as a pupil who has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age or has a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools.

The researcher refers to "SEN" to describe the difficulties pupils experience associated with learning and does not specifically address or focus on specific models of disability. For this reason, the researcher uses the term "SEN" throughout, rather than "SEND", although it is acknowledged that "SEND" is used in the Code of Practice (2021).

In the DfE's exclusion statistics (2023b), persistent disruptive behaviour continues to be the most common reason for permanent and fixed-period exclusions (both 34%); children with social, emotional, and mental health needs are the most likely to be excluded. Pupils with SEN with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) were excluded in 2021/2022 at a rate of 0.13 compared with children with SEN without an EHCP at a rate of 0.25 and without any SEN at 0.05 (DfE, 2023).

1.4 Consequences and Impact of Permanent Exclusion

Permanent exclusion from school can lead to a range of adverse short-term and longer-term implications. Veldebenito et al. (2018) highlights the strong link between school exclusion and negative developmental outcomes, such as poor academic performance, antisocial behaviour, and poor employment prospects.

The immediate and obvious consequence of removing a student from the mainstream school environment is the disruption to receiving education. Missing important learning can lead to gaps in their attainment and may have an adverse effect on their academic progress as well as their future opportunities. However, the negative consequences of permanent exclusion can also have wider and longer-term social implications, including high costs to public education funding (Parsons & Castle, 1998). They can ultimately lead to involvement in crime (Briggs, 2010) and, eventually, imprisonment (Arnez & Condry, 2021). Much research on the impact of permanent exclusion on a pupil's onward trajectory, both socially and educationally, highlights the negative consequences young people tend to experience post-exclusion. Research highlights feelings of unsafety (Feingold & Rowley, 2022), social exclusion, mental health difficulties, and poor educational outcomes (Watling, 2004).

1.5 Local Context

The current research was conducted within one outer London borough. The researcher was completing their professional placement as a Trainee Educational Psychologist within the Local Authority as part of the Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology training programme. Recorded permanent exclusions within this local authority were higher than the national average in 2019/20 (DfE, 2019a), and, as a result, there was a push to reduce permanent exclusions in the borough.

During the researcher's placement, the local council was under high levels of scrutiny for poor financial control. The council was in debt of over £1 billion and had been declared bankrupt multiple times. Funding for many services was reduced, including cuts of £15 million to the education system. This resulted in cutting spending on tackling youth violence, no longer providing school transport for children with special educational needs, and a reduction in the number of children placed in care. (News sources are not referenced due to the anonymity clause referring to the specific local authority).

Since their introduction in the 1960s, PRUs have faced continuous challenges, specifically regarding cuts to government funding to the education sector. This was experienced first-hand during the current study when one of the PRUs initially set to be involved in the research was forced to close permanently due to financial strain. This meant pupils were moved into alternative provisions, and one pupil withdrew from the interview process.

1.6 Researcher's Position

The researcher's keen interest in school exclusions began during employment as an Assistant Educational Psychologist in an East London Local Authority. The researcher worked as part of the LA's 'Behaviour and Inclusion' team, mainly supporting young people who were at risk of exclusion (and working with the school SENCo and senior leadership teams to support the young people) and working with young people who had been permanently excluded from schools, who were attending Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) or Education Other than At School (EOTAS).

Much of the researcher's work involved assessing pupils attending PRUs for learning needs and completing reports to support applications for Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs). Throughout this work, the researcher was surprised at how many secondary-aged young people displayed behaviours consistent with traits of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), and other signs of neurodiversity, which had never been explored or diagnosed. Furthermore, there were also high numbers of students operating at very low levels for literacy and numeracy, who also displayed difficulties with receptive and expressive language skills and experiencing social and emotional difficulties. Although this was the previous experience of the researcher, it was ensured throughout the research and data collection that assumptions were not made regarding participants having unmet learning needs and critical reflection on biases was used throughout the study.

The researcher attended Inclusion panels, primary and secondary behaviour forums, and Fair Access Panels. Fair Access Protocol or 'FAP' refers to the mechanism used within local authority education systems to ensure all vulnerable, school-aged children and young people are allocated appropriate school provisions as quickly as possible. FAP applies to children in alternative provision who need to be reintegrated into mainstream education or who have been permanently excluded but are deemed suitable for mainstream education. (DfE, 2021).

1.7 Aims of the researcher

Given the profusion of existing research indicating negative onward trajectories for young people who have experienced permanent exclusion, and the national figures continuing to rise (DfE, 2023), it appears that more can be done to highlight the significance of permanent exclusions and explore the experiences of young people. Through the researcher's personal experience within Educational Psychology practice and work in PRUs, it is clear that despite abundant research highlighting the disadvantages of permanent exclusion for pupils and society, there continues to be a high number of pupils excluded from school who have unidentified or unmet learning needs. It is clear from the existing literature and the findings from the current study that pupils continue to be excluded without prior support for learning needs and SEMH needs. Evidently, more work needs to be done to reduce exclusions and provide much earlier intervention for pupils displaying behavioural difficulties.

This research aimed to hear the experiences of pupils who have been permanently excluded and the views of staff in the PRUs and the young people who attend post-exclusion, and, therefore, consider the opportunities for reducing permanent exclusion and improving educational psychology practice.

1.8 Critical exploration of psychological frameworks

The research will consider relevant psychological frameworks in relation to the experience of permanent exclusions. The Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF), (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018) is considered as an alternative way of looking at psychiatric and diagnostic models, shifting thinking from "what is wrong with you" to "what happened to you". PTMF explores the roles of threat and power, and the meanings people make of these regarding their experiences. For this reason, the researcher deemed the framework suitable for applying to the current study and exploring the experiences of permanently excluded pupils as opposed to examining their perceived faults. Some critics of the framework argue that PTMF may lack specificity and can undermine complex mental health difficulties by attributing them solely to power imbalances and societal threats (Morgan, 2023, Pilgrim, 2019). Similarly, some critics argue that the focus on social and environmental factors may neglect biological and genetic factors, potentially adding further stigma to specific social groups and being reductive in its acknowledgement of mental distress (Read & Harper, 2019).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), proposed by Deci & Ryan, (1985) will be referred to in relation to exclusion from school and the intrinsic motivation and autonomy of pupils prior to and after permanent exclusion. Some critiques of SDT reject the assumption that all humans possess intrinsic motivation may be better influenced by extrinsic motivational factors such as rewards or avoiding punitive measures. Trigueros et al (2019) consider the varying roles and attitudes of teachers and the perception of students in their participating classes. Such aspects may exert a negative influence over the adoption of adaptive behaviours, both in the present and in the future, to both motivational and avoidant effect. This is also relevant to the current study and is referred to in the discussion section.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the process of permanent exclusion and the consequences and disadvantageous impact of permanent exclusion on young people. Key information regarding the national and local contexts of the study was provided with

consideration of international dimensions of exclusion. Permanent exclusion statistical trends and data were included and discussed. The researcher's position and aims were highlighted, and psychological frameworks were critiqued. The following chapter explores current literature on permanent exclusion, focusing on the views and experiences of pupils and staff. A thematic literature synthesis will be conducted and reviewed, and key themes will be explored and summarised.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to present an overview of the existing literature, which examines the experiences of secondary-aged pupils who have been permanently excluded from school, and additionally (where possible), the perspectives of staff who know the pupils well. A systematic review of the research will be presented, and search terms and inclusion criteria will be discussed. A critical appraisal of each selected study will be presented with a thematic synthesis. Gaps in the research will be identified, and the systematic review will aim to generate relevant research questions.

2.2 Literature Search Process

An initial scoping review of existing literature was conducted in November 2021 as part of the research proposal process. This formed a basic understanding of the breadth of literature pertaining to permanent exclusions and the views of the young people who experience them. This provided a basis for a systematic review. Further searches were conducted between July 2022 and September 2022, where additional relevant studies were identified.

2.3 Literature Review Search Questions

The literature review aimed to critically evaluate the current research base in relation to the following questions:

- 1) To what extent has research explored the retrospective views and experiences of young people permanently excluded from secondary school and staff who know them well?
- 2) What is currently known about the experiences of pupils and staff in PRUs, regarding the processes that led to permanent exclusion?

2.4 Search Strategies

A systematic search of the literature was carried out between July 2022 and September 2022 through EBSCO, using the following online databases:

- Child Development & Adolescent Studies,
- Education Abstracts (H.W. Wilson),
- Education Research Complete,
- ERIC,

- British Education Index
- APA PsycInfo.

Search terms used included the following:

‘school exclusions’, ‘permanent exclusions’, ‘pupil referral units’, ‘secondary school students’, ‘pupil referral unit staff’, ‘pupil views’, ‘student views’, ‘staff views’, ‘student expulsion’, and ‘pupil experience’.

These terms were combined using Boolean logic, e.g.:

‘school exclusion’ AND ‘secondary school’; ‘secondary school students OR ‘secondary pupils’ AND ‘exclusion from school’ OR ‘permanent exclusion’; ‘staff views’ AND ‘student views’ AND ‘school exclusion’; ‘school expulsion’ OR ‘school exclusion’ OR ‘student expulsion’ AND ‘secondary school’ and ‘school exclusion’ AND ‘pupil experience’.

Further searches were conducted using SCOPUS and Google Scholar, and following this, “snowballing” techniques were applied by hand searching the references and bibliography sections of studies and relevant theses.

The scope of the literature reviewed was initially defined using the “who, what, how” method, as proposed by Booth et al. (2008) and adapted from Ibrahim (2008).

- WHO- Key stage 3 and 4 pupils (aged between 11 and 16 years old) who have been permanently excluded from mainstream secondary schools, and staff who know the pupils well.
- WHAT- The views and experiences of the aforementioned young people, staff on their exclusions; and the processes that led to their exclusions and considerations of how exclusions may have been prevented.
- HOW- Exploring common themes between participants regarding their views and understandings of the processes that led to their exclusions. In addition, the considerations of any unmet needs, with the aims of informing future practice in schools regarding the prevention of permanent exclusions.

2.5 Overview of the Literature

2.5.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The initial search identified over 100 studies. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were then applied, as per Stage 3 (Study selection) of Arksey & O’Malley’s (2005) framework, to further refine the most relevant studies. The search criteria included studies based on UK education systems. Initially, they included studies only published between the year 2000 and the present day, to ensure that up-to-date research was included. However, this was then extended after a relevant paper by Gersch and Nolan (1994) was frequently cited and referenced.

Searches included studies conducted in schools and alternative provisions in England, which predominantly featured qualitative experiences of exclusions. These focused on the pupil’s experiences of exclusions as told by themselves through first-hand interviews with pupils and educational provision staff. Exclusion criteria were applied, such as discarding studies conducted and published outside of the UK, due to the current research study being conducted within the educational provisions in England.

According to government data on UK exclusions, suspensions, and permanent exclusion figures peak at around 14 years of age; therefore, inclusion criteria for the literature review

stipulated research which predominantly focussed on the views and experiences of secondary-aged pupils. Studies that did not include the experiences of secondary age permanent exclusions were excluded from the review (although included some studies, which focussed on *both* primary and secondary age), which reduced the number of studies to 18. Research focusing predominantly on qualitative data analysis was included, and studies that did not apply a thematic analysis were excluded. Only published and ‘peer-reviewed articles’ were part of the inclusion criteria; however, after searching grey literature such as doctoral theses through UEL’s research repository, relevant studies were discovered, and ‘peer-reviewed articles’ filtering was removed. This helped to avoid publication bias and increased the number of studies (N 24).

Further exclusion criteria were applied to remove studies focusing solely on a specific race and/or gender. Previous studies have focused on particular ethnic groups of pupils (Demie, 2021; Sode, 2021; and Boyd, 2021). This study aimed not to extract views from a particular race or gender (although these areas may be considered throughout data analysis). The search also excluded studies focusing primarily on the reintegration process rather than reflecting on the process of permanent exclusion. Similarly, studies focusing on managed moves rather than permanent exclusion were removed, reducing the studies for review (N-7).

Details are provided below in Table 2.

Table 2. *Inclusion and exclusion criteria for literature search*

	Included	Excluded
Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies seeking the views and perspectives of pupils and/or staff. • Qualitative studies focus on the experiences of young people’s permanent exclusion from school. • Studies focussing on pupils who have been permanently excluded from school. • Secondary-aged pupils (extended to studies which include BOTH secondary and primary school-aged pupils if methodology and findings are relevant). • Studies seeking the views of staff who work with secondary-aged pupils. • Studies focussing on young people of any gender or race. • Studies conducted in pupil referral units (broadened to include mainstream secondary schools, but the search yielded few results). • Studies which apply thematic analysis as the main form of data analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies that don’t predominantly feature the views of pupils and staff. • Studies that focus predominantly on the risk of exclusion or fixed-term exclusions. • Studies that focus primarily on the experiences of reintegration. • Studies that focus solely on primary-aged pupils. • Research specifically focusing on race or gender. • Studies that do not apply data analysis which generate and explore key themes.

Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research based within England's education system. • Research conducted and/or published between 2000 and 2022 (this was expanded upon finding a relevant paper from 1994). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research based outside of the UK education system. • Research conducted and/or published prior to 2000 (extended to include one relevant paper).
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2.6 Critical Review of Previous Research

2.6.1 The Studies:

- 1) Caslin (2021) 'They have just given up on me' how pupils labelled with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) experience the process of exclusion from school.
- 2) Gersch & Nolan (1994) Exclusions: What the Children Think.
- 3) Hart (2013) What helps children in a pupil referral unit (PRU)? An exploration into the potential protective factors of a PRU as identified by children and staff.
- 4) Jalali & Morgan (2018)- 'They won't let me back'- Comparing student perceptions across primary and secondary pupil referral units.
- 5) Murphy, R (2022) How children make sense of their permanent exclusion: a thematic analysis from semi-structured interviews.
- 6) Stanforth & Rose (2020) 'You Kind of Don't Want Them in the Room': Tensions in the Discourse of Inclusion and Exclusion for Students Displaying Challenging Behaviour in an English Secondary School.
- 7) Trotman et al. (2015) Understanding problematic pupil behaviour: perceptions of pupils and behaviour coordinators on secondary school exclusion in an English city.

Of the 7 selected studies, all focused on gaining the views of pupils affected by school exclusions.

2.6.2 Quality Assessment

An in-depth quality assessment of the included studies, as proposed by Booth et al. (2016), was carried out. This enabled the researcher to assess and evaluate the selected studies and to determine their strength and relevance to the research question. Gough's (2007) 'Weight of Evidence' framework (WoE) and Pawson et al.'s 2003 TAPUPAS framework assessed each study's transparency, accuracy, specificity, purposivity, utility, and propriety.

Gough's (2007) WoE framework is outlined below:

- 1) WoE A: This refers to the rigour and integrity of the study design. Researchers should consider the transparency, accuracy, accessibility, and specificity of the study. This is a

generic judgement of the paper and a consideration of whether the conclusions align with the findings.

2) WoE B: This enables the researcher to judge the appropriateness of the study design in relation to the specific review question; for example, it considers the relevance of the research design. Researchers consider purposivity in this judgement.

3) WoE C: This is a review-specific judgement about the relevance of the focus of the evidence for the review question. Utility and propriety are considered. For example, the ethics of the research could impact its inclusion and interpretation in a review.

4) WoE D: This is the overall judgement of the WoE for the paper. It is determined by combining the previous three ratings (WoE A, B and C).

See Appendix 1 for the completed TAPUPAS framework.

2.7 Thematic synthesis

Thematic synthesis is a method frequently used in systematic reviews that addresses questions about peoples' views and experiences (Harden et al., 2004). All studies selected for review used qualitative or mixed methods approaches. A thematic synthesis endeavours to consistently analyse content across included studies (Booth et al., 2012). Thomas & Harden (2008) refer to one of the key tasks of a thematic synthesis within a systematic review as "the translation of concepts between studies". For the current study, this involved reading and re-reading the selected articles to identify key themes or topic areas. Through reading and re-reading the seven studies, certain similarities among findings and considerations, generated natural themes across the studies, which could then be organised into categories and considered more deeply. Emerging themes were highlighted, and colour-coded to separate and categorise overarching themes. Themes were then examined across studies.

The systemic literature review focussed on the perspectives and perceptions of young people who have been permanently excluded from school and, where available, the views and perceptions of the staff who know them well. All studies selected used thematic analysis as part of their data analysis. Following an analysis of the findings from the selected studies, five themes were identified, and sub-themes were generated. These form the structure of the systematic review of the literature. These are as follows:

- Relationships (school contacts re transition, peer relationships, peer judgement, and teacher-pupil relationships).
- Special educational needs and learning or social needs.
- Pupil Support from teachers and school systems.
- The impact of labels.
- Environmental factors and the impact on behaviour.

2.7.1 Relationships

The significance of relationships was referred to across all seven studies and was the first notable theme that emerged during a critical appraisal of the literature. Several studies in the review referred to the impact of student-pupil relationships and peer-to-peer relationships on young people who experience permanent exclusion, and many explored the importance of positive relationships between pupils and staff.

Gersch & Nolan (1994) and Hart (2013) extracted themes of relationships as a main finding in their research. Each referred to contrasts in relationships between pupils and teachers from Primary School, Secondary School, and during time at PRUs. They summarised that young people with difficult or strained relationships with staff in secondary school are more likely to engage in challenging behaviour, which results in exclusion from school.

According to current exclusion figures (gov.uk, 2021), “persistent disruptive behaviour” was the most common reason for permanent exclusion in England. Interestingly, challenging behaviour is often reduced when a pupil can form a positive and trusting relationship with an adult within the school environment (Stanforth & Rose, 2018). Each of the 7 papers references, in some way, the effects of relationships, and the contrast between relationships formed with adults in primary school and after the transition to secondary school. Trotman et al. (2015) explored the disconnect between relationships enjoyed at primary school and “feelings of being ‘lost’ physically and emotionally within secondary schools”. Stanforth and Rose (2018) refer to relationships being considered by staff as “one of the single biggest factors that influence the likelihood of experiencing challenging behaviour”.

Caslin (2021) explored relationships between pupils and teachers, how teachers’ responses to young people impacted trust, and how young people’s behaviour and views were perceived. The findings of this study suggest that the education system can often work to punish young people rather than support them. Jalali & Morgan (2018) refer to their findings, which indicate that pupils who have transitioned from mainstream secondary schools to PRUs report a sense of connectedness and relate to the support offered in PRUs as to that of a “family”.

Throughout the themes emerging within the study by Murphy (2022), the importance of peer relationships was often referred to when considering supportive factors for pupils who experience permanent exclusions. The findings of this study indicate that all pupils who participated recounted problems around bullying and/or peer judgement during the time of their exclusions. Similarly, findings from Gersch & Nolan’s study indicated that pupil participants often reported difficulties with peer relationships and identified that this negatively impacted their social skills.

2.7.2 Special Educational Needs

Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN), particularly those with Social and Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties, feature highly in the UK government’s permanent exclusion figures. The permanent exclusion rate for pupils with an education, health, and care plan (EHCP) is 0.08, and for pupils with SEN with no EHC plan (SEN support) is 0.15, compared to 0.03 for those without SEN (gov.uk, 2021). Many studies selected for review focus on SEN (SEMH needs in particular) and the impact of childhood trauma on pupils’ behaviour, thus contributing largely to reasons behind exclusions.

Four out of the seven studies consider pupils’ special educational needs in relation to permanent exclusions and refer to the high level of SEN pupils represented in national exclusion figures. Murphy (2022) discusses responses from participants that highlight the connections made by pupils between the behaviour they displayed as a result of unmet learning needs and a lack of sensitivity towards their needs. Murphy’s findings emphasise that children cope with their learning difficulties by avoiding school or being disruptive in class, thus being viewed as displaying challenging behaviour, rather than offered support with their learning. Murphy’s study examines themes of embarrassment and the impact of “feeling stupid,” as reported by the excluded young people.

Jalali & Morgan (2018) focus their study on pupils with SEMH difficulties, consider negative experiences in mainstream school, including difficulties with learning, and examine the dissonance between young people's behaviour and their perceptions of unfair treatment. Findings highlight the negative impact of excluded pupils' cognitions on their emotional and behavioural responses. Murphy (2022) draws on work by Pearce (2007), who refers to individual acts as symbols of social contexts and considers how disability discrimination can be an underlying context of behaviour resulting in exclusions. Caslin (2021) refers to inclusion and considers how many teachers may not feel prepared to work with a diverse range of learners.

2.7.3 Support: From Teachers and School Systems

Across a broad range of literature examining pupil and teacher views on permanent exclusion, the theme of the impact of teacher support and school systems emerges frequently. The theme of school support and its impact on pupils features throughout all 7 selected research papers. Many of the studies considered support for and from teachers, including the skill set of individual teachers, the length of time the teacher had been in the role, and how these factors may impact how equipped they felt in their ability to understand and manage challenging behaviour.

This theme also emphasises the importance of teachers and school systems being aware of and understanding environmental contexts and the needs and backgrounds impacting vulnerable children. Murphy (2022) examines the "School's response" and "Lack of quality support" as overarching themes throughout his study and focuses on the significance of how pupils perceived school responses to be negative turning points in their permanent exclusion. Murphy describes how children repeatedly discussed "poor-quality support as causing their violent and truanting behaviour". Jalali & Morgan refer to the impact of psychological factors in supporting the long-term inclusion of vulnerable pupils in mainstream education.

Hart (2013) explored the protective factors of PRUs identified by children and staff. She considered how the school environment can be a significant factor in supporting vulnerable children by creating a potentially "resilience-enhancing environment". Hart's research findings indicated that staff availability from the high levels of staff-pupil ratios was felt to be a protective factor for pupils in PRUs, which is not regularly available in mainstream secondary schools. In Hart's study, it emerged that pupils perceived personalised learning experiences and staff support as significant in aiding their progress.

Stanforth and Rose (2020) examined views from pupils and staff and found that teachers indicated a greater willingness to change their practices in managing challenging behaviour when they felt they had a better understanding of the circumstances within a pupil's home life or background. This demonstrates the importance of relationships between pupils and staff and the impact of adequate support prior to permanent exclusion. Stanforth & Rose also considered the complexities of teacher training and referred to many teachers being left without the appropriate formal training on how to use inclusive approaches to support students with challenging behaviour. Trotman et al. (2015) also consider the importance of training for school leaders and those with pastoral responsibilities with regard to supporting pupils with behavioural difficulties. They refer to developing behavioural policies based on evidence-based practice. Caslin (2021) explores discrepancies between the tolerance levels of teachers, highlighting evidence that suggests some teachers are more tolerant than others and cites ways in which teachers respond differently, which can significantly influence the relationships built with pupils.

Trotman et al. (2015) examined the theme of teaching and learning. They explored various ways teachers and school staff can help understand pupils and their needs, and ways of understanding the root causes of challenging behaviour, for example, the social and emotional needs that the behaviour may be masking. The concept of 'masking' refers to attempts to hide or camouflage difficulties or anxieties (National Autistic Society, 2022) and is often associated with autism. Disruptive behaviour at school often masks underlying processing, learning, and emotional difficulties (Nash et al., 2016). Trotman et al. also consider the impact of the transition between key stages and schools on young people. The findings of their study highlight that negative behaviour appears to be magnified when the emotional impact of transition on pupils is inadequately managed by staff.

Gersch & Nolan's 1994 paper examined excluded pupils' views and emphasised the importance of teacher support, with many participants explaining feeling they had not received the help and support they required, and sharing their perceptions that teachers were not prepared to support them when they found the work challenging. Some pupils in the study were able to identify the specific support they felt would have benefitted them and potentially helped to prevent the exclusions.

2.7.4 The impact of labels

While examining the literature and aiming to explore staff views, a key theme of 'labels' was highlighted, specifically the use and impact of labels attached to pupils, and how these impacted how teachers view and perceive students. Caslin (2021) shared concerns regarding how labels are employed within schools and how the stigmas attached to certain labels can negatively impact the perceptions of young people held by the adults who surround them. Caslin focuses on the "SEBD" (Social and Emotional Behaviour Difficulties) label and examines how a utilitarian approach to education enables education systems to remove young people who have the SEBD label from the classroom. Stanforth & Rose (2020) examined the construction of the student and found that often, the language used by staff and students indicated a 'problem within the child' that was seen as responsible for the challenging behaviour. From the qualitative data, Caslin identified a range of labels to describe students and specified language and labels used by staff often carried an element of blame. This, Caslin formulated, created a perpetrator/victim divide underpinning students' perceptions and highlighted the contrast between blaming students for their behaviour and/or blaming parents for students' behaviour. This, however, appeared to change once staff were presented with a different view of the child. For example, if they were presented with contextual factors, they were more likely to respond to behaviour in less punitive ways.

Gersch & Nolan (1994) also explore the use of labels and how these can negatively impact perceptions of excluded pupils, ultimately leading to equal opportunity issues. This, they argue, can also impact the way pupils are perceived by their peers. This use of labelling is particularly resonant when considering the label attached to a child when they are permanently excluded from school and how the "excluded" label affects their onward educational trajectory and treatment.

Labels and their impact also feature throughout Murphy's 2022 study. Responses indicate that pupils felt labelled as "bad" rather than supported with their learning or social needs. This resulted in adult responses such as blame, judgment, and low levels of empathy.

The findings from all studies in the systematic literature review indicate a need for a review of punitive measures and behaviour policies in schools to include a shared understanding of the

root causes of poor or challenging behaviour, including exploring any systemic and environmental influences impacting young people.

2.7.5 Environmental Factors

The fifth theme prominent within the literature was the concept of the pupils' environmental factors (such as their home life and the school environment) and how these impact the child, their behaviour, and, ultimately, the likelihood of exclusion.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed an ecological systems model, through which he examines the microsystem of a child's innermost circle, involving their close family and main attachment figures and caregivers. The mesosystem is closely linked with the microsystem but may extend to relationships built at school, i.e., with teachers and peers, through spiritual communities and mentor figures. The exosystem and macrosystem relate to networks outside these, for example, neighbourhoods, external family, public policy, etc. In most studies, there are frequent references to environmental factors, such as home lives, trauma, difficult circumstances the child experienced, and the transition between primary school and secondary. This theme also pertains to the physical environment of the schools and pupil referral units and pupils' experiences of the contrasts between the two after exclusion.

Trotman et al. (2015) considered the impact of school sizes on how a pupil experiences transition. They referred specifically to the behaviour of pupils changing in response to feelings of loss, uncertainty, and insecurity, when transitioning from a small primary school to a large secondary school. This paper also referred to poor behaviour as a direct result of complex and "chaotic" home, community, and school lives for many young people who experience exclusion. One of the main emerging themes from this paper was "*anger and calm: pupil and teacher behaviours*". This link with relationships acknowledges the chaotic nature of classroom environments and the impact this has on pupils.

Stanforth & Rose briefly comment on their findings that teachers' understanding of pupils' individual contexts was more likely to result in them applying less punitive measures in response to negative behaviour. They discovered that an understanding of the child's individual home environment and personal circumstances led to more sympathy and understanding. The findings of this paper also explore a link between deprivation and poverty, and difficult and traumatic home lives. Therefore, the knowledge that pupils of a "pupil premium" status was occasionally interpreted as a predecessor for poor behaviour and considered the criticism of blaming family deficit for behaviours. Stanforth & Rose conclude that teachers "could reject punitive exclusionary approaches to challenging behaviour, when they gained knowledge of certain contextual factors".

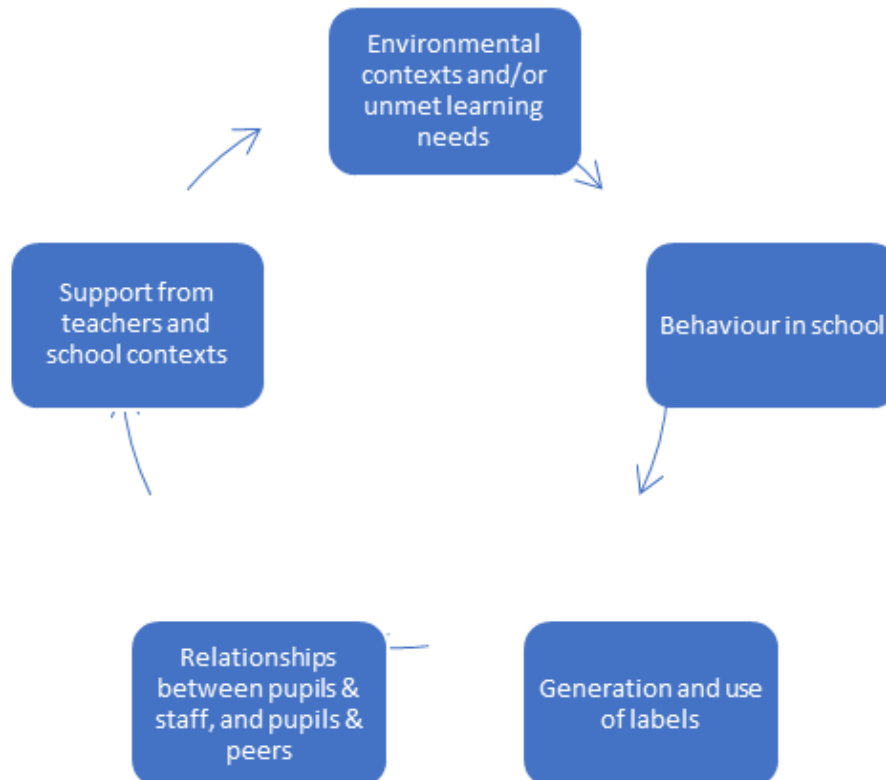
Murphy (2022) refers to racial inequality, social inequality, and disability discrimination as prohibiting contexts linked with poor behaviour. Murphy's initial theme within the findings and analysis is "*personal problems*", where he examines pupils' responses in linking the exclusions with dealing with personal problems. Sub-themes within the overarching theme of personal problems include '*abuse*' and '*bullying*'. Murphy found that most students who had been excluded reported being physically or emotionally abused in the recent or historical past, contributing largely to behavioural problems. Murphy's findings show that excluded children are more likely to have suffered abuse.

The concept of a pupil's 'environment' is also a main theme in Hart's 2013 study. Here, Hart considers the contrast between the school and PRU environments. The study's findings indicate the importance of an environment that pupils feel is conducive to learning. This is thought to foster positive and resilient outcomes for pupils.

2.7.6 Interacting Themes

The key themes identified within the literature search undoubtedly intersect and impact on one another. A pupil's environmental contexts, experiences, and Special Educational Needs on their behaviour will likely impact relationships between staff and pupils. Furthermore, deficits in teachers' skills and knowledge of home contexts and behaviour management may impact the emotional needs of the child being addressed and prevent a more nurturing approach from the staff. See Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. *Interacting themes within the literature review.*



Conclusions drawn from the critique of previous research were explored and will be discussed with regard to the current research aims.

2.8 Summary of the literature

The current literature around permanent exclusions (which includes the views of pupils and staff who experience them) has provided some evidence of key themes relating to behaviour. It has also focused on the factors that led to exclusions and considered ways to reduce exclusions. In contrast, little research has been conducted on how pupils and staff feel exclusions could have been avoided. Existing research highlights the significance of the relationships built between staff and pupils. Additionally, it highlights the importance of understanding and identifying contextual factors such as special educational needs, and schools not fully understanding pupils' difficulties within their environment. Much of the

literature indicated that pupils felt better understood by staff at pupil referral units rather than with teachers they had previous experiences with within their mainstream secondary provisions (Trotman et al., 2015).

Although the current research aims to focus on pupils' experiences of permanent exclusions, it is important to briefly consider the abundance of existing literature studying the impact and experiences of managed moves on young people, especially as many permanently excluded pupils have experienced failed managed moves as one of the processes leading to permanent exclusion. Database searches using the search terms "pupil experiences of managed moves" yielded over 3,000 results, and studies by Bagley & Hallam (2017), Parker et al. (2016) and Gazely et al. (2013) are referred to within the chosen studies examined in the systematic literature review. Managed moves were introduced in the UK in 1999 as an alternative to permanent exclusion, and much research has been conducted on the experiences and outcomes of this. The current study focuses on permanent exclusion and does not explore participant experiences of managed moves.

There appears to be a lack of research exploring young people's retrospective views and experiences of permanent exclusion alongside the pupil referral unit's staff regarding how the pupils may have avoided permanent exclusion. The systematic review has highlighted a gap in examining retrospective views. Hart specifically suggested that "Retrospective studies, linked to exploring the perceived protective factors of a PRU by those who successfully reintegrate back to mainstream school and go on to achieve positive social and academic outcomes, would also be valuable". (Hart, 2013, p. 209)

Murphy considers Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and concludes that the impact of bullying and abuse must be addressed to understand and take accountability for the exclusion behaviours of young people. They proposed that "further research is needed to consider how at the level of culture (...) there persists a systemic misreading of the signs and symptoms of social disadvantage and bullying that leads to practices of permanent exclusion". (Murphy, 2022, p. 55)

Many of the main findings from studies within the literature indicate that further research is necessary to develop a larger evidence base and highlight clear needs for reform in mainstream education providers before permanent exclusion is considered, with a focus on key areas, similar to the themes generated and discussed in the current literature review. Gersch & Nolan proposed in their 1994 study that "*qualitative studies of pupil and parental attitudes, teacher styles and attitudes and school systems are more likely to reveal meaningful findings*" than purely examining exclusion figures and statistics alone.

The research, therefore, aims to elicit the views and experiences of staff through an eco-systemic lens and focus on triangulation as well as highlighting areas for future positive change and development within mainstream school systems.

The current literature based on secondary-aged permanent exclusions appears to be growing and provisionally contributing to future practice. However, there certainly remain gaps in the literature, which require further research. These supported the rationale for the current research process and are summarised in the following section.

2.9 Rationale for Current Research

Research on school exclusions is by no means limited. There is an abundance of literature covering the field of school exclusions. However, there appeared to be a gap in the literature when it comes to gaining retrospective insight from secondary-aged pupils on how they feel their exclusions *may have been avoided*, and specifically focussing on the identification of (or therefore lack of) special educational needs of pupils *prior* to permanent exclusion and how

this may have impacted the processes leading to permanent exclusion. Similarly, there is a distinct lack of research focusing on the views of staff employed in Pupil Referral Units. This highlights a gap in the literature and misses the voices of key adults, who typically understand the process of permanent exclusion and observe firsthand the emotional impact pupils face. PRU staff have good knowledge of individual pupils' journeys pre and post-exclusion and are well-placed to share their views on this. The literature search enabled the researcher to gain a good understanding of existing literature, identify gaps, and, therefore, develop the following research questions:

2.9.1 Research Questions

1) What are the views of staff in Pupil Referral Units on the process of permanent exclusion regarding the pupils who attend the PRU?

2) What are the common experiences of pupils who have been permanently excluded from school?

2.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an insight and overview of young people's experiences of permanent exclusions. Research questions were stated, search strategies were defined, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria were made explicit. Much of the literature studied throughout this systematic review focussed on participants' experiences of permanent exclusion and the process before and after exclusion. However, none of the studies focused on how the exclusions could have been prevented or conducted deep explorations of unmet learning needs before exclusion.

The research was examined by generating five main themes- relationships, special educational needs, school support, the impact of labels, and environmental contexts. Gaps in the literature were considered and used to form the basis for the current research and conclude the current chapter. The following chapter will clearly describe the methodology applied to collecting and analysing the data for the study.

Chapter 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter outlines the research design and process of data collection and analysis. The researcher's ontological and epistemological positions will be discussed, whilst considering relevant theoretical underpinnings. Research questions are outlined and inform the aims of the research and the methods used to gather and analyse the data. Information will be provided regarding participants' selection, recruitment, characteristics, data collection, and analysis methods. Ethical processes and considerations are defined, and the trustworthiness and validity of the data will be discussed. The chapter ends with an overall summary of the methodology.

3.2 Ontological and Epistemological Position

Ontology and epistemology are separate but intertwined. Ontology is concerned with the concepts of reality and existence, while epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge and how it is acquired.

Ontology refers to the systems through which a person views or conceptualises 'reality'. Smith (2012) defines ontology as a branch of philosophy associated with "the science of what is, of the kinds and structures of objects, properties, events, processes and relations in every area of reality". In social research, the ontological stance of the researcher underpins the nature of how they view the reality of the research process and findings. Epistemology refers to how knowledge is obtained or produced and how a person effectively knows what they know.

Greig, Taylor, & MacKay (2007) argue that positivism and constructivism are the two major conceptual approaches underpinning research, operating as a continuum with positivism on one end of the scale and constructivism on the other. Positivism focuses on objectivity and operates on the assumption that research data must be scientifically based on observable and measurable facts, rather than focusing on subjective experiences, interpretations, and personal opinions. For this reason, positivism generally underpins quantitative research methods.

Constructivism rejects the concept of objectivity and works within the assumption that the nature of the participant is subjective, the research knowledge is symbolically and socially constructed, and perception is held in community with others. Constructivist research focuses on constructing knowledge through experiences and is often considered an appropriate research paradigm for qualitative data collection and analysis.

Another branch of methodological evaluation combines the scientific thinking of positivism with recognising the context and individuality of human behaviour and experiences (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007), known as critical realism. Regarding the previously mentioned continuum with positivism at one end and social constructivism at the other, critical realism falls more towards the social constructivist position.

3.2.1 Critical Realism

A critical realist paradigm argues that some multi-layered constructs and systems underpin the observable events we experience. Critical Realism combines ontological realism with epistemological relativism (Braun & Clarke, 2022) and operates on the assumption that there is "one truth"; however, it can be observed and experienced in a multitude of ways. In relation to the current research, permanent exclusion is a singular process that each pupil participant has experienced; however, their views, observations, and experiences may differ greatly and cannot be observed in an objective way to form one 'truth'. Whilst the current research aims to explore social constructions and perceptions of pupils and staff, a critical realist paradigm underpins the nature of the research and the construction of reality as examined through the language used by participants. Furthermore, a critical realist research paradigm distinguishes between the 'real world' and the 'observable world'. Ultimately, critical realism highlights reality's complex and multidimensional nature, underpinning the exploration of staff and pupil views obtained through the research.

Fox (2009) argues that critical realism also encompasses elements of emancipatory research, as it focuses on the importance of the individual perspective. Emancipatory research is seen as a process of producing knowledge-driven data that can benefit disadvantaged groups. Its key aim is to empower its research subjects (Noel, 2016).

The researcher's ontological position is adopted through a critical realist stance, and the epistemology focuses on social constructivism. Social constructivism is the theory that people

construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiences and interactions within their environment. The researcher adopts a constructivist epistemology by aiming to explore pupils' and staff's understanding and experiences of permanent exclusion from a mainstream secondary school and how their experiences shaped their knowledge and views.

The researcher feels that a critical realist ontology and a social constructivist epistemology enabled participants to share their truths and knowledge and the data to be analysed through individual views, experiences, and constructions.

3.2.2 Social Constructivism

Constructivist and constructionist research positions operate under the assumption that no singular 'truth' can be uncovered. Constructionism focuses on how a person learns through relationships, group processes, discourse, and power, and how knowledge is formed through these dynamics (Galbin, 2014). Constructivism differs slightly from this and focuses on an individual's unique experiences and how these shape their understanding of knowledge and truth rather than meanings made from group processes and shared understandings (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

In social constructivism, knowledge or 'truth' is not viewed as a fixed reality, but rather is objective and exists separately from the individual or individuals. Instead, it exists as a product of social experiences, which impact cognitive processes and the meaning we make from these through interactions with others and within our environment. Social constructivism observes how social reality, or cognitive 'facts', are created and formed by individuals and their interpretations of their social world and experiences. The researcher adopts a social constructivist epistemology and focuses on the meanings made by participants through their unique, individual experiences of permanent exclusion and how their retrospective views and interpretations of exclusion are formed through their experiences.

The researcher feels that a critical realist ontology and social constructivist epistemology enable pupils and staff to express their views, feelings, experiences, and understandings. It is also useful for guiding the researcher in extracting their constructions in a pure sense. Qualitative research using data collection through semi-structured interviews enabled participants to openly share their views and experiences and detail their individual interpretations of the shared event each pupil experienced (permanent exclusion from a mainstream secondary school).

The research and axiology are underpinned by core values shared by the researcher and promoted by the University of East London, such as social justice, autonomy, and beneficence. Excluded pupils lose much of their autonomy when excluded from school, and discursive practices indicate a negative onward trajectory, as addressed in the introduction.

Government statistics in England indicated that the most common reason for permanent exclusion is "persistent disruptive behaviour" (Gov.co.uk, 2019). The researcher's stance on behaviour and punitive measures may impact the narrative of the research and data analysis process. The researcher views behaviour as a form of communication and an expression of a need that is not being met.

3.3 Research Purpose

Research purpose is generally categorised into four main areas: exploratory, emancipatory, evaluative, and explanatory. Evaluative research examines impact or evaluates effectiveness,

and explanatory research focuses on explaining a phenomenon or establishing causal relationships between variables. Therefore, evaluative and explanatory research approaches were not appropriate in meeting the needs or purpose of the current research.

Exploratory research aims to gain a preliminary understanding or develop a further understanding of a phenomenon. The purpose of this research is to gain the retrospective views of pupils and staff in pupil referral units regarding their understanding and experiences of the processes that led to permanent exclusion. The research questions were addressed to seek an understanding of pupil and staff views.

An exploratory research purpose was espoused, (exploring the views and experiences of pupils and staff). However, permanent exclusions are by no means considered a “previously unknown or unresearched phenomenon”, as per some definitions of exploratory research (Robson & McCartan, 2017). However, as identified in the literature review, there are gaps pertaining to seeking pupils' views on how they feel they may have avoided permanent exclusion and exploring the processes that led to it.

Emancipatory research is concerned with social justice and seeks to challenge inequalities and empower disadvantaged and discriminated groups. As well as an exploratory purpose, the current research also aims to provide an emancipatory purpose. It has been argued that exclusions provide “a culling system that further oppresses and victimises identifiable groups who are already part of a downward spiral of dislocation and failure” (German, 2001, p.12). As adopted throughout this research, an emancipatory focus (eliciting and sharing the voices of those most affected by permanent exclusions, who may be viewed as vulnerable groups) seeks to empower pupils. Further, it aims to inform future exclusionary processes and practices. Blair (2001) argues that excluded pupils are considered a vulnerable group within society, and, therefore, most likely feel marginalised and excluded from social and academic school processes within the national curriculum. Waleng (2018) explores the marginalisation processes within school disciplinary processes. Furthermore, Howarth (2004) favours critical research as a methodology for supporting silenced or marginalised voices, such as the voices of excluded pupils.

3.4 Theoretical Underpinnings

The research is underpinned by theories of adolescent development and identity formation, and the Power Threat Meaning Framework (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018) is applied when exploring the experiences of young people who have been permanently excluded from school and the views of the staff who know them well.

3.4.1 The Power Threat Meaning Framework

The Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF) was developed as an alternative to more traditional models based on psychiatric diagnosis (BPS 17, 2018) and focuses on the shift in perspective from asking “what is wrong with you?” to “what happened to you?” (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). PTMF provides an alternative way of viewing a person's (generally reasonable) psychological and emotional responses to often very adverse environments and experiences. It considers how these operate as protective functions, thus demonstrating a capacity for meaning-making and agency.

The framework proposes the following core questions-

1. 'What has happened to you? (How is *power* operating in your life?)
2. 'How did it affect you? (What kind of *threats* does this pose?)

3. 'What sense did you make of it?' (What is the *meaning* of these situations and experiences to you?)
4. 'What are your strengths? (What access to *power resources* do you have?)

Johnstone & Boyle (2018) refer to 'general patterns in distress' and consider the ways people respond to negative operations of power and how these can increase levels of insecurity, fear, mistrust, violence, and conflict. They acknowledge the impact this has on members of society with marginalised identities. As in line with the emancipatory nature of the research, whereby permanently excluded pupils may arguably be viewed as a marginalised group, the PTMF patterns are aimed to restore the link between distress and social justice and examine how identity plays a role in how a person experiences power and power dynamics.

Secondary-aged pupils (between 11 and 16 years of age) are going through the adolescent stage of development and the stage Erik Erikson (1963) called "identity versus role confusion". In his proposed stages of psychosocial development, Erikson labelled the period of adolescent development as the 'fifth stage of ego'. Erikson argues that during this crucial stage of development, humans are experiencing role confusion and beginning to explore and understand their own sense of identity. Marcia (1993) further explored Erikson's concept of identity and role confusion, proposing four stages of the identity formation process: Identity Diffusion, Identity Foreclosure, Identity Moratorium, and Identity Achievement. Marcia suggests that during the 'Identity Foreclosure' stage of identity development, the adolescent tends to conform to the expectations of others, such as parents, teachers, and peers, which can impact their views of self and the future. The concept of labelling is one that often arises in the discourse surrounding adolescent psychology and school exclusions. The current research is underpinned by considerations of how pupils experience labelling with regard to their identity formation and how experiences of permanent exclusion can impact this.

Applying the PTMF to pupils who have been permanently excluded from school provides a key basis for moving away from the concept of "what is wrong with you" often conceptualised for pupils who are excluded for "behavioural difficulties" or "persistent disruptive behaviour" and instead exploring "what happened to you?" and the way power operates in the lives of the young people. Trauma, difficult transitions, and learning needs are common experiences amongst permanently excluded pupils. This research aims to shift the labelling of "naughty" children to exploring the reasons behind their behaviour and unmet needs, which may impact the behaviour.

3.4.2 Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-determination theory is a psychological theory developed by Deci & Ryan (1985) that operates on the assumption that humans are intrinsically motivated to behave in ways that support their own development, personal growth, and well-being. Fundamentally, SDT suggests that individuals have three core needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which must be satisfied to promote optimal functioning and well-being. When these needs are met, SDT proposes that individuals will experience more 'self-determined' motivation, which means that they are motivated by intrinsic influences, such as core values, personal interests, and beliefs, rather than extrinsic influences, such as rewards or punishments.

3.5 Pupil Voice

In 1989, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) proposed a bill of articles emphasising the importance of acknowledging and respecting children's and young people's rights. Article 12 of the bill states that children have the right to be heard and freely express their views on all matters that affect them, and emphasised the

importance of children being involved in decision-making processes. This has since been embedded in educational psychology practice and underpins much of the statutory work completed by EPs. The researcher's experience working with pupils in secondary schools at risk of exclusion and pupils after permanent exclusion was that pupils' voices are often lost during the exclusion process. There can often be times when young people are not given the opportunity to express their views on the reasons for exclusion or have any input on their future provision.

Therefore, this research aimed primarily at hearing from pupils who had experienced permanent exclusion and ensuring their voices were elicited, captured, and shared in the most authentic and direct ways possible.

3.6 Research Design

3.6.1 Qualitative Research

The research applied a qualitative design to gain young people and staff's retrospective views, perceptions, and experiences. Qualitative research generally explores the views and experiences of interviewees and the meanings they form from these experiences (Willig, 2008). Willig makes a strong case for qualitative research, supporting the aim of giving voice to those whose accounts tend to be marginalised or discounted (Willig, 2013). As the research aimed to gain a rich and in-depth exploration of the perspectives of pupils (whose views are not always sought or valued) and staff in pupil referral units, a qualitative design was deemed more appropriate than quantitative, which is associated with a positivist epistemology and focuses more on causality, rather than eliciting and interpreting individual stories and constructs. A large focus of the research was to share the 'unheard' voice of the pupils who have experienced permanent exclusion, which is underpinned by emancipatory research.

To gain participants' views organically and openly, semi-structured interviews were selected as the data collection method, enabling flexibility to follow participants' leads and ask questions referring to relevant comments made by participants whilst following a main structure for topics and questions.

3.6.2 Semi-structured Interviews

In line with the emancipatory nature of the research, semi-structured interviews were viewed as the most appropriate data collection method for numerous reasons. Firstly, the flexible nature of the approach offers a foundational structure with a framework of set questions whilst also allowing for further exploration of topics. This allows the researcher to ask deeper questions regarding specific responses and enables the participant to control the narrative and share responses they find meaningful, even if not specifically asked.

Robson & McCartan (2016) refer to the interview guide as a 'checklist' with the option of substantial modification based on the interview flow. This was ideal for the current research, particularly for the pupil participants who occasionally chose not to disclose specific experiences (such as the reason for their exclusion) but instead wanted to guide the interview in the direction of their experiences with mainstream teachers. Similarly, the researcher found that staff participants were far more likely to speak at length when they felt passionate about a topic, such as government funding to education, and so the semi-structured approach enabled participants to share what they found meaningful. This provided rich insight into each individual's experiences and constructs. Interview lengths varied depending on how much the participant chose to speak or how much time was available. Staff interviews tended to go on

for around an hour, whereas pupil interviews generally lasted between ten minutes and half an hour.

3.6.3 Research Questions

The overarching research question underpinning the study is: *What can be learned from pupils and staff in pupil referral units regarding processes that lead to permanent exclusion?*

The following sub-questions guide the research:

- 1) *What are the views of staff in Pupil Referral Units on the process of permanent exclusion regarding the pupils who attend the PRU?*
- 2) *What are the common experiences of pupils who have been permanently excluded from school?*

3.7 Data Collection

3.7.1 Interview Schedules

Separate interview schedules were developed for staff (see Appendix 1) and pupils (see Appendix 2) alongside the main research questions as a rough framework to guide the semi-structured interviews. The questions were merely guides, rather than rigid proposals to be methodically worked through in order. Participants were encouraged to share as much or little as they felt was relevant to their story, in their own time and at their own pace. If conversations moved away from the line of questioning or responses became tangential, this was encouraged, and the researcher followed their storytelling rather than re-directing them to specific questions. The interview schedule acted as a guide and prompted new conversations if the dialogue reached natural pauses.

Two separate interview schedules were developed- one for pupils and one for staff. Each shared some similarities and some differentiations. The interview schedules for participants shared similarities in that both asked for the participant to share their experiences of the kinds of support pupils receive with their learning in mainstream secondary schools and during their time in the pupil referral unit, as well as asking each participant for their views and understanding of the processes which led to the pupil or pupils' exclusions. Each interview schedule asked participants to discuss whether they felt pupils had any special educational needs or difficulties with learning and any support received. The schedules differed in that staff were asked how much information they received about a pupil and their needs, any diagnosed SEN or reasons for exclusion before they arrived at their PRU placement. Pupils were asked to describe how it felt when they received notice that they had been permanently excluded from their mainstream school.

The interview schedules were shared with each participant at the start of the interview, before recording, to ensure they felt prepared, familiar, and comfortable with what may be asked, and to provide them with an idea of the key discussion areas. The schedules were then removed from view before discussions began (unless participants requested to keep them) to ensure the conversation flowed naturally and organically and was not list-like in nature.

3.7.1.1 Staff interview schedule

Interview schedules developed for and shared with staff focussed mainly on their understanding of the pupils' backgrounds prior to them arriving at the pupil referral unit and their views and understanding of any unmet learning needs or previous trauma that may have impacted their behaviour in mainstream school (and therefore contributing to the reasons behind their permanent exclusions).

Each interview concluded with me asking the participant if there was anything I had not asked that they would like to share or felt was relevant, ensuring participants left feeling that they had been allowed and encouraged to share as much of their stories as they felt was relevant.

3.7.1.2 Pupil interview schedule

The interview schedule mainly focussed on the participant's experiences of primary and secondary school prior to permanent exclusion and their understanding of how, why, and when they were permanently excluded. Questions then explored the kinds of support they received before and after exclusion.

The researcher was aware that discussing big transitions, such as being removed from one school community and being sent to a new, unknown school, may have evoked unpleasant feelings and that some lines of questioning may lead the participants to reflect on previous or current trauma. Sharing the schedules with them aimed to offer them a sense of control and autonomy over the directions for the interview. They were clearly told they may choose not to answer any questions they wished, and they had the opportunity to cross off any specific questions they did not wish to engage with. Once this conversation was had and the participants could make any amendments to the scheduling, the schedules were removed from the participant (unless otherwise requested) once the interview began, ensuring the participants did not feel bound by the rigidity of structured questioning. One participant expressed that he did not wish to share the reason for his permanent exclusion. No other participants refused to answer any questions.

3.7.2 Participants

3.7.2.1 Recruitment of Participants

The research took place within one Local Authority and was conducted across 2 Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). Participants included seven staff who work in various roles in the PRUs and know the pupils well, (including senior leadership, inclusion leaders and learning support assistants) and pupils attending the PRUs after being permanently excluded from their mainstream secondary school. All provisions were part of one Local Authority Collegiate, and permission was sought from the Head of the collegiate to approach individual PRU provisions for engagement with the research. Once permission was granted, a joint meeting was set up with all PRU heads via Microsoft Teams. The research aims, and purpose was explained, as well as a description of inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants. I then contacted each Head Teacher individually and set up one-to-one meetings to discuss whether they felt they could identify pupils and staff who fit the criteria and may be happy to be interviewed.

Head teachers were asked to consider if they felt they currently had pupils on role in their provisions who fit the following criteria:

- Verbally and emotionally able and willing to engage with the semi-structured interviews.
- Aged between 11 and 16 years old.
- Permanently excluded from mainstream secondary school.
- Currently on role with the PRU provision full-time.

Verbal communication and basic receptive and expressive language skills were necessary for pupils to engage with the interviews. This was expected for secondary-aged pupils who had previously attended mainstream schools. The research focussed on secondary-aged pupils to provide context on their experience of both primary and secondary school education and share their views of the transition between key stages. The researcher specified the aims were to interview pupils who were permanently excluded rather than those on a managed move or respite placement.

The emotional safety of participants was paramount in selecting pupils to engage in the interviews, and, therefore, the researcher ensured that pupils who were currently undergoing emotional turmoil, stress or any other psychological distress (for example, a significant bereavement) were not selected to participate.

After discussions regarding participant identification, the appropriate forms were sent via secure email to each Head, including consent forms for participants and parents of young people and participant information sheets. Recruitment flyers were hand-delivered to each provision. Only once parental consent forms had been signed and returned did the researcher meet the pupils and ask for verbal consent to interview them, and only once both written and verbal consent were granted did the interviews begin.

3.7.2.2 Participant Characteristics

12 participants were interviewed in total, and participants fell into two main categories- PRU staff and pupils.

Participant characteristics for staff are detailed in Table 1.

Participant characteristics for pupils are detailed in Table 2.

Findings from the literature review highlighted the length of time a teacher had spent in the role may often impact their confidence and competence in managing and understanding behavioural difficulties, and so this was included in the data collection. It was important to the researcher to hear views from staff in a range of roles (with the specific inclusion criteria of being in a role where they worked directly with the pupils in the PRU on at least a weekly basis) and with a range of time spent in the roles. Although the researcher did not specify gender in the recruitment flyer, a mix of genders from each participant group was interviewed. To examine whether pupils had diagnosed or undiagnosed needs, this was asked during pupil interviews and the type of school support they felt they received during their time spent in mainstream classes.

Table 3. PRU staff participant details

Pseudonym	Job Title	Sex	Time in role
Phil	Assistant Head Teacher	Male	3 years
Leon	Learning and Behaviour Support	Male	3-4 years
Emma	Head Teacher	Female	20+ years
Craig	Deputy Head Teacher	Male	11+ years
Nathan	Head Teacher	Male	Less than 1 year
Daniel	Subject Teacher	Male	5 years
Anna	Subject Teacher	Female	15 years

Table 4. *Pupil participant details*

Pseudonym	Year Group	Sex	Diagnosed SEN	In-class support received prior to exclusion
Jamal	Year 9	Male	No diagnosis	TA support in some lessons
Amber	Year 8	Female	Dyslexia	Coloured overlays to support reading
Noel	Year 11	Male	ADHD, ASD, Dyslexia	None disclosed
Sam	Year 10	Male	ADHD, Dyslexia, Social anxiety	None disclosed
Cheyenne	Year 10	Female	ASD	None disclosed

3.7.2.3 Timeline of Data Collection

Due to the busy nature of PRUs and the often-erratic attendance of pupils, data collection proved to be more time-consuming than originally anticipated. Original plans were to begin data collection in September 2022, and initial contact was made with the Local Authorities Head of the PRU Collegiate and the principal educational psychologist in April 2022 to seek permission to approach individual PRU provisions to recruit participants. In July 2022, an online meeting was conducted with Head Teachers from 5 PRU provisions to discuss the research aims, ascertain if Head Teachers felt they could identify appropriate participants and seek permission to approach staff and pupils to participate in interviews. Due to various circumstances, such as a critical incident within the PRU collegiate, ongoing difficulties receiving returned consent forms and varying commitment clashes, data collection began in December 2022, and all data was collected and transcribed in April 2023.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Before beginning the research, ethical approval was obtained by the University of East London's ethical committee (see Appendix 4), the LA's Principle Educational Psychologist and The Head of the LA's PRU Collegiate (Appendix 5).

All research complied with ethical guidelines from the Health and Care Professions Council (2016) and the British Psychological Society (2018). The potential for harm to participants or the researcher was considered, and a risk assessment was completed to mitigate against this, prior to commencing the research.

Information sheets detailing the specifics of the research and participation, including information about the researcher, details of the research, the right to withdraw, data storage and confidentiality, were developed and sent out to selected pupils, their parents or carers and selected staff (Appendices 6,7,8) as a first step. Each potential participant and the parents or carers of the pupils were then given a consent form to read, check and sign prior to engaging with the interviews (Appendices 9,10,11). No participant was interviewed until consent forms were signed and returned. Participants were given contact information prior to the interviews and offered the opportunity to ask any questions beforehand.

The aims for interviews and interactions with participants were to be entirely transparent throughout the process and engage in a completely deception-free process. To ensure this, the researcher checked their understanding upon meeting them before the interviews commenced and after the individual interviews had been conducted. Each participant was

given a debrief sheet after the interviews (Appendix 12), which detailed how their data would be managed, information regarding the results of the research and the procedures for if they felt adversely affected by taking part in the research, including the researcher's contact details and the details of further support.

Permanent exclusion from a school community often has the potential to cause distress and feelings of rejection, alienation (Billington, 2000) and ostracization for pupils (Dixon, 2007). Due to this, the researcher was aware that parts of the interviews might bring up unpleasant emotive feelings for participants and, therefore, was keen to pick up on non-verbal cues indicating distress or as a signal to indicate they wished to pause or withdraw from the interview. Through the researcher's previous experiences of working with young people with social and emotional needs, gaining views of young people attending PRUs as part of completing statutory advice and the knowledge and training gained on the doctorate, they were well equipped with principles of attuned interaction with young people and comfortable with interacting with them and detecting signs of discomfort or emotional dysregulation. The researcher was therefore keen to manage these appropriately through discussions, stopping the interviews if necessary, and working in partnership with the PRU staff to support the pupil or refer to other agencies if necessary.

3.9 Power Dynamics

Mukherji & Albon (2018) discussed how issues of power should be considered in relation to the choice of method and appreciate the importance of recognising conceptual issues around interviewing children and young people. Westcott and Littleton (2005) consider the critical idea that children may not be used to being listened to seriously. This felt particularly pertinent when applied to young people who have been excluded from school and who often have had little involvement in where their next educational provision will be.

Clark (2005) argued that all forms of communication between adults and children involve questions of power. When preparing to conduct semi-structured interviews with pupils, I was aware of the necessity to consider my positional power as an unknown professional (potentially another face in a long line of adult professionals the young person may have encountered, for example, teachers, social workers, sometimes police etc.) and to consider the impact this may have on the young person and their willingness to disclose personal information regarding their exclusions and educational history. The concept of 'vulnerability' was also integral to considering power dynamics within the research. Clark further argues that adults who view children and young people as "vulnerable" may emphasise a strong or powerful role for adults and a comparatively powerless role for children. Conversely, adults who view children as capable of taking an active role in research may project higher expectations of children regarding their ability to participate (Mukherji & Albon, 2018).

When considering power dynamics, it felt pertinent to the researcher to reflect on her own positioning and power and how participants may experience this. It is common for young people who have been permanently excluded to have experience communicating with many professionals, including teachers, senior leadership, social workers and, in some cases, the police. It is important to be aware that some of these experiences may have been negative or unpleasant for pupils, and it could be confronting for them to talk to a previously unknown adult about topics they may find personal or intrusive.

To ensure pupils felt comfortable and informed, the researcher carefully explained her role and purpose, introducing herself and sharing previous experiences working with young people who had been permanently excluded from school. The researcher used principles of attuned

interactions and considered how she welcomed, received and responded to each participant's initiative. The researcher explained to pupil participants that they would not be told off or reported to teachers for using profane language that would not usually be encouraged in school. This was to ensure the pupils felt comfortable sharing their views and experiences organically and naturally, perhaps how they may naturally communicate with friends or family without the anxiety of repercussions regarding the 'appropriateness' of their language use.

3.10 Data Analysis

After each interview, the researcher listened to the recording to re-familiarise themselves with the data and hear it from the listener's position, rather than an interviewer. This was with the objective of considering the responses in a clearer way and without the responsibility of keeping the conversations flowing, as well as being able to identify any glitches in the recordings quickly after the interviews. Interview transcription began soon after. The researcher ensured transcripts were produced as quickly as possible after the interviews to enable recognition and recall of exactly what was said during any areas where speech was muffled or inaudible.

Transcriptions were developed initially using transcription software within Microsoft Teams. Recordings were then listened to again, and errors within the transcripts produced by the software were manually corrected. A secondary manual transcription process enabled the researcher to create explicit, verbatim accounts of what was said, including any slang, mispronunciations, swearing, and where necessary, tone and verbal emphasis were included (Appendix 13). Capitalisation was used to indicate a loud statement, and additional letters in words were added to express elongated sounds- for example, "NO!" or "naaaahh". Keys were included to indicate pauses or emphasis on specific words or tones. Nothing was removed from transcriptions, and where the sound was muffled, or participants' responses were inaudible, the transcripts noted this.

Although the research analysis was largely inductive because it sought the views and experiences of participants first and foremost, before analysis, there were also elements of a deductive approach. The researcher began the research process with a literature review, including a thematic synthesis of existing data. To conceptualise these themes, the researcher relied on knowledge gained from the literature review to inform key research questions. Whilst there was some preconceived idea that the research may generate similar findings and themes to those explored during the literature review, the basis of the study was not testing hypotheses or attempting to refute or support these. Therefore, the analysis process was mainly inductive.

Various methods of data analysis were considered. One of which was Narrative Theory (or a narrative analysis)- which focuses on interpreting an event and fundamental elements of a person's experience of the event. This felt relevant in exploring how participants construct their realities through the impact of their experiences. However, whilst the researcher was keen to elicit participants' experiences and retrospective views, the main aims of the research were less to analyse the meanings people make of their experiences, and more to consider similarities, patterns, and comparable themes through multiple participant responses. Therefore, Reflexive Thematic Analysis was selected as the most suitable for the current research.

3.10.1 Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Braun & Clarke (2013) propose a six-stage process for analysing data. The following stages make up the proposed process:

- Step 1- Familiarising yourself with the dataset
- Step 2- Coding
- Step 3- Generating initial themes
- Step 4- Developing and reviewing themes
- Step 5- Refining, defining and naming themes
- Step 6- Writing up

The researcher used this as a framework for conducting the thematic analysis and completed each stage as follows:

3.10.1.1 Familiarising yourself with the dataset.

The data was initially produced through the participant interviews, during which the researcher experienced the data for the first time. Once all interviews were concluded and all recordings were transcribed, the researcher listened to the recordings, then listened again whilst producing verbatim transcripts to become further familiarised with the data. The researcher then read and re-read each transcript to become fully familiarised with the dataset before beginning the analysis.

3.10.1.2 Coding

While coding software is available, the researcher chose to code by hand, initially using hard copies of the transcripts and highlighter pens to indicate points of interest or relevance. Electronic copies were used when a secondary coding process was applied. Initially, extracts were hand-written on post-it notes and used to group relevant extracts into categories.

Figure 2

Example image of the initial coding process



Microsoft Word was then used to create a table containing direct quotes from participants of interest or relevance to the research question in one column and relevant code labels in the

adjacent column. Electronic copies and hard copies of the transcripts were thoroughly examined. Each time a point of relevance or interest, particularly if directly related to the research question, was spotted, this was directly inputted into the table, and a code label was attached.

Examples of the initial coding processes are available (see Appendix 14).

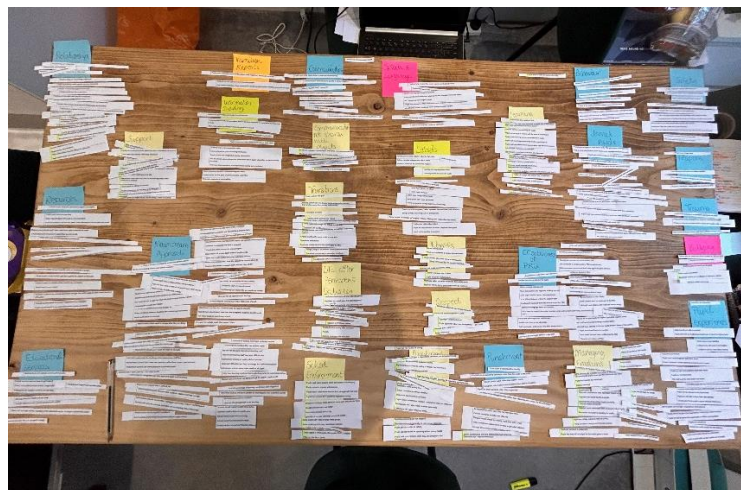
This process was done initially with all the staff transcripts and then with all the pupil transcripts separately, before a third process of coding the entire pupil and staff dataset in preparation for generating integrated themes.

3.10.1.3 Generating Initial Themes

During this phase, the researcher was able to begin identifying patterns and shared views or meanings across the dataset. Braun & Clarke suggest that in reflexive thematic analysis, a theme operates to capture a wide range of data that compile and evidence a shared idea.

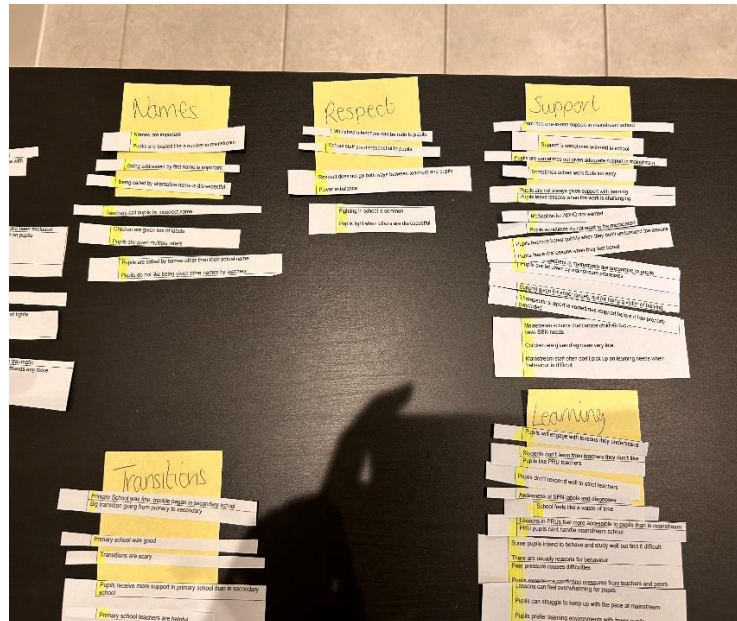
The researcher began manually grouping hard copies of individual codes into categories of shared meanings and patterns. As this process developed, codes were categorised into around 20 labelled concepts (See Figure 2), with examples of 'knives are a huge issue' and 'carrying weapons isn't always with the intention to cause harm' coming under the code of 'weapons'. Similar concepts falling under the codes (for example) of 'bullying' and 'trauma' as initial code groups, were then all placed into one group, with 'safety' as the theme heading. The researcher applied this process in relation to Research Question 1, *What are the views of staff in Pupil Referral Units on the processes of permanent exclusion with regards to the pupils who attend the PRU?*, and Research Question 2, *What are the common experiences of pupils who have been permanently excluded from school?*

Figure 3. Example image of generation of themes



Note. This image is for the purpose of viewing the initial coding process. It is acknowledged that the viewer cannot read code labels.

Figure 4. Further refinement of themes.



3.10.1.4 Reviewing, naming, and defining themes

Themes and subthemes were reviewed and condensed from 7 themes to 4 overarching themes with subthemes. The researcher reflected on each theme and subtheme's unique contribution to the overall research and considered how the themes linked to one another and the research questions. In some cases, relevant extracts from the data were used to label each theme to produce powerful theme labels, which accurately encapsulated the participants' views. (See Appendix 15.) Thematic maps were produced to illustrate the key concepts, themes, and subthemes and demonstrate the themes relevant to the research questions.

3.10.1.5 Producing the Report

The following chapter of this doctoral thesis is dedicated to reporting the findings from the thematic analysis. Direct quotes and extracts are detailed to demonstrate the validity of the key concepts, themes, and subthemes and to tell the 'overall story' of the data and analysis as a whole.

3.11 Validity and Trustworthiness

Whilst the concept of validity in research has often been applied to quantitative research methodologies, Yardley (2008) argues that the same notions of validity can and should also be applied to qualitative studies. Maxwell (2012) refers to validity in qualitative research as the credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, or interpretation. Similarly, Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggested that research value is strengthened by its trustworthiness and proposed establishing four factors: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

This principle refers to having confidence in the 'truthfulness' of the finding and was applied to the study by recording the interviews and producing verbatim transcripts, which were checked

multiple times for accuracy. Direct quotes from participants were included throughout the reporting of findings. The concept of credibility also refers to ensuring participants feel able to share honest and open accounts of their experiences. Participants were interviewed in the PRU provision, where they were employed if they were staff participants or where they attended if they were pupils. This aimed to conduct the research in a familiar and appropriate location, which felt on 'their turf' and where they were comfortable.

Transferability

This principle refers to showing that the findings can be applied in other contexts. The researcher provided information regarding each element of the study, including the national and local context, participant characteristics, and generalisability.

Dependability

The concept of dependability refers to showing that the findings are consistent and can be repeated. The researcher provided details of each stage of the recruitment and data collection, the full processes involved, and details regarding participant characteristics. Data analysis and interpretations were made clear.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree of neutrality and objectivity, and the extent to which the respondents and researcher shape the findings of a study. The researcher's reflections, biases, and reflexivity were documented throughout the study in a reflective journal, and an audit trail was kept and logged to enhance confirmability. The researcher's position was reflected on and outlined within this chapter, and the impact of this, and her core values were also considered and noted. Regular discussions with the researcher's academic tutor throughout the entire research process provided further opportunities for reflection as well as weekly supervision sessions with the placement provider.

3.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an outline of the study's methodology. The ontological and epistemological stances were explored and defined, the research purpose was stated, and theoretical underpinnings applicable to the research were considered. The chapter outlined research methods, including descriptions of data collection and analysis. Ethical considerations were addressed, power dynamics explored, and the validity and trustworthiness of the research were defined.

The following chapter provides the findings from the data analysis.

CHAPTER 4- Research Findings

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter discusses the research findings that were produced using Reflexive Thematic Analysis. To analyse the data with the view of answering the two Research Questions, two datasets were analysed: the responses from the pupil interviews and the responses from the staff interviews. Afterwards, a third analysis was conducted of integrated themes, which included all of the data as a whole. Throughout the transcript extracts, researcher comments are labelled 'R' and participant responses are labelled 'P'.

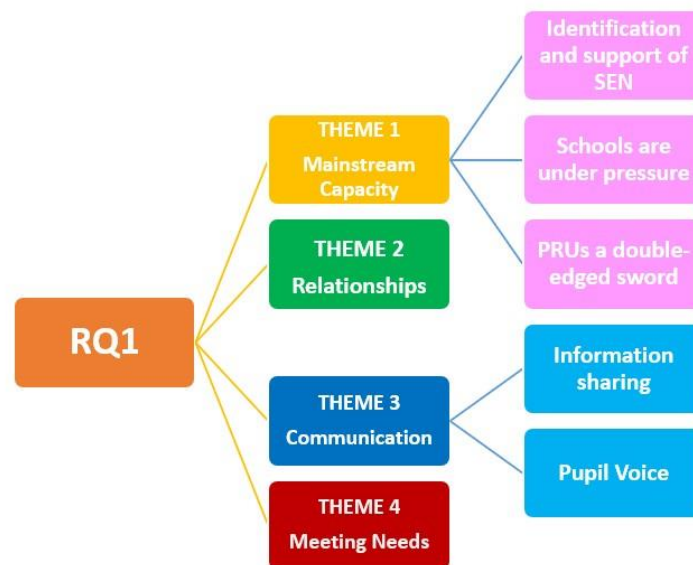
Thematic maps illustrate the themes within each data set, and a thorough, detailed description is provided for each dataset, theme, and sub-theme relating to each research question.

Research Question 1) *What are the views of staff in Pupil Referral Units on the processes of permanent exclusion regarding the pupils who attend the PRU?*

Research Question 2) *What are the common experiences of pupils who have been permanently excluded from school?*

4.2 Analytic Narrative

Figure 5 Thematic Map Research Question 1



4.3 Themes Within Staff Data

A thematic analysis of the data gathered during interviews with staff and in response to **research question 1** elicited four overarching themes. The title of each theme within the staff dataset is a direct quote from a participant, which encapsulates the essence of the theme. The four themes are titled as follows:

Theme 1. *“Mainstream Schools just don’t have the capacity”.*

Subtheme 1.1- *Identification of and support for Special Educational Needs*

Subtheme 1.2- *Schools are under pressure.*

Subtheme 1.3- *Pupil Referral Units as a “double-edged sword”.*

Theme 2. *“Relationships are exceedingly important”.*

Theme 3. *“Communication is the most powerful tool any of us have”.*

Subtheme 3.1- *Information sharing*

Subtheme 3.2- *Pupil voice*

Theme 4. *“If we know a child has needs, why are we not meeting them in a reasonable time?”*

4.3.1 Theme 1: “Mainstream schools just don’t have the capacity”.

This theme summarises the apparent views shared by staff in PRUs that mainstream secondary schools are ultimately unable to effectively identify and support every single pupil's varying and often complex needs. The size and capacity of mainstream schools were an obstacle mentioned frequently by participants in relation to meeting the needs of pupils with social and emotional difficulties. Many staff participants acknowledged that class sizes of thirty-plus pupils make it very difficult for teachers to provide tailored support to pupils who feel unable to conform to behavioural standards and who need additional support in class but don't have an identified SEN support plan.

4.3.1 Subtheme 1.1 Identification of and support for children with Special Educational Needs

Staff participants within this study often referred to the link between excluded pupils and special educational needs. They also commonly expressed concern about how many pupils arrive at the PRU with clear needs that had not yet been supported through their educational journey. Three participants commented on the high numbers of pupils who display learning difficulties, speech and language difficulties, and/or social communication needs:

R- “in terms of the [pupils] who've been permanently excluded, what percentage roughly would you say have some kind of SEN or some kind of learning need, or whether it's diagnosed or undiagnosed?”

P- “100!!”

R- “Really, yeah?”

P- “Pretty much yeah. I'm struggling to think of ones where there's not either, something just like dyslexia or ADHD / undiagnosed ASD / AED / ODD, so then there's... there's... there's all the whole the full spectrum of everything is there usually and they'll be somewhere on it all. OR, they're there because of a massive amount of childhood trauma. Yeah. And that often goes hand in hand in hands with the uh exhibiting the behaviours of the educational additional need.”

(Daniel- Lines 42-51)

“The percentage of kids that we have here with undiagnosed SEN, I'd say it's quite high, like, Anecdotally, 70%”

(Phil, Lines 92-93)

P- “You know, most of the kids that we get here have social communication issues.”

Researcher: “Really? Yeah?”

P- “Yeah that is the biggest... Speech and language, social communication.”

(Emma, Lines 123-126)

Furthermore, staff participants often reported the ease at which they could very quickly spot a child with unidentified needs when they arrived to begin their new placement with the PRU.

“They come here and literally within minutes of talking to them, you know, they've literally been lost and missed. And there's no one cared enough to look into why? Because you can quite clearly see they've got speech and language problems. You know, they could get a diagnosis for ADHD.”

(Anna- Lines 107-119)

“It is scary how many kids come here that have undiagnosed needs that school have got no idea about.”

(Emma- Lines 151-159)

“With most students you know when they walk in the room, Umm. And it amazes me how schools don't see it. Especially with some children, because it is so blatantly obvious that there is a need that's not being met. So, our thing is that we try to look beyond the behaviour to see what's the cause of it.”

(Emma- Lines 16-19)

Discussions with participants regarding the identification (or lack thereof) of learning needs often progressed to the link between SEN and behaviour. The staff participants appeared to have a clear and shared view that unmet needs directly impact behaviour and how a pupil presents. The semi-structured interviews often naturally led to discussion around behaviour and the link between unmet needs and the difficulties mainstream staff face managing unwanted or disruptive behaviour from pupils. Some participants referred to the idea that some pupils are unable to operate appropriately in a mainstream secondary school and shared views that emotional regulation can be increasingly difficult for pupils with unmet learning needs:

“Mainstream schools require, due to their nature of 30 kids in the class, a certain level of compliance, that some students find very difficult to maintain for a whole host of reasons.”

(Craig- Lines 122-125)

“The students who are, you know, getting up off the seat during class, disturbing others walking around rooms that is, you know, can be a result of so many different things that can be students CAN be helped with and support that CAN be put in place for them, but unfortunately, mainstream schools haven't really got the capacity during a mainstream lesson to to deal with that in a kind of

sophisticated and a kind of sometimes long winded way it it- it requires a different approach for those students."

(Craig- Lines 132-139)

Staff participants frequently raised the issue of class sizes in mainstream schools and expressed the difficulties mainstream teachers face. One participant questioned:

"When you've got 30 odd kids in a class, how can you support send kids?"

(Emma- Line 97)

And later pondered:

"Not blaming mainstream, but with the limited resources and so many kids in a class, how do you manage? Y'know, so... but yeah, I think schools tend to focus on behaviour rather than what their needs are"

(Emma- Lines 141-143)

"I've had other students and like I said, as soon as they walk in the room... You just know that there is something from talking to them or and, but then I I guess it's that's what we do. Umm. And in mainstream, I guess there's so many of them that maybe you wouldn't, but sometimes it is so blatantly obvious that you wonder how it was missed."

(Emma- Lines 66-71)

Some staff participants considered the possibility that for mainstream schools, pupils who present with behaviour that teachers find increasingly challenging could be an easier option to permanently exclude pupils, rather than explore and support learning needs. One staff member summarised this as:

"it seems it would be easier to get rid of the problem rather than to manage the problem."

(Craig- Line 169-170)

Another participant queried the lack of diagnosed SEN as an easier option to exclude than to pursue a diagnosis and/or need:

"I feel a lot of the times we get pupils in here and it's very apparent that there's some sort of need, not that any of us can diagnose it, But, you know that there's... there's a need that hasn't been diagnosed. And there, the concern is, has it not been diagnosed because they haven't seen it? Even though seems to be fairly apparent that there is a need there? Or is it just that it's easier to ignore it? And then there's the case of "well, now I can permanently exclude you".

(Phil- Line 39-44)

The capacity of mainstream schools and the limitations to teachers to be able to effectively manage the needs of every pupil were frequently discussed, and participants considered constraints with time, resources, and academic progress pressure that mainstream teachers face.

R- "Do you think that for these pupils that were speaking about now, if they had received the support for the learning needs earlier or there had been a diagnosis earlier in their educational history, that they may have avoided permanent exclusion?"

P- "I would like to say yes, but while you have class sizes of 30 and an academic curriculum that is only looking at progress and doesn't (although behind the scenes, people do say they appreciate that people don't progress in a linear fashion) the expectation is that they progress in linear fashion.

Umm... And while you have teachers and support staff who aren't able to effectively do their jobs because of the sheer volume.

Then, if it was diagnosed earlier you wouldn't have a kid with very poorly or partially met needs because there is just not the capacity in mainstream schools to support this."

(Nathan- Lines 173-182)

One participant shared their views on the concept that teachers in mainstream schools may not necessarily be given the appropriate support themselves, to support the pupils and their individual needs successfully and realistically:

"I don't think that support is a lot of the time is JUST about the kids. I think some of the professionals working with these young people need support themselves and what I mean by that is, I mean training."

(Leon- Lines 156- 158)

Another expressed their opinion that teaching staff in mainstream schools may be able to support individual learning and emotional needs better if they had less pressure on them to provide results:

R- "Do you think that for these pupils that were speaking about now, if they had received the support for the learning needs earlier or there had been a diagnosis earlier in their educational history, that they may have avoided permanent exclusion?"

P- "I would like to say yes, but while you have class sizes of 30 and an academic curriculum that is only looking at progress and doesn't (although behind the scenes, people do say they appreciate that people don't progress in a linear fashion) the expectation is that they progress in linear fashion.

Umm... And you have teachers and support staff who aren't able to effectively do their jobs because of the sheer volume.

Then, if it was diagnosed earlier, you wouldn't have a kid with very poorly or partially met needs because there is just not the capacity in mainstream schools to support this."

(Nathan- Lines 173-182)

4.3.3.2 Subtheme 1.2: Schools are under pressure.

All participants were keen to share their sympathy and understanding towards mainstream teachers, who they collectively appeared to feel a sense of compassion for, with regard to the pressures that teachers are under. This was often discussed about large class sizes, pressure to perform and produce results, managing behaviour, and the ever-increasing workload secondary school teachers face.

Phil shared their views about the pressures of results and the impact this can have on supporting the needs of individual pupils:

"Not to put any fault into mainstream schools because like, you've come to our school now, our school's fairly small compared to mainstream school. If you think of a mainstream school, one year group has 215 pupils in one year group, there's five years in the school.

30 kids in the classroom... We've got 8... Max... 6 minimum, in a classroom, so like. We have a lot more time to kind of work around the kid and build relationships and kind of get down to the nitty gritty of why they- they are behaving, or they're doing, what they're doing,

Where, in the mainstream school That's not really looked at, like they're pressures of results and Providing numbers and all that kind of stuff overrides sometimes quality work do you know what I mean? If you think in the classroom, in mainstream you could have 4 kids that actually need 1 to 1 support.

So, I mean, and that's cut down to one support worker in the classroom working with a student that's meant to be one-to-one on a four-to-one basis?"

(Phil- Lines 84-96)

Nathan summarised their views on the ever-increasing progress demands that schools face and the difficulties following funding cuts to the education sector with the following comment:

"Before the funding crisis, so going back... The first half of my career. I would suspect, well it was more child focused, and the mantra at the time was 'Every Child Matters' Whereas at the moment, it seems like only exams matter."

(Nathan - Lines 186-188)

One participant shared their views on the reduced levels of pressure on staff working for the PRU in comparison with the pressures mainstream teachers face:

“I wanna make this very clear- in any way an aspersion on mainstream teaching staff. They have considerably more considerably busier, hectic situations than we do, you know we've got very small classes, there's very few pupils in the provision.

You know, there's the intensity of, of dealing with children with, you know, behaviours that are difficult. but we don't have like, 300 books to mark and 300 homeworks to Mark and, you know, thirty children in my class all vying for attention.”

(Daniel- Lines 107-117)

4.3.1.3 Subtheme 1.3: Pupil Referral Units as a “double-edged sword”.

Whilst participants shared views on the capacity and limitations of the support provided by mainstream schools, there were also frequent reflections on the ability of PRUs to provide a different level of care and support for young people, which has positive and negative outcomes. Staff members often referred to the luxury of having smaller class sizes in PRUs, which enable them to identify and support pupils with their individual needs and the types of provision they can and cannot offer. Participant responses generally included the “pros and cons” of PRUs in terms of meeting the needs of the pupils.

Staff training was mentioned within the first subtheme, and this was also indicated through Daniel’s view on school provision size and staff training:

“I think a lot of the schools don't really have large enough, or well-trained enough provisioning within the school to- to support these kids. So, they'll [thumb gesture pointing to the door indicating being kicked out] Yeah, they have to get them out.”

(Daniel- Lines 31-39)

Phil shared his views on the benefits of a smaller provision in the PRU:

“I think the biggest thing that we have here, that mainstream schools don't, is time... Hmm, because the ratio from staff to pupils is much, much lower. I- our class sizes are no typically no bigger than 8. Whereas, in mainstream you'll get a group of 32 and some school here by groups of 40.”

(Phil- Lines 168-172)

Craig acknowledged the concerns regarding peer influences in the PRU versus a mainstream school. He referred specifically to the risks of negative peer influences and the vulnerability to becoming embroiled in criminal activity or gang affiliation:

“The other thing which is also an important factor is their friendship circle gets limited. So, I often say the students that going back to a mainstream school, you

can choose a friendship circle from a kind of wider pool here that they are with nearly all kids who are in inverted commas- "Naughty kids". No, and so. I think it would be good for them to be able to choose a friendship group from a wider cohort of children so...

a lot of our students here are really good kids and they don't really get involved with criminal activity on the streets. But we have a cohort within our cohort that do. Now if they gravitate towards that cohort within ours that are attracted to say gang culture or criminal behaviour, they've got... maybe that is a slightly larger pull factor here than it is in a mainstream. You can stay away from that traction more in the mainstream so it is possible that they could be drawn into... all the 'glamour', as they see it, of criminal life, here maybe more than a mainstream."

(Craig- Lines 84-97)

While reflecting on the positive and negative aspects of the PRU environment, Craig added views on the benefits of a more intimate, emotionally supportive provision. However, he also compared the restricted curriculum offered in a PRU versus broader curriculum opportunities offered in a mainstream school:

"We have got quite a nurturing, caring environment and students quite quickly feel very secure in and if, you know, you were to interview students, they probably would say that they don't want to go back to mainstream because they- they love it here, which is a kind of double-edged sword because we don't want them to be permanently in a pupil referral unit. But we also don't want to treat them bad, soo they want to go back to a mainstream school. So, it's a kind of difficult balance... But..."

I would say in general there are exceptions. Most of our students end up saying that they prefer this environment to a mainstream environment. So even though the- the short-term impact on them is quite, umm, probably quite difficult emotionally for them to deal with... Once they get established. I do think the, the- they feel good but this impacts on them in other ways which is their educational output."

(Craig- Lines 52-62)

"The negative impact, I would say being in a pupil referral unit, is that ermm... One- educational outcomes may be restricted due to the fact that the curriculum is not as broad. So, for example, there are certain subjects we can't offer Spanish or French because we haven't got a teacher in every discipline."

(Craig- Lines 76-84)

Other participants reflected on the benefits of a PRU in relation to the emotional support and sense of community they feel they can offer pupils. This feeds into the second theme of relationships.

4.3.2 Theme 2: “Relationships are exceedingly important”.

The second theme identified through the data was the significance of relationships and their role in learning and education. All participants mentioned the importance of building positive relationships with the pupils and the impact of negative teacher-peer relationships. The concept of relationships seemed to be one that staff in PRUs felt particularly strongly about. They often shared comments highlighting the care and support they strive to implement, particularly for vulnerable pupils. Craig discussed the relationships formed within their provision and described the PRU as follows:

“a very nurturing and small environment where you develop really good bonds with staff. That’s very significant, and that a lot of students feel recognized and seen and loved in a way that had never happened in a mainstream school. And so, it can have a quite powerful effect on their lives. And they often, even in their 20s, they still come back and see us because it was- it was an important experience for them.”

(Craig- Lines 102-106)

All staff participants shared the view that relationships built during a child’s education are of paramount importance. Leon expressed the following:

R- “You spoke about relationships earlier. How important do you think relationships are for the permanently excluded pupils that you get here?”

P- “I think THAT is probably the MOST important thing, is the relationship between the school, parents, young people here. I think that’s one of the... If not, the MOST important... It is everything.”

(Leon- Lines 118-121)

Nathan shared the view that positive relationships are needed to ensure pupils feel safe and reflected on the impact of negative relationships between pupils and peers:

R- How important do you think the relationships are?

P- KEY! The pupils aren't gonna work unless they feel safe. Part of being safe is having trust, or at least a working relationship with the professionals in front of you, and the experience of many of these children is that teachers aren't the positive relationship. Umm, so they get here, and teachers are the enemy.

(Nathan- Lines 224-229)

Reflections on relationships emphasise the importance of trust, safety, and support. Within the data, an emphasis was placed not only on the importance of building positive relationships between staff and pupils, but also with parents and families. This was something the PRU staff felt they were able to do well within their provisions.

"I think that's one thing that schools don't really... and, and when I say schools, I mean all schools don't necessarily do really well, is build better relationships with parents, so that they can come so that there isn't that bridge that separates them."

(Leon- Lines 141-144)

Phil further emphasised the benefits of building positive connections with parents of pupils attending the PRU:

"I've had a few parents come in sitting in this room and they're just like "you actually just get it".

And if nothing else, I feel it's because we have took the time to sit and listen to them and they don't feel judged and they feel supported and we- we try our best. And like if somebody comes in and they've got uniform issue rather than given the detention. My first question is 'can we help you with that?' 'Do you need us to buy a pair of trousers?'"

(Phil- Lines 218-226)

The importance of relationships permeated throughout the entire dataset, highlighting repeatedly the positive impact that supportive relationships have on pupils, their feelings of safety, and their ability and willingness to learn.

4.3.3 Theme 3: "Communication is the most powerful tool any of us have".

This theme encapsulates the importance of clear communication. It highlights the detriment of poor communication in terms of the information shared about a pupil and regarding pupils who have communication difficulties or who are not encouraged to share their views. It also demonstrates the impact this can have on their education, behaviour, and processes which lead to permanent exclusion.

Subtheme 2.1- Information sharing

Most staff participants referred to concerns about mainstream schools' information about permanently excluded pupils who begin their placements at the PRU. Some participants shared that the paperwork often included quite damning descriptions of the children and their backgrounds. In contrast, others said that they receive very little information regarding the pupils, making it incredibly difficult to know how best to support them.

Leon referred to the negative descriptions of children shared in transition reports and commented:

R- "so thinking about the pupils that you've got here and that you kind of got to know well, what do you generally know about the pupils prior to exclusion so that

we're talking about the ones that are permanently excluded? How much do you know when they arrive here about them?"

P- "We basically know what the school has sent to us, so it's normally a document that kinda has a background check or background story on their educational life outside of this building."

R-"Hmm."

P- "Some of them when you read them, it sounds like you've got Al Capone in coming into, coming into the schools, yeah. So as much as I read it, I tend to basically just, um. Read it for readings sake and build my relationship with the child as they come in for myself 'cause I find when you're reading some of those information, you kinda have a pre judged mind on that child already where if you actually build a relationship for yourself.

The person you read about and the person that you have relationship with tend to be two totally different people."

(Leon- Lines 4-16)

Leon later shared the following:

R- "What differences do you do you find from reading that profile of them and then meeting them?"

P- "I think sometimes is that totally total opposites to the monster they've created it in is almost like a character they've created of this individual?"

Um, without actually building a relationship with this kid with these kids, so it's based on the behaviour that they've actually presented rather than. WHY they've presented the- the behaviour..."

(Leon- Lines 19-27)

Some participants shared their concerns that the information shared about pupils does not include details on the support they require, particularly for learning needs, and instead can frequently focus on just behaviour.

"I do find mean with the intervention kids especially. There are very, very few applications that say they've got SEND needs. Yeah. And most of them have speech and language..."

(Emma- Lines 70-71)

Others referred to the discrepancies between different schools regarding the quality of information they receive about a pupil and the clarity of communication:

“Some schools are extremely good on cataloguing everything and passing it across in a way that we can clearly understand. So... they explain who the people are, who are commenting on various things, and they've removed the acronyms that are unique to their school.

Other schools, it's very, very sparse, and it's a case of looking through what's missing, what's hidden here, reading between the lines.”

(Nathan- Lines 29-33)

R- *“Do you tend to know much about the pupils educational background before they come here?”*

P- *“I'm going to say this quite often. It depends on the school that they come from, right? You know, sometimes we will get quite a lot of information. Sometimes we won't have any and we'll have to wait. But we'll have to have them with us with no information.”*

R- *“So you have them in for a certain amount of time and you're like, I don't know anything?”*

P- *“Yeah! we don't know them. We don't know the risks. We don't know what-what they need. And it really does boil down to what school they're from. So, some schools are better than others.”*

(Anna- Lines 4-11)

Nathan referred to information shared by the “good” schools and what this can look like:

“So, when you got the high-quality information, the pupil is usually as presented and there are usually suspicions, explicit or implicit, that there's additional needs that have not been met or diagnosed. That a decent array of attempts have been made to reach that pupil, but they've just not gone that extra step that they're not necessarily equipped to at that school.”

(Nathan- Lines 42-45)

This subtheme highlighted the importance of information sharing regarding the pupils who arrive at PRUs after permanent exclusion and the impact that negative or poor information can have on the way the pupils are viewed and supported by their new educational provision.

Subtheme 2.2- Pupil voice

The second subtheme within the overarching theme of 'communication' emphasises the importance of communication, focusing specifically on how pupils communicate, are understood and how they are supported and encouraged to share their views, particularly, during and after an event that may have contributed to their permanent exclusion.

School pupils frequently have decisions made for them, and their autonomy is often restricted by the adults around them. This is particularly true during a permanent exclusion when pupils are told they must leave their school and attend a new provision, usually after an event or events surrounding them and their behaviour. The consideration that schools may not consistently seek and listen to pupils' views was raised initially by Phil, who commented:

"Communication is the most powerful tool that any of us have, and, I think pupils feeling heard is really, really important and understood, and even if they don't agree with the decision you're making, if they feel that you've at least listened to them and taken it into account then they feel valued as well. Which I think is really important and I know mainstream schools will all talk about "student voice" and it's really important, but it's – how do they actually capture that?"

(Phil- Lines 180-184)

Another participant felt strongly that if pupils were listened to more in school, they could avoid permanent exclusions:

R- "In your view, do you feel that the pupils you get here could have avoided permanent exclusion?"

P- "HUNDRED PERCENT!"

R- "and if so, how?"

P- If the school's supported their needs better? Yeah? And listen to them and nurtured them.

Went to their families. More family support. More communication."

(Anna- Lines 349-355)

Some participants shared views that speech and language difficulties significantly impact children and their communication abilities. They argued that more could be done to better identify and support these needs, including teaching children communication skills and encouraging them to share their views effectively. One participant felt particularly strongly about this and shared the following comments:

"You know what I think? Point blank, period. Just teaching anybody to communicate better than what they've seen or know... Helps. All round."

(Leon- Lines 261-262)

"How [are the pupils] meant to communicate effectively when [the pupils have] never been taught how to communicate effectively? You know I mean so... I feel like..."

It's about teaching the human beings how to communicate, rather than acting before you've had time to actually think about what it is that we need to- to say."

(Leon- Lines 279-282)

All participants shared the view that all behaviour is a form of communication, while most participants commented on speech and language needs impacting behaviour. This was summarised in reference to the demographic of pupils who attend the PRU by Phil with the following quote:

"Behaviour is just communication. So a lot of the times, what is it something ridiculous like in the UK, 10 or 11% of all pupils have speech, language and communication needs. Whereas if you look at areas of social deprivation, it can be as high as like 50% which is absolutely shocking. But a lot of that comes down to, like the language that you're exposed to as young person like from your parents and stuff."

(Phil- Lines 196-202)

4.3.4 Theme 4: "If we know a child has needs, why are we not meeting them in a reasonable time?"

This theme highlights multi-agency support, including the wider contextual issue of access to educational support services. It refers to outside agencies such as Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) support services, CAMHS, and Educational Psychology Services. The PRUs involved in this research are all part of a local authority collegiate group (which includes 5 provisions), who, at the time of the interviews, were trialling a pilot scheme of in-house therapy services being directly available to the PRU, including speech and language therapists, mental health professionals, assistant psychologists, a youth worker, a family worker, and a post-16 worker, who can assess, diagnose, and support young people directly without having to refer through other pathways and join long waiting lists. Previously, access to these services would require lengthy referral processes and waiting times of over a year. Each participant referenced the significant value of this service and detailed how it has enabled the PRUs to access the right support for pupils quickly. Mainstream schools in the local area do not have access to this service.

Phil reflected on why pupils arrive with unmet needs, as discussed within the first subtheme, and shared the following:

"I just feel that, with the whole SEN side of it, I think that's massive where people aren't being diagnosed, but. The caveat of that it's a case of it takes so long to get the kids seen by CAMHS, and it's like a two-year waiting list. Nearly three years. You can't sit with a kid wrecking a lesson for 30 other pupils for two years without knowing anything but what we do here is we go on the premise of if we have a suspicion and we feel that a kid may have an SEN, whatever the recommendations are to try and support that pupil, we put them in place, straight away and trial that, and if something works, great. If it doesn't stop doing that."

“And again, a lot of this is down to time and resources as well, but to me the whole [brand name of internal services within PRU collegiate] thing over the last year and a half nearly two years now has been absolutely amazing. It's enabled us to do a lot better work just on a deeper, deeper level than we previously had done, especially with the mental health stuff and SALT referrals and stuff because as a teacher like I found those really informative and allows me to approach to kids better and have a better understanding and stuff as well.”

(Phil- Lines 359-371)

Emma also expressed her frustrations at waiting times for educational psychology support and shared concerns that children are being left waiting for support:

“Currently there's a lack of EPs. Yeah, so you're struggling to get educational psychologists and EHCPs want those reports so want that evidence? And I think it's harder to get an EHCP now, isn't it? It's not like it was years ago. The- the criteria has changed and I think that the waiting time is ridiculous. If we know a child has needs, why are we not meeting them in a reasonable time?”

(Emma- Lines 86-90)

Emma later referred to the positive and significant impact the right support (offered through the in-house service) has on pupils and their behaviour with the following anecdote-

“One [pupil] in particular. He didn't realize he had speech and language needs, and now that he knows that there, there is that issue and that he can get support with it, he feels more confident in class. He understands why he doesn't know or can't express, you know, himself. It's been an eye opener for him. And along with that then we had improved behaviour. Yeah. So, him sort of being able to understand himself better. Yeah. And not feel like he was stupid.”

(Emma- Lines 130-134)

4.3.5 Summary of Staff Themes

The thematic analysis of staff views highlighted four main themes. The first of which evidenced views that mainstream schools typically do not have the capacity to identify and support SEN and emphasises the increasing pressure schools are under to perform and provide results; thus leaving little space or time for nurturing pupils' individual needs. The pros and cons of attending a PRU were commonly discussed. This highlighted the time and space PRU staff have to provide nurturing support for small groups and on an individual basis. However, views were also shared regarding concerns that PRUs, which typically cannot offer wider curriculum opportunities and also have the potential negative peer influences and a dangerous onwards trajectory that is sometimes evidenced.

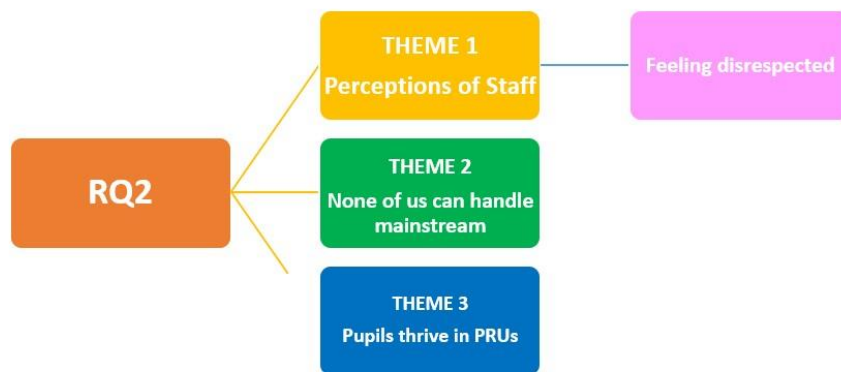
The significance of building positive relationships and communication - in terms of information sharing from mainstream schools and eliciting the pupil's voice - was referred to repeatedly throughout staff interviews. School staff frequently shared the view that the information they

receive from schools pertaining to excluded pupils and their needs is often very limited or paints an extremely negative picture of what often turns out to be a very vulnerable child with complex needs.

The fourth theme encompassed the views that waiting times for specific support for pupils are too long (such as CAMHS, Speech and Language, and Educational Psychologists). The staff interviewed within one collegiate group of PRUs shared the immense benefits of an in-house service delivering very quick mental health, speech and language, and therapeutic support. However, this is not available to all schools and PRUs in the country.

4.4 Thematic Analysis of Pupil Dataset

Figure 6 Thematic Map Research Question 2



A thematic analysis of the data gathered during interviews with staff and in response to **research question 2** elicited three overarching themes. The three themes are titled as follows:

Theme 1. Pupil perceptions of staff attitudes and teaching approaches

Subtheme 1- *Pupils feel disrespected by teachers.*

Theme 2- None of us can handle mainstream

Theme 3: Pupils thrive in PRUs

Theme 1: Pupil perceptions of staff attitudes and approaches

All 5 pupils in the study shared examples of negative interactions with teachers in their previous mainstream school, and all pupils shared positive views of experiences with staff in the PRUs. Both positive and negative interactions with staff appeared to have had a lasting impact on them and their onward behaviour in one way or another. All the pupils shared examples of feeling disrespected by teachers, and this created the first subtheme within the theme of pupil perceptions of staff attitudes and support.

Subtheme 1.1- Pupils feel disrespected by teachers.

The levels of disrespect perceived by pupils from teachers ranged from being called names they did not like, being shouted at, and feeling like they were let down.

Two pupils shared examples of feeling disrespected by teachers who called them by certain names. Noel expressed his anger about being frequently referred to by school staff by his second name, rather than his first name-

P- "Like in secondary, they never called me by my first name. They called me by my second name, which is technically one of the first names. They called me by [pseudonym- Gregg] because that is my second name. And I was just like Just call me by my fucking first name, you prick."

R- "Why? Why did they do that?"

P- "They did it with pretty much everyone. Like any student that was bad, they never called by the first name. Always some other name. Or some other part in your name, and it just happened they chose 'Gregg' to be mine."

R- "That's really disrespectful"

P- "It's not even my fucking last name. There was this one teacher. I just had enough of it. And she all she kept doing was calling me [repeats 'Gregg'] and treating it like I was a number, not a student. I was just another 'thing'."

(Noel- Lines 251-261)

Another participant shared similar experiences of teachers not calling her by her name:

"Everyone would call me 'trouble'. Everyone when they saw me in my first mainstream they would just call me 'trouble', no one ever called me by my name they would just call me 'trouble'.

R- As in like, other kids? Or teachers?

P- No, it was just the teachers.

(Cheyenne- Lines 202-205)

Noel shared further views on the significance of the names pupils and adults are called in schools and the impact this has on the connections formed between them:

R- "OK, so when I speak to young people like you I find they're quite happy at the PRU because they feel like the staff talk to them like they're human"

P- "Yeah whereas in mainstream they talk to you like you're a number. –"student 345,000". Yeah? I have a name! And my name is [name] Yeah? Nice to meet you. Actually. No. Not nice to meet. You egotistical prick."

R- "The adults here. Do you call them by their first name?"

P- "Yeah. Yes."

R- "Do you find that a bit like you can connect with them a bit better?"

P- "Yeah, I I sort of think calling people by their first name is like... actually, knowing that you can connect with them, whereas if you were calling by the last name, that's just like you don't really give a fuck. Whereas if you- you start to call them by their first name you treat them like a human and they treat you like a human."

(Noel- Lines 238- 249)

Jamal expressed his feelings of anger and wanting to retaliate physically when teachers shouted at him, which he shared was a common occurrence:

P- "Bare [lots of] teachers were just shouting at me, and I swear I would just want to box them up, but I couldn't.

R- What sort of things were they shouting at you for? Was it just talking? Or..?

P- Like if I was to say something wrong, then they would start shouting,

Or, [inaudible] it was just little things that they would start shouting at me for. If I was to end up going back in mainstream I would end up hitting them. So, I don't wanna go back to mainstream. Cause no teachers can say that to me."

(Jamal- Lines 75-87)

He explained this made him feel angry and added that the teachers in the PRU do not make him feel this way. He emphasised the difference in their approach:

R- "So what do you mean then, what do you feel about that, when you get shouted at and when you say 'no teacher can do that to me'"

P- "I will get mad"

R- "Yeah... and what happens when you get mad?"

P1- "They will get hurt."

R- "Do you sort of have that problem here?"

P1- "Nah, all the teachers here are calm. Like they never shout. They don't shout."

(Jamal- Lines 88-94)

Similar to Jamal, feeling as though he would be shouted at for "saying the wrong thing", Amber also shared her experiences of feeling as though she would get into trouble for things that she

perceived to be minor behaviours, such as speaking without raising her hand. This, she explained, led to her frequently walking out of lessons:

R- *"I didn't like the people and I asked them can they move me, and they said no and then I'd just keep wandering around school."*

R- *"So was it the staff or the other pupils that you didn't like?"*

P- *"The staff!"*

R- *"Ohhh the staff that were in the lesson, you didn't wanna be in there with them. What was it you didn't like about them?"*

P- *"They're just rude"*

R- *"Yeah... In the way that they speak?"*

P- *"Yeah, you know when you speak with not having your hand up. Yeah, That's what they kept moaning about. But the teacher said that we speak without putting our hand up, because we were doing this thing and then they was like 'put your hand up' then that's what made me walk out the lesson."*

R- *"So they were trying to stop you from speaking. And they wanted you to put your hand up?"*

P- *"Yeah!"*

R- *"Yeah. And then you went out. OK."*

(Amber- Lines 41-59)

Amber, who also has a diagnosis of Dyslexia, shared that she was not given support for this and explained that refusing to attend lessons led to the incident that she was permanently excluded for, which involved an unintentional physical altercation with a teacher-

P- *"The teacher told me to go to the lesson. I didn't like it and she followed me. Yeah, but I slammed the door back and I got in her arm. And her arm was like... and she couldn't move it. That's why I got kicked out."*

R- *"So that was what you were permanently excluded for?"*

P- *"Yeah. Yeah. She told the head teacher that I didn't listen to her. She told them that I shattered the door and that's why I got kicked out."*

R- *"So was that actually like, did you mean to hurt her arm?"*

P- *"No! no."*

(Amber- Lines 23-29)

Amber was not the only participant who spoke about their reluctance to attend lessons. Noel and Cheyenne also shared experiences of not wanting to be in the classroom environment for different reasons explored within Theme 2.

Theme 2- “None of us can handle mainstream”.

This theme highlights the pupils' views of their perceived abilities to tolerate the mainstream learning environment, including feeling overwhelmed due to factors such as too many people and lessons feeling too challenging. Of all five pupils who participated in the study, each pupil shared that they had one or more diagnostic labels or learning needs (See Table 4 for pupil participant information). Most pupils expressed that they did not receive learning support in mainstream schools.

Noel explained his multiple diagnoses of neurodiversity and shared his feelings about engaging with lessons that he felt were beyond his understanding:

R- “Thank you for telling me about your ADHD anxiety, dyslexia and ‘slight autism’.

Have you ever been given support in lessons for that?”

P- “No”.

R- “Never in primary or secondary?”

P- “Nope. Well, in secondary I didn't need it, cos all I did was bunk lessons. The only lessons I went to was math and English, And that was only because I needed. Yeah, OK. I went into science once. I saw. I saw in the room on the whiteboard, and it was like some shit like “photosynthesis” and I was like, I can't even fucking pronounce that, I'm out. I'm OUT!”

R- “So before you've even started the lesson, you're like ‘I'm gone’?”

P- “Imagine- imagine this is me. I see ‘photosynthesis’. And, like, “Yep. See-Yah”. Very quickly. While the teacher's turned her back.”

(Noel- Lines 93- 102)

Cheyenne disclosed her diagnoses of Autism and Dyslexia and shared very similar experiences with mainstream lessons:

R- OK. The next question is, did you ever feel like you had any difficulties with learning or with the lessons or the kind of-

P- Where, mainstream?

R- Yeah.

P- Umm... Yeah... Like something I found is they move very, very fast because there's like, a bigger population in the classroom. So they move faster, so that's what I like about a PRU like, the population is a lot denser. So like, there's a lot less people so you can go at more of a reasonable pace that I couldn't like, kinda keep up with... because in my classes yeah? Like, I kept walking out of all of my lessons, like I just walked out of all my lessons literally.

It would be like it would be like it would be MAD [unusual] like, if I went to one whole lesson like in a whole day. So, I just missed out on loads of gaps in my learning... and then... Because I missed out and so many gaps in my learning yeah, it's just like, I didn't understand so I couldn't move as quickly as everyone else. But now like, with here, they just go at a slower, more easier pace.

R- Yeah. Do you stay in whole lessons while you're here?

P- Yeah.

R- What was it that made you need to leave the lessons?

P- I was overwhelmed. Sometimes I get overwhelmed and if I get annoyed. I'll just walk out and stay outside. Because outside it's more interesting.

(Cheyenne- Lines 120-137)

The concept of feeling overwhelmed in school was commonly identified throughout the pupil interviews, as well as an acknowledgement that mainstream school environments feel too busy, with too many people.

Many of the pupils appeared to have a shared view that the mainstream environment did not always feel conducive to learning, either due to challenges accessing the lesson content or through finding it difficult to tolerate the scale and pace of the school environment. Noel described being unable to “handle” mainstream, which he perceived to be a commonality between himself and the other pupils in the PRU:

P- “What she [the head teacher of a PRU he had previously attended] wanted to do was turn it from a PRU to a mainstream, but then you'll have to get rid of every single kid in here because you know none of us can handle mainstream.”

R- “What you just said, then “none of us can handle mainstream”. What do you mean by that?”

P- “Well, I mean by that is that if you were to put, put any any one of us right now in a proper mainstream school, we'd be back in within a month, if that.”

R- “That's really interesting”

P- “Yeah, we just can't handle it. We just can't handle mainstream. Like with me. It's numbers. I can't for me, I can't do any class of any of anybody over ten. Ten is the maximum. Yeah? 11 you're pushing it 12. I'm out.”

R- “What is it about that that you-“

P- “I don't know just social anxiety probably social anxiety and I just, I don't like big places I don't like lots of people yeah if you wanna put me in a room with like 2-3 people piss easy. You gonna put me in a room with 100 people. Well, I'm gonna panic the fuck out, and the table in front of me? Smash! the chairs being thrown it across the fucking room.”

(Noel- Lines 325-341)

Amber also referred to feeling anxious around big groups when describing her transition between primary and secondary school, and how this impacted on her behaviour:

R- "What did you like about primary school?"

P- "I don't know. I think it was just less as people. Less people. Yeah. It was smaller? Yeah. Yeah."

R- "And then so you had a relatively good experience primary school. And then you went to secondary school."

P- "Yeah. And there's too much. Too many people. Yeah. I don't get on with loads of groups. Yeah."

R- "So what did you feel like when you went to secondary school and it was like all these people everywhere?"

P- "I don't know.

I was scared at first.

And then I just got on with it and then I start being naughty. Then I was kicked out."

(Amber- Lines 9-19)

Pupil participants shared their experiences of the difficulties they faced in mainstream schools. They also explained that they engaged better with learning and felt happier since attending the PRU, as examined in theme 3.

Theme 3: Pupils thrive in PRUs

It was common for pupils to state that despite initial apprehension at the prospect of attending a new provision, their learning and relationships with staff had improved since transitioning from mainstream school into the pupil referral unit.

Jamal stated he initially felt scared about attending a PRU, but shared a significant improvement once he had settled into his new provision:

R- "How has life been for you since you started coming here, in comparison to school before?"

P- "My confidence went up since being here."

R- "Why do you think that is?"

P- *"Like, I was just QUIET, like as soon as I came in. But I started talking more"*

R- *"Do you think you're more confident here than you were in school?"*

P- *"Here"*

R- *"And you know you said you had a bit of help with the work in school, do you get a bit of help with the work here?"*

R- *"Yeah. But most of the time I don't even need help here I just get it all done and I get it all right"*

R- *"So even your schoolwork is better since you've been here."*

(Jamal- Lines 132-142)

Cheyenne also reflected on her initial concerns:

R- *"How did you feel knowing that you were coming [to the PRU] in here?"*

P- *"First- at first I was nervous, because my mum was just telling me you're going to a centre and she wasn't telling me what centre I was going to. Like she knew but she was not telling me. And then, yeah, when we were driving here to come on the first day. I was thinking 'I know where we are', so then I texted a few people. I was like you go here and you go here, and it was all like yeah. So then that was easier cause I knew people that went here before."*

(Cheyenne- Line 93-98)

Subtheme 3.1- Positive relationships make a big difference.

Like other pupil comments, Sam shared his feelings of anxiety about initially coming to the PRU, but explained how that had changed once he met the pupils and staff:

R- *"How did you feel when you found out you had to start coming here?"*

P- *"Ummmm... at first I was like ohhh god I don't really want to."*

R- *"Were you a bit scared?"*

P- *"Umm... kind of... I was like, I didn't wanna have to find new mates, it's a whole different re-set basically, so it was pointless doing that in my opinion."*

But yeah, I was kind of like ohh was what's the point in coming here? Go do this and this all over again. So yeah, I mean I was like, OK, I'll come here."

And these guys are actually quite nice. So OK, sweet! I'm stayin here for now."

(Sam- Line 133-142)

Cheyenne and Noel reflected on how they engaged better with lessons in the PRU, sharing comments that they feel able to remain in lessons in the PRU instead of mainstream school. Cheyenne put this down to the pace of the lessons:

P- "here, they just go at a slower, more easier pace."

R- "Yeah. Do you stay in whole lessons while you're here?"

P- "Yeah."

(Cheyenne- Lines 132- 134)

Noel indicated this was down to relationships being more positive with staff in the PRU:

R- "What about their teachers here? Do you like them?"

P- "Yeah."

R- "Do you? What do you like about them?"

P- "They're just better. Just calm. It's really, really calm. Where's all the other teachers and all the other schools I've been in were very, very strict ones and very strict."

(Noel- Line 205-210)

He later added:

R- "How about the lessons here? Are you actually getting...-?"

P- "Oh, yeah, I'm actually doing them."

(Noel- Line 281-286)

Amber also identified that she feels happier in the PRU because of the teachers:

R- "The pupils I speak to seem a lot happier in the Pupil referral unit than they did in school."

P- "Yeah. Yeah."

R- "What? What is it?"

P- "I don't know."

R- "Do you think it's the way the staff speak to you?"

P- "Yeah, the staff is definitely better. Yeah. Yeah. And they kind of... they're more... they're more nice..."

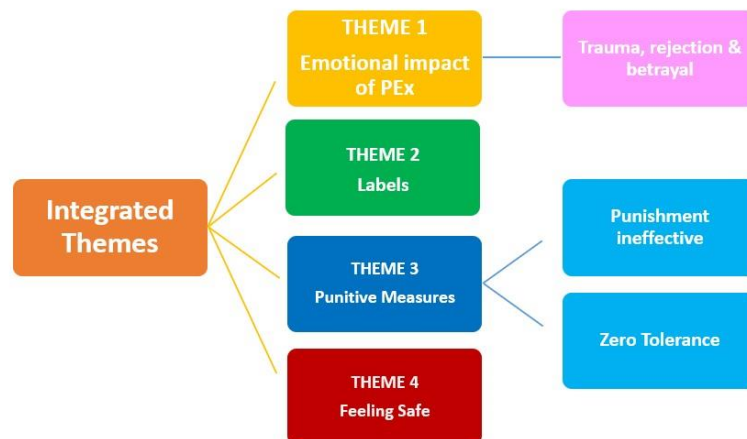
4.4.4 Summary of pupil themes

The themes highlighted within the pupil data emphasised the negative impact of feeling disrespected by teachers and how this often resulted in repeated challenging behaviour. Views were often shared regarding the pupils' perceptions of their own ability to "handle" mainstream school. They highlighted a common view of feeling overwhelmed in loud and busy mainstream school environments. Furthermore, the pupils typically shared the view that life in the PRU felt more containing, calm, and easier to build positive relationships with the adults there, and, therefore, the pupils felt more able to remain within the classroom environment for entire lessons.

4.5 Integrated Thematic Analysis

A final integrated thematic analysis was conducted to identify shared themes between pupils and staff. The researcher was keen to represent the views of staff and pupils as separate entities to ensure the voices of each participant group were accurately heard and represented. However, it was also felt it was important to synthesise the two data sets. An integrated thematic analysis aimed to examine shared views, highlight common themes, explore patterns and connections within the two datasets, and, ultimately, increase the study's rigour.

Figure 7. Thematic Map of Integrated Thematic Analysis



Theme 1: Emotional impact of being permanently excluded

Subtheme 1.1- *Trauma, rejection, and betrayal*

Theme 2: Labels are powerful

Theme 3: Punitive measures

Subtheme 3.1- *School punishment is not effective in reducing unwanted behaviour*

Subtheme 3.2- *Implications of zero tolerance policies*

Theme 4: Feeling safe in school

4.5.1 Theme 1: Emotional impact of being permanently excluded

This theme encapsulates participants' views on the emotional and psychological impacts of being permanently excluded from school. Staff expressed concerns for the pupils who had been permanently excluded, and pupils often shared unpleasant feelings associated with being told they could no longer attend their mainstream schools.

One staff member likened the experience of being permanently excluded to a bereavement:

P- "That's really traumatic. And yeah, for pupils, it's like [...] permanently excluding a kid. Literally saying we're rejecting you from our community. You're no longer part of our community. You can't come back. Don't be near our community sort of thing. That's really traumatic, and it is a bereavement in some ways as well."

(Phil- Lines 269-273)

Craig also used the word "traumatic" when sharing his views on the pupils' experiences of permanent exclusion, which feeds into the first subtheme:

Subtheme 1.1- Trauma, rejection, and betrayal

R- "How do you think that young people cope with a permanent exclusion? What kind of impact do you feel from getting to know the pupils?"

P- "I mean, I think it's fairly traumatic in the short term and you know the whole unknown and the reputation of a pupil referral unit and their students that come here and the potential danger they could be in by attending a unit with what they may imagine to be violent students, for example, is quite a scary thought even for the more hardened students. But... Yeah... So I- I would say it has quite a significant impact."

(Craig- Lines 42-51)

Cheyenne was explicit in describing her feelings and experience of being permanently excluded from two separate schools (labelled within quote as 'school 1' and 'school 2'):

R- "I was actually really upset. I was actually REALLY upset."

R- "So you were upset when you were excluded from [School 1]?"

P- "Yeah."

R- "How did you feel when you're excluded from [school 2]?"

P- "It wasn't... I I was actually upset. I cried as well."

P- "Another thing was just like... That's not nice to know that you're not wanted somewhere..." [.....pause.....] "So, yeah...."

(Cheyenne- Lines 91-92)

Daniel reflected on the concept of rejection:

P- "I think all the time they [the pupils] felt rejected by the mainstream system"

(Daniel- Line 120)

Sam described his feelings of being let down by his mainstream school and spoke of feelings of betrayal after being excluded for the possession of a weapon, which he reports was planted on him by pupils who had bullied him throughout his time in secondary school-

P- "I felt like I was betrayed because... Like, I'd never done it. I've been here... For basically no reason. Ummm so I was like, OK. That school was just... Not OK."

(Sam- Line127-130)

4.5.2 Theme 2: Labels are powerful.

The concept and impact of labels were recurring themes throughout the dataset. It was particularly prominent when discussing the labels pupils are assigned during their time in secondary education, both diagnostic labels relating to learning needs and social labels relating to groups and behaviour. This theme emphasises how labels can alter how others perceive pupils and their feelings about themselves.

Subtheme 1- SEN labels

Four out of the five pupils disclosed diagnostic labels they had been given during their lives. Noel shared his multiple diagnoses:

R- "Have you ever had? Umm. Like any tests or anything like that for things like ADHD or..."

P- "Yeah, yeah, I have ADHD, I have dyslexia, and I'm slightly autistic."

(Noel- Lines 53-55)

And Sam was similarly forthcoming in sharing his diagnoses:

R- "Do you ever feel or did you ever feel, that you had any difficulties with like, learning or with anything that you needed support for in terms of doing well at school?"

P- "Umm, not really. I mean like I kinda had a little bit of a struggle after I found out I had dyslexia but other than that no."

R- "OK, you've got dyslexia?"

P- "Well, it's something to do with memory or something like that, but yeah."

R- "It's quite interesting that you've got a bit of dyslexia. Have you ever been told you have, like, ADHD or...?"

P- "Ohh yeah, I've got ADHD."

R- "So you've got dyslexia, ADHD, is there anything else?"

P- "So there's dyslexia, ADHD, anxiety, anger issues..... Umm, yeah, that's about it! Oh and asthma!"

R- "So that's a lot of labels that you've been given."

(Sam- Lines 149-162)

Sam had earlier disclosed that after experiencing an extended period of bullying, he had begun to physically retaliate, which had led to teachers placing him in therapy for 'anger issues':

P- "It [the bullying] was going on for the whole of year seven to be honest. Then kind of like towards year 8, it got to where I was kind of older, but that's when the starting of the fights happened.

I actually ended up going into therapy for anger issues. I actually don't see why, if I wasn't the problem there."

(Sam- Lines 44-47)

Sam appeared despondent when referring to being put into therapy for anger issues. Seemingly, this was a result of something that had happened to him, rather than something that was intrinsically 'wrong with him' as implied by the label of "anger issues".

Cheyenne referred to being diagnosed with autism and spoke of her rejection of the label and how she chose not to share this with others for fear of judgement:

R- "How have you felt since they told you you've got Autism. How did that feel? Was it like a relief? Or was it strange? Or a bit like how did it feel for you?"

P- "If someone asked me like 'do you have autism?' I'll say no"

R- "OK. Why?"

P- "I don't know. I just feel..." [long pause]

R- *“Do you feel like people might judge you for it?”*

P- *“Yeah.”*

(Cheyenne- Lines 185-191)

It appeared some of the pupils had a good understanding of the diagnostic labels they had been assigned and the potential implications of these. Emma discussed the occasional reluctance of parents to access SEN support for their children for fear of the diagnostic labels they may receive and the impact of these.

P- *“Some parents, on the other hand, they can be quite, argumentative and they don't want a label for their child. So you sort of hit barriers.”*

(Emma- Lines 19-21)

Emma went on to reflect on the possible cultural and historical stigma attached to the labelling of certain racially minoritised groups:

P- *“I think. With some parents, especially of black students, it comes from a place where. Way back when- I'm not gonna quote years cause can't remember where it was- basically... All black children were given labels of being, you know, 'illiterate'. And when parents have experienced that or, you know, their- their parents have experienced it, it's sort of that label means that they are not the same as everybody else, that it is to do with racism.”*

(Emma- Lines 27-31)

As well as discussions of SEN and diagnostic labels, interviews with staff and pupils frequently highlighted the ongoing impact of other various types of labels pupils may receive, as explored in subtheme 2-

Subtheme 2- General labels

Many of the staff and pupils shared views on labels and their impact. Nathan had specific experience of this through his teaching career and was enthusiastic about considering the ways pupils are labelled and their understanding of this:

R- *“Yeah, it's interesting you just used the term kind of “labelling” and what do you think about the impact that labels have on pupils?”*

P- *“Ah!! Right, I've taught sociology and I've taught citizenship in this area and the year 10s and Elevens in those classes love talking about labels because they all felt they had them.*

They felt they had them on the street. They felt they had them in the classroom. They felt they had them with different teachers, between their peers and also with the police as well. In fact, that last one was a very big issue for a lot of the pupils.”

(Nathan- Lines 109-116)

The concept of being labelled by teachers arose frequently, particularly regarding academic progress, behaviour and learning difficulties. Pupils and staff alike often referred to pupils being viewed as “naughty” or “bad”.

Amber shared her difficulties with reading and writing and spoke of her dyslexia diagnosis. As discussed within the previous themes, Amber had shared she found lessons challenging, which often led to her refusing to engage. When asked if she was ever taken out for small group work or one-to-one support, she shared the following:

R- “And then, did you ever have lessons out of the main class?”

P- “Yeah.”

R- “Yeah. OK. And was that with one adult or was that in a small group?”

P- “Yeah, One adult”

R- “And did that help?”

P- “But that was only telling me that I'm naughty.”

(Amber- Lines 103-109)

In relation to this, Craig spoke about the work the staff in the PRUs do to challenge negative labels and promote more positive ways for the pupils to view themselves:

R- “Do you find that when the pupils arrive here that this is... Or could potentially be... A place where they can relieve themselves of these labels...?”

P- “TOTALLY! yeah. So we will often challenge behaviours by talking through the behaviour. “So, yeah... you have done that silly thing. We know that's wrong. How could you done it different? How could you have done it better? At what point did it begin to slide to you Yeah. How could you have arrested that? How could you process it in a different way next time? Which triggers you going to look for?”

And that means that we start challenging the labels-

“I'm the naughty kid”- “No you're not! You're not the ‘naughty kid’ , You were stressed, Let's use the right words for this”.

(Nathan- Lines 135-144)

Anna spoke passionately about the importance of encouraging young people to gain a positive sense of identity, and the role schools and staff can play. She referred to a pupil of Polish nationality who had recently joined the PRU and been given a name by his mainstream school that was not his birth name. She reflected on the impact of this-

P- "For instance, we got one [pupil] yesterday and he just turned up at my lesson, and he's called [pseudonym Dave]. But his name isn't actually [Dave] because he's Polish and it's actually [pseudonym Dobieslaw]. But he's changed his name to [Dave] because no one in mainstream could get it right. Which to me, is disrespectful. And that's saying you're not allowed to be the individual who you are."

(Anna- Lines 33-37)

P- "And it's so sad about Dobieslaw. What does that mean about his Identity. And then it's like brushing it off, isn't it? And that's not fair. It's not gonna make him grow as a person. And you know, love who he is and what he's about."

(Anna- Lines 54-56)

In relation to earlier themes regarding the pressures mainstream schools face, Nathan reflected on the pressures of academic progress, exams, and results and the impact this can have on pupils and the labels they receive-

P- "I've taught in an area with the 11 plus- You start labelling someone as a failure at 11- It follows through. It follows through. It follows through.

And some people can cope with that, and many people can't..."

(Nathan- Lines 209-211)

He added-

P- "and then they [the pupils] get their results and again, labelling comes back in and comparisons to their peers."

(Nathan- Line 299)

Emma also spoke about the concept of pupils feeling less able than their peers and reflected on the ways pupils often choose to behave in certain ways, rather than risk being labelled "stupid" by others-

P- "That's a lot of the kids. They don't want to look stupid. They don't want other people to know [they have learning difficulties]. Therefore, being the 'class clown' is the answer, and getting sent out because it's getting a little bit tough, but then every time they get sent out, that's another gap in their education. And then some teachers, they look at a kid walking through the door and they're told "just go"."

(Emma- Lines 135-139)

Emma's view that pupils are told to leave lessons due to behaviour issues and their impact on their learning and attainment leads to the third theme, which focuses on school punishment.

4.5.3 Theme 3- Punitive Measures

Behaviour was a concept that pupils and staff frequently discussed throughout the dataset. One of the most pertinent points when considering pupils' experiences and views of staff in PRUs was how staff in mainstream schools responded to challenging behaviour. This led to considerations of punitive measures, including being sent out of class and detentions and how they impact students' future behaviour. The following subtheme considers the impact of punitive measures.

Subtheme 1- School punishments are not effective in reducing unwanted behaviour.

This subtheme explores responses that imply that punitive measures in school, applied as a response to unwanted behaviour, are not only ineffective but can actually exacerbate behaviour that challenges staff.

Amber referred to an initial fixed-term exclusion she received after an altercation with a staff member.

R- *"So then you get kicked out for that. Right. And so then? Was that kind of the first time you've got into trouble already?"*

P- *"No. I kinda got worse... It got worse after that."*

P- *"I was still naughty, I didn't used to go to any of my lessons or nothing, I used to run around the school."*

(Amber- Lines 30-37)

When asked about the support she received in class, Amber spoke about being removed from lessons due to her behaviour rather than supported with her needs:

R- *"So you never came out of class to have help with, like your reading or writing?"*

P- *"Nah, I only came out of class when I was bad, like naughty."*

(Amber- Lines 105-106)

When considering the needs of the pupils and viewing behaviour through the lens of communicating an unmet need, as discussed in previous themes, it was interesting to discover that often, pupils and staff referred to sanctions and punishments that did not seem to have any kind of educational purpose or provide any opportunities for pupils to reflect on mistakes or learn about their behaviour and the impact. Noel discussed receiving detentions, in which his time was not spent productively and, in his view, did not lead to improvements in his behaviour in school:

R- *"So when you were in detention, what did you have to do? Did you just have to sit and stare at the wall? Or... what were you doing?"*

P- *"If it was a whole school, which I have to do like 3-4 at the time. They filled the whole school. Then you'd have to sit there and write lines, right? Like proper lines from the book."*

R- *"So you just copy it straight out of a book and spend your whole entire, like, detention doing that?"*

R- *"Did it stop you from misbehaving?"*

P- *"No, no, no."*

R- *"So would you just say in a way it's almost made you worse?"*

P- *"Yeah!! I don't know why they think the detentions do anything. It's like, yeah, this is what's gonna happen if you do something wrong. It's like..." [shrugs]*

(Noel- Lines 154-165)

Craig shared his views on the importance of learning from behaviour and referred to the removal of a pupil from their learning environment as something that is not often helpful:

P- "in a classroom to say "you've been naughty, get out, you're not coming back in my class". It's not. It doesn't help the student learn from their behaviour and return."

(Craig- Lines 162-164)

Anna shared similar views on the importance of learning opportunities through supporting pupils to reflect on incidents:

P- "We've got quite a good thing here. What we do, you know. Well, there is a form, but we fill it out. But it is it's one of the questions is, how do you think it made the other person feel? Yeah, you know, and that's a huge learning curve, isn't it? You know, sometimes they might not say they. They might say they don't know. But that question in their head, they might go home and actually think about it or use it in the future..."

(Anna- Lines 93-103)

Anna applied similar thinking to school exclusion processes as a whole:

P- "Every human being should have, in my opinion, multiple chances to change and to adapt and to better themselves. Yeah. So, if that child hasn't had the opportunity to say sorry or, you know, change their ways, then what's that teaching them in life that once you do something wrong, that's it? Yeah, it's not fair."

(Anna- Lines 83-86)

Other staff members shared views that punitive measures inflicted on young people are sometimes too harsh in relation to the behaviour exhibited-

P- "I feel like some of these kids, it is small, petty behaviours that they get punished for and... become BIG issues yeah..."

(Leon- Lines 170 – 173)

The concept of punishments sometimes being too harsh leads into the second subtheme, which focuses on a zero-tolerance approach to possession of weapons in schools.

Subtheme 3.2- Implications of zero tolerance policies

As knife crime and weapons charges are particularly prevalent in the local authority where the research was conducted, it was unsurprising that conversations with participants often led to discussions around knives and school policies, despite this not being a specific topic within the original interview schedules. Two of the pupil participants referred to exclusions due to weapons possession, and some staff participants reflected on the varying nuances behind the reasons a pupil may carry a knife and discussed how permanent exclusion from school may not always be the best course of action.

Jamal was permanently excluded for, in his words, “chasing someone with a knife”. Sam described a different scenario, whereby he had been targeted and bullied by a specific group throughout his entire experience in secondary school, which resulted not only in him retaliating physically, but Sam also shared that the group had intentionally framed him by planting a knife in his school bag and reporting this to staff to get him into trouble-

P- “Ever since I joined year 7, up to year 9 before I got kicked out... ummm... I just got constant bullying and stuff in that they... ummm... well, in year 7 they asked me to buy them food, and so on and so forth, and then it escalated from there from food to fights then me being framed, to me being here.”

(Sam- Lines 19-22)

Sam added further details later in the conversation-

P- “They [the teachers] searched me, they found that... the- the knife they [pupils] put in my backpack while they were huddling around me. And then, they [teachers] were like “why do you have this?!”

Like I tried to claim it wasn't mine, but they didn't trust me. So yeah. And then it came to me being excluded for a week, and then to the panel, and now here!”

(Sam- Lines 94-97)

This felt like an instance where a pupil had perhaps been unfairly excluded.

Some staff participants discussed why pupils may carry weapons and reflected on the appropriateness of a ‘zero tolerance policy’ on weapons possession. Phil shared his views:

P- “For me the weapons thing is, is massive in the local authority as well, because there's some kids that literally will carry a weapon because they are absolutely terrified of what's gonna happen to them. That doesn't mean it's right that they've done it.

I think as well... That it depends on the situation like so for me, if I'd find a kid with a weapon at school- I obviously confiscate it, then I have to report it to the police and bring in parents and stuff as well, but to me you need to investigate the reasons why that's actually happened.

Find out why it's happened and what the background of it is well.

Because typically, people just don't carry weapons for the sake of it like.

And there's been a few cases where I know from being on the Fair Access panel previously, where a kids carried a weapon once and it's not necessarily always a knife like, but they've had something on them that they shouldn't have, and it's literally because they've been told "you gonna get your head kicked in" by a group of people."

(Phil- Lines 319-321)

Emma shared her views on the vulnerability of many of the pupils she sees and considered whether some of the pupils who have undiagnosed needs have a good understanding of being easily coerced by negative peer influences, and the implications of carrying a weapon-

P- "I think the ones with undiagnosed needs could have avoided permanent exclusion, but then if you link the 'knife carriers', when you find that they have undiagnosed needs- did they really understand what they were doing? AND they're vulnerable to coercion."

(Emma- Lines 152-156)

Craig had similar views on the varying factors which may influence a young person to carry a weapon, and reflected on the suitability of a zero-tolerance policy, whilst acknowledging the difficulties schools face in terms of responding appropriately to weapons possession:

P- "I've known some very young students who have been excluded for weapons possession, who were clearly were clearly in our judgment, never gonna use that weapon in a million years, they- they brought that weapon in as a badge of look what I've got in my bag and leave me alone. Don't bully me. I I can be a 'bad man'.

But, you know that they're not a kid who's got any violent tendency tendencies, not really aggressive, never, ever were gonna use it. And it was a juvenile show of strength, and they've been permanently excluded from it. And it is quite sad that there are some kids that end up here on weapons possession that don't fit.

On the other hand, we've also had students who have come with weapons, possession offenses that might have been capable of using that weapon. so it it's a complicated area, but there are kids that get punished through that policy, maybe too harshly."

(Craig- Lines 195-206)

Reflections on pupils who carry knives because they are scared or are being bullied feed into the final theme of the importance of feeling safe.

4.5.4 Theme 4- Feeling safe in school

The importance of feeling safe was highlighted often throughout the data. Pupils and staff frequently referred to experiences of unpleasant physical interactions and bullying that young people had faced prior to permanent exclusion from school.

One pupil spoke of a negative interaction with a teacher as a catalyst for a change in her outlook and behaviour, sharing with me that she had been “fine” up until this incident, after which she shared that her behaviour began to change.

R- “What was your experience of primary school like?”

P- “In primary school it was fine, it was just normal, I was really quiet. But then something happened to me. Basically right. One of my - in my Year 4 class, yeah? Must have been in the library. And this teacher dragged me across the floor, yeah? And ever since then I started getting rude to everyone.”

(Cheyenne- Lines 3-7)

Shortly after this, she spoke about being bullied and further referred to negative interactions with others at school as changing her behaviour and outlook:

R- “OK. So, Year 4 that happened to you. You were very quiet and kind of not getting into trouble or anything like that. So then, what happened after Year 4?”

P- “Then in year five, I got bullied so that made me have even thicker skin. That made me a bit more defensive and stuff. And then after that it was just like I was a very different person. Like, I wasn't quiet or.. I was really, really loud. I would always do things to people before they could do it to me.”

(Cheyenne- Lines 16-19)

Sam also shared experiences of bullying from a specific peer group, which eventually led to him becoming involved in physical fights, as detailed in the previous theme.

Anna referred to a pupil who attended the PRU, who had been excluded from school for fighting, but who had actually been a victim of relentless bullying during his time in secondary school combined with speech and language difficulties, for which he had no support-

P- “And what was happening? He was actually getting bullied. But there was five bullying in him instead of the school dealing with that five. He was the one who was penalized.

And when we got him, on paper it says he was this, that, he smashed up rooms... yet we've had nothing from him. But he was telling me at school all he had to do all his life is beat up well not beat up- but fight off the bullies because he's got you

know, speech and language difficulties. He's very, very low level. Lots and lots of things need to be looked into with him. But he's had all his life. He's always had people after him, bullying him, and that's why he used to have to get into fights because he was made to get into fights, but the teachers instead of dealing with the bullies because there were so many of them he was in isolation all the time."

(Anna- Lines 256-278)

Anna was not the only staff member to recount anecdotes regarding pupils who had been victims of bullying prior to exclusion. Daniel also shared the following:

P- "[sigh] you often get cases of kids coming here where they've been in school and they've been bullied by 3/4/5 other kids in the year and another year group bullied, bullied, bullied, bullied, bullied, bullied, bullied and then they lashed out and knock someone out with the punch someone or had a fight. And they're the one that get excluded, then these other five scuttle off and pick someone new."

(Daniel- Lines 63-67)

Daniel was asked for his views on feelings of safety the pupils may experience in the PRU versus mainstream school:

R- "Do you feel like that the provision here is sometimes like the only safe space that-"

P- "Oh god yeah. Loads of times. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, there's there's some that.

That were, you know, have had poor attendance at mainstream school"

(Daniel- Lines 107-109)

He went on to explain that it is common for pupils' attendance to increase in the PRU, where they feel safer. Anna also referred to pupils feeling unsafe in school and the impact this can have on them, particularly when combining a permanent exclusion-

P- "They [the pupils] didn't feel safe at school. And they've been kicked out of their school community. And they don't know where to turn. And they feel like failures..." (Anna- Line 203-205)

Nathan summarised the importance of safety for pupils in education in one sentence-

P- "The pupils aren't gonna work unless they feel safe."

(Nathan- Line 226)

4.5.5 Summary of Integrated Themes

The themes within the integrated thematic analysis illustrated the emotional impact of being permanently excluded, the impact of labels, and punitive measures, and the importance of pupils feeling safe within the school environment. One of the most salient points made by pupils and staff was that the process of permanent exclusion can be traumatic for a child. Similarly, labels attached to children before, during, and after permanent exclusion can significantly impact their self-esteem and behaviour, and the punitive measures governed by the school are often ineffective in reducing unwanted behaviours. Furthermore, views were shared around schools' zero-tolerance policy towards weapons, and many rich discussions were had regarding incidences when this policy wasn't necessarily beneficial to students, their well-being, and their onward educational trajectory. The importance of feeling emotionally and physically safe was highlighted, and a key point that emerged was the prevalence of bullying experienced by many pupils in school prior to being permanently excluded.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the themes that were identified through reflexive thematic analysis. Each theme was highlighted, and pertinent participant quotes were extracted from transcripts and shared to emphasise the key themes and subthemes. The following chapter will discuss the findings in relation to the research questions outlined within the methodology chapter.

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research findings in relation to the original research questions and discusses the most salient points highlighted within the themes and sub-themes. Psychological theories are applied to research findings and discussed. The themes highlighted within the data analysis are explored and linked to the literature review.

The chapter then explores the strengths and limitations of the study, outlines the researcher's critical reflections and highlights opportunities for further research. The chapter ends with a summary of the discussion.

5.2. Aims and Research Questions

The aim of the research was to gain an understanding of what can be learned from PRU staff and pupils regarding permanent exclusions to add to the existing body of literature and to explore opportunities for informing future practice. The overarching focus was:

What can be learned from pupils and staff in Key Stage 3 & 4 Pupil Referral Units about processes leading to permanent exclusion?

The primary research questions were:

Research Question 1) *What are the views of staff in Pupil Referral Units on the processes of permanent exclusion regarding the pupils who attend the PRU?*

Research Question 2) *What are the common experiences of pupils who have been permanently excluded from school?*

5.3 Theoretical Links

5.3.1 The Power Threat Meaning Framework

This theoretical framework was discussed in Chapter 3 and will now be referred to in relation to the research findings. The Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF) was developed as an alternative to psychiatric diagnoses and aims to explore and understand an individual's experiences of difficult times or distressing incidents. PTMF was explored in relation to the current study by examining the impact of distressing events experienced by pupils in school and how they led to permanent exclusion. Cheyenne shared an incident where a teacher had "dragged [her] across the floor" and referred to this as the specific turning point where her behaviour changed, and she began being "rude to everyone". Cheyenne later referred to being bullied, which also impacted her behaviour. She explained this led to her becoming defensive and prepared to hurt others before they could hurt her. This aligns with Johnstone & Boyle's (2018) proposal that negative operations of power can increase levels of insecurity, fear, mistrust, violence, and conflict. Similarly, Sam also spoke of ongoing bullying, which he felt led to his wrongful permanent exclusion.

Applying PTMF to the negative experiences Sam and Cheyenne described would involve considering 'what happened to' the pupils instead of 'what is wrong with' the pupils, and proposes the core questions:

1. 'What has happened to you? (How is *power* operating in your life?)
2. 'How did it affect you? (What kind of *threats* does this pose?)
3. 'What sense did you make of it?' (What is the *meaning* of these situations and experiences to you?)
4. 'What are your strengths? (What access to *power resources* do you have?)

In both circumstances, power dynamics heavily influenced their experiences of being bullied. Cheyenne encountered a negative interaction with a teacher when she was very young, followed by being a victim of bullying in Year 5. Sam experienced a group of pupils who were frequently targeting him and threatening physical violence. We can see how this affected Cheyenne and the sense she made of it through her comments explaining that she began hurting others after this incident. In her words:

"In year five, I got bullied so that made me have even thicker skin. That made me a bit more defensive and stuff. And then after that it was just like I was a very different person. Like, I wasn't quiet... I was really, really loud. I would always do things to people before they could do it to me."

By making the decision to become "very different" and "do things to people" before they could do it to her, Cheyenne appears to have been attempting to reclaim the power in this situation, and, perhaps, considering this shift in behaviour as accessing "power resources" as proposed by Johnstone and Boyle (2018).

Applying this theoretical framework to pupils at risk of permanent exclusion and considering what has happened to them, how power is operating in their lives, and examining the threat they may be facing, we can identify areas where children and young people require additional support before opting for sanctions and punitive measures.

Critiques of the PTMF were referred to in the introduction chapter, including a potential lack of specificity and the danger of disregarding biological and genetic factors or complex mental health needs in favour of a reductive analysis of environmental and social experiences. However, the responses throughout the study exposed significant experiences pertaining to

power imbalances (as referred to by Sam and Cheyenne) and therefore the PTMF acted as a suitable framework for underpinning the analysis and adding to a rich discussion.

5.3.2 Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT) operates on the assumption that a human's need for personal growth is what drives their behaviour and that people have an intrinsic need to actively grow and improve (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The three core needs that underpin SDT are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. SDT also differentiates between two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation comes from within and is guided by a person's own interest or enjoyment in a pursuit. Extrinsic motivation is driven by external factors such as rewards, social pressure, and positive or negative reinforcement.

Critiques of SDT include the argument that human motivation is complex and cannot be neatly categorized into three needs, as well as the lack of consideration of extrinsic motivation and the success of reward systems (Holding & Koestner, 2023). However, the study found SDT to specifically suit the age group of participants. When applying the principles of SDT to the findings from the study, it is significant to note that when children are excluded from school, they lose much of their autonomy. Typically, all decisions are made by adults regarding the pupil's future provision, and transition reports are written about them, their character, and their behaviour, often without the views or input of the child. Furthermore, it seems clear that when pupils are given repeated sanctions such as frequent detentions, removal from class as a punishment for behaviour (rather than an opportunity for support), and spending time in isolation, particularly as a punishment they don't agree with or view as 'just', they are not able to experience autonomy, competence, or relatedness and are, therefore, unlikely to feel intrinsically motivated to change their behaviour in a positive way.

The concept of relatedness and belonging are highlighted within the theme, examining the importance of relationships seen within the current study, and was referenced throughout much of the existing literature. Nurturing positive relationships between teachers and pupils and supporting pupils to develop and increase their intrinsic motivation will likely reduce persistent disruptive behaviour and lower the risk of permanent exclusions.

5.4 Exploring themes in relation to research questions.

The following section considers the research findings for each research question and explores how they link to themes identified in the literature review. Key statements pertaining to the data are underlined as subheadings and discussed below.

5.4.1 Research Question 1 *What are the views of staff in Pupil Referral Units on the processes of permanent exclusion regarding the pupils who attend the PRU?*

5.4.1.1 Mainstream secondary schools are under too much pressure to provide nurture and support to children at risk of exclusion.

Findings from the data and thematic analysis frequently highlighted the difficulties mainstream schools face in terms of their capacity for nurture, meeting all individual needs, and building positive relationships with pupils. Staff participants often referred to the demands of the job role in mainstream schools. They listed large class sizes, demanding curriculums, and lack of support for teachers as common indicators that schools face an increasingly difficult task of creating nurturing spaces for and close relationships with pupils. Throughout the process of this study, the UK saw thousands of teachers taking industrial strike action on multiple dates after dealing with the increasing effects of bigger class sizes, the impact of budget cuts to the

education sector, and a significant reduction in teaching assistants. All of which coincided with an increase in students suffering mental health difficulties and an escalation in behavioural problems. (Skopeliti & Otte, 2023)

The role of the environment on a child's development and well-being has been studied throughout the history of educational psychology. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) emphasises the importance of a child's 'microsystem', which involves direct relationships formed with family, within schools, and immediate communities. Within the microsystem, the 'mesosystem' forms the links between structures, such as the teacher-child connection.

Each staff participant in the study shared the view that most pupils who attend the PRUs through a permanent exclusion did not receive enough nurture or support for SEN needs in mainstream schools. This nurture and support would occur within Bronfenbrenner's microsystem (1979). However, each participant also seemed very keen to emphasise that their blame for this did not fall on mainstream teachers, who, in their view, are stretched to capacity and under increasing pressure to provide results in terms of grades and supporting very large class groups.

These findings link to the themes identified in the literature review in Chapter 2. Caslin (2021) specifically referred to discrepancies between teachers' tolerance levels when attending to pupils' needs and behaviour. It appears clear that significant pressure on teachers impacts their stress, ability to cope with the job role, and tolerance levels (Woods et al., 2023). Similarly, Murphy (2002) and Hart (2013) identified the significance of support for and inclusion of vulnerable pupils in building resilience and encouraging school attendance.

The findings of the current study indicated that PRU staff felt they were able to provide more therapeutic and nurturing support and build more positive relationships with pupils, and because of this, they saw fewer behavioural incidences. This links with Trotman's findings (2015) that pupils felt better understood and contained by staff in PRUs than mainstream teachers, and Arnold, Yeoman & Simpson (2008) consider the concept of the PRU as a "safe base" (p.39). Staff participants generally put this down to the benefits of PRUs having significantly smaller class sizes, more time to spend building relationships with pupils, and less pressure on PRU teachers to provide results and grades. Furthermore, the staff in this study spoke of their access to an in-house tailored support team of speech and language therapists, psychologists, and other professionals who could see and assess pupils very quickly, resulting in faster and more tailored learning and therapeutic support for young people. On the other hand, mainstream schools often have exceedingly long waiting times for access to outside support, and pupils are often permanently excluded before other professionals see them.

5.4.1.2 Earlier identification of learning difficulties and SEN is needed.

A question that arose frequently from staff regarding their views on permanent exclusions was why so many children arrive at the PRU who 'blatantly' have learning needs that have not been identified in their mainstream school. Most of the staff shared that they felt able to spot learning needs or traits consistent with neurodivergence very quickly upon meeting young people, and there were lots of discussions about how the school could have missed this. This often led to considerations that managing the presenting behaviour took precedence over supporting learning needs. Some participants also considered whether schools felt it was easier to exclude pupils than to try and assess or support their needs.

Findings from the current study are consistent with findings from the literature. Four out of the seven studies examined in the literature review highlight the large number of pupils who are excluded from school who display SEN and learning needs but have not received assessment

or support for these. Murphy (2022) linked the connection between behaviour and unmet learning needs and referred to the need for more support.

All PRU staff in the study shared how beneficial it has been having access to the successfully piloted SEN support service shared between provisions within the local PRU collegiate, which includes speech and language therapists, assistant psychologists, youth support workers and mental health and counselling support. Unlike mainstream schools, which have to refer through local authority services, which have waiting times of up to three years, the PRUs within this collegiate could access these services in a matter of days and identify the needs and appropriate support very quickly.

Taggart et al. (2006) explored the importance of early identification of SEN in early years (and children 'at risk' of developing SEN) and the positive impact of early identification on cognitive development and behaviour, despite abundant research stating the importance of early identification of SEN (Cooper, 2000; Macomber et al. 2010). It is clear from the current research that there are still many examples of children excluded from school and arriving in PRUs who clearly have unidentified needs.

Many of the staff participants shared seeing significant improvements in behaviour, confidence and well-being of pupils who had received assessment and diagnosis of learning needs during their time in the PRU. Some staff referred to children appearing more confident once they better understood their difficulties and received support with these.

5.4.1.3 Communication is a key factor.

Staff regularly shared views regarding communication as both a barrier and a tool or opportunity for information sharing between schools, PRUs and families. It was clear from many of the staff views that often they receive little information from schools regarding a new pupil's background or needs and thus can find it difficult to know how best to support the young person. Similarly, staff shared experiences of receiving information from schools with rather damning descriptions of the child, which painted them in a very negative light. However, upon meeting the pupils, they could clearly see a vulnerable child in need of nurture and support.

- Leon commented-

"The person you read about and the person that you have relationship with tend to be two totally different people", adding- "I think sometimes it's totally total opposites to the monster they've created it in is almost like a character they've created of this individual".

Communication was also discussed in terms of behaviour- with many staff members viewing behaviour as a form of communication and emphasising the importance of supporting underlying speech and language needs and nurturing emotional literacy. One head teacher expressed that most children in her PRU have unmet speech and language needs. She shared the dramatic improvement in behaviour and confidence levels observed in pupils who received SALT assessment and support during their time in the PRU. This is clearly an area where many pupils require intervention far earlier in their educational journeys. Findings imply this has a strong potential to reduce persistent disruptive behaviour and prevent permanent exclusions.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory, Bowlby's Attachment Theory and many theories underpinned by Psychodynamic Psychology emphasise the importance of verbal and non-verbal communication and the significance of conscious and unconscious *behaviour* as communication. Persistent Disruptive Behaviour is the highest reason for permanent

exclusion, indicating the need for a shift in how teachers view behaviour and emphasising the importance of reframing “attention-seeking” or “challenging” behaviour as ‘support-seeking’ behaviour and exploring ways in which school staff can further support young people displaying ‘persistent disruptive’ behaviour.

5.4.2 Research Question 2 *What are the common experiences of pupils who have been permanently excluded from school?*

5.4.2.1 The importance of building positive relationships cannot be understated.

As identified in both the thematic synthesis of the literature and the thematic analysis of the data- relationships continue to be one of the most significant factors in a child’s educational journey. Pupils frequently linked their disruptive or challenging behaviour with teachers they did not respect and felt they were not respected by. The concept of being treated “like a human” by teachers was often referenced, with some pupils feeling they were treated like a “number” in mainstream school or being addressed by names or labels they did not like. The opposite was generally shared regarding relationships built with staff in PRUs.

The significance of teacher-pupil and peer-peer relationships abound within current literature and was a theme highlighted throughout all studies included in the literature review. Many pupils who are permanently excluded from school have been victims of bullying previously in their education. This is often a catalyst for a change in behaviour or a significant factor leading up to exclusion. Research indicates that peer relationships are considered an important supportive factor (Murphy, 2022), and the sense of connectedness and belonging is intrinsic to a pupil’s well-being (Jalalai & Morgan, 2018).

It is also clear from existing research that positive teacher-pupil relationships have a huge impact (in many cases, the single biggest factor) on influencing positive behaviour and reducing the risk of exclusions (Trotman et al., 2015). Research indicates that pupils typically have better relationships with teachers in PRUs than in their excluding mainstream schools. (Daniels et al, 2003). Unfortunately, due to ever-increasing mainstream class sizes, job roles, lack of support and curriculum demands, there is often inadequate time or resources to enable mainstream teaching staff to build meaningful one-to-one relationships with young people. Instead, negative behaviour receives the most reactions. This study identifies that behaviour difficulties are more often responded to with sanctions, punitive measures, and exclusions than with nurture, reflection, and opportunities for restorative justice (Hopkins, 2002; Zehr, 1995). Furthermore, the research also indicated that punitive measures are ineffective in reducing unwanted behaviour, which is discussed in the following section.

5.4.2.2 Sanctions and punitive measures don’t typically improve behaviour.

The data provided anecdotal evidence from pupils that sanctions and punitive measures such as repeated detentions and being sent out of class do not generally lead to an improvement in behaviour. In many cases, the pupils appeared despondent and reported sanctions became part of everyday life and in many circumstances led to an escalation of behavioural incidents.

It would appear clear from the data that pupils who are repeatedly sent out of class or given detentions do not typically report motivation to improve their behaviour, which leads to the question of why many mainstream school processes continue to include the use of sanctions such as repeated detentions and isolation and suggests that alternate methods of managing behaviour would be more suitable. Liam reported detentions were generally spent copying lines out of a textbook rather than engaging in learning activities, and numerous participants

shared that they had not been offered the opportunity to discuss or reflect on incidents and behaviour that led to sanctions.

Way (2016) states that understanding student *perceptions* of discipline and authority is fundamental to understanding how discipline influences student behaviour. Her research suggests that pupils respond better to sanctions they understand, agree with, and perceive as fair. In contrast, punitive measures they see as unjust can lead to a worsening of behaviour. Way also argues that positive pupil-teacher relationships are a key factor in reducing unwanted behaviour.

5.4.3 What can be learned from pupils and staff in PRUs?

5.4.3.1 Language and labels used to describe children should be very carefully considered.

The impact of labels was a key theme highlighted in the data analysis and supports the existing literature and research on permanently excluded pupils. Caslin (2021), Stanforth & Rose (2020), Gersch & Nolan (1994), and Murphy (2022) emphasised the negative impact of labels frequently used to describe excluded pupils and shared examples of words like “bad” and “problem”. The current study also revealed pupils’ experiences of being referred to as “naughty” and “trouble”, and, more specifically, being referred to by a different name.

Furthermore, as acknowledged within the theme of communication, staff participants frequently referred to negative descriptions of pupils in transition papers issued to PRUs by mainstream schools. This study extends the current literature and indicates an ongoing issue with descriptors used to refer to pupils, many of whom are vulnerable and experience a loss of autonomy during the process of permanent exclusion and transition to PRU provisions.

Billington (2000) refers to the thousands of labels placed upon children in Britain each year (p.21), and the significant impact said labels can have on the children and the adults close to them. Billington argues that the impact of labelling children and the stigmatisation associated with such labelling can have lasting and far-reaching social and economic consequences for pupils (p.22). In line with the Power Threat Meaning framework, which aims to move away from the pathologising of children, Billington argues that the psychopathologising of a child, including labelling them with “behavioural” or “learning” difficulties, goes beyond just the label itself, and instead, allocates a child with a range of social disadvantages. It is important to acknowledge the nuances of labels, which help, and labels, which hinder. On the one hand, a label of Autism or social and emotional mental health difficulties may provide a child with access to further support within their education, including an EHCP. However, when a child is viewed through the “what is wrong with you” lens, as opposed to “what has happened to you” (Johnson & Boyle, 2018), children are at risk of lasting stigmatisation and negative social consequences (Billington, 2000).

5.4.3.2 Trauma Informed practice can improve support for young people at risk of exclusion.

The concepts of safety and trauma are clearly hugely significant when considering opportunities to improve permanent exclusion processes and reduce the risk of exclusion. Themes highlighted within the literature emphasised the significance of a child’s environment and its impact on their learning, development, and behaviour, particularly when the child has experienced trauma. Some studies from the literature highlighted school environments being chaotic and unsettling and the transition from primary school to secondary school as an experience some pupils find traumatic (Trotman et al., 2015). The current study also indicates that some elements of school life are traumatic for pupils and refers explicitly to negative teacher-pupil interactions and exclusion as a traumatic event. This indicates that despite clear

research highlighting the impact of traumatic experiences at school, there continues to be an ongoing wider issue and different approaches are needed.

Research establishes children cannot learn when they do not feel safe (Comer, 1999), and the current research findings indicate permanent exclusions can be incredibly traumatic for children. Adults working with children should be aware of the profound psychological effects that school processes and teacher behaviour can have on young people. Research by Morgan et al. (2015) highlights that disenfranchised young people need additional support to engage (or re-engage) in education. This is particularly pertinent when considering pupils who have experienced permanent exclusion from their mainstream school. Morgan et al. argue that support for young people requires further thinking about the role educators play in alternative provisions and PRUs. They suggest improvements to practices relating to young people who have experienced exclusion and are burdened with feeling they have failed in conventional school settings.

5.4.3.3 Zero tolerance policies should be given further consideration.

Zero tolerance policies were introduced to schools as a measure to ensure a safe environment by keeping weapons out of school and enforcing the instant removal of any pupil found to be carrying a knife or other weapon (APA.org, 2006). As highlighted in subtheme 3.2, weapons (knives in particular) and the zero-tolerance policy adopted by many mainstream schools was a topic of contention for many staff participants. Two pupil participants shared experiences of being permanently excluded for carrying a knife, one of whom reported having carried and used the weapon with the intention to scare others, and one pupil reported having a knife planted on him by bullies. Throughout the researcher's previous experience of working with young people in PRUs, it was a common experience to meet young people who had been permanently excluded for a one-off incident of carrying a knife, where the pupils explained they had taken it to school to protect themselves from bullies by scaring them, rather than with an intention to use the knife or harm others. Research by Valdebenito et al. (2017) highlights that victims of bullying are the most likely to carry a knife in school, which supports the 'self-protection' hypothesis. Considering the strong correlation between school bullying and the possession of weapons, effective anti-bullying programs in schools are essential. However, zero-tolerance policies appear to need a far more nuanced approach rather than all children and situations being treated the same (Tseng & Becker, 2016).

Daftary-Kapur et al. (2014) examined the link between zero-tolerance policies and the school-to-prison pipeline. They argued against policies that push students out of school and potentially bear severe life-long implications. The current study supports the need for the re-consideration of zero-tolerance policies, and these findings mirror existing bodies of literature. The study highlights a need for schools to treat weapons possession on a case-by-case basis. Before permanently excluding a student, schools should examine the factors that contributed to the pupil carrying a weapon and consider alternative means of support for the pupil where appropriate.

5.5 Implications for Educational Psychologists

One of the key findings from the study was the alarming amount of young people who arrive in PRU settings with unidentified learning, language, or social communication needs, which are likely to have impacted their behaviour and, ultimately, led to permanent exclusion. PRU staff often shared their frustrations and concerns that many of the young people had never received SEN support or involvement prior to exclusion (such as through SALT, CAMHS, or EPs) despite clear needs. In her foreword to Cigman's 2006 book, Mary Warnock states that

the children who suffer the most from the current system are those whose disabilities and learning needs are not obvious or visible, particularly those with undiagnosed ASD (Cigman, 2006). Warnock refers to the transition between primary and secondary schooling for children, whose social communication needs are unidentified as potentially “catastrophic” and highlights the impact that such trauma can have on a pupil’s onward trajectory through secondary education, including behavioural difficulties and emotionally based school avoidance.

Ainscow et al., (2013) emphasise the need for more inclusive schooling for children with SEN and argue the case for more inclusion to avoid exclusion. Educational Psychologists are well placed to provide consultation, assessment, and support to schools and pupils at early stages (ideally before the transition to secondary school) and before learning needs and SEN lead to behaviour becoming a significant concern, often leading to exclusion. Furthermore, EPs can help schools to understand the root causes of behaviour, explore developmental difficulties, and/or trauma, and implement training and strategies for schools to support young people who are not only at risk of exclusion, but before the risk arises. Additionally, it may be beneficial for EPs to have input into teacher training programs, particularly to support trainee teachers and newly qualified teachers with behaviour management strategies and equip them with how to confidently spot concerns indicating underlying SEN, trauma, and how to work with EPs.

5.6 Strengths of the study

The research provides insight into the views and experiences of permanently excluded pupils and adds to the existing body of literature pertaining to permanent exclusions. Strengths of the study include, most notably, that the research gained the lived experiences of permanently excluded pupils who may not have otherwise had the opportunity for their voices to be heard. This aligns with the emancipatory research paradigm, which Noel (2016) defines as the process of producing knowledge that can benefit disadvantaged people. In this case, permanently excluded groups, with the key aim of empowering research subjects. Similarly, the voices of PRU staff are often not represented in existing literature on permanent exclusions. Therefore, the study gained and shared their views, which are invaluable when considering opportunities for future practice.

The methodological approaches were suitable for the research. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to share their views in line with the set questions and venture into areas they felt were particularly important or pertinent to the research. The choice of interview style and data analysis methods (Reflexive thematic analysis) were aligned well with the critical realist stance of the researcher.

Strengths related to the sample selection included pupil participants from a range of ethnic backgrounds and year groups, with staff participants selected from a mix of genders, ages, ethnic backgrounds, and a range of time spent working in the PRU. Interviewing staff who had varying time spent in-post ensured a mix of experiences of the PRU during different changes to political and legislative structures as well as changes in government funding to education, which may have had a direct impact on the provision, resources, and permanent exclusion processes, particularly relating to pupils with SEN.

A relative strength in terms of positioning of the researcher was that although the researcher was working as a Trainee EP within the local authority, they had not yet been involved in any cases within the PRU collegiate, thus ensuring the pupils and staff had no prior experience of her, which could have impacted the interviewer-participant relationship. The researcher was trained in Video Interactive Guidance (VIG) (Kennedy, Landor & Todd, 2011) and Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP) (Kennedy, Landor & Todd, 2015) and therefore, had

excellent knowledge and understanding of the principles of attuned interaction, which enabled her to build positive relationships with participants very quickly and ensuring rich discussions were had.

5.7 Limitations of the study

Due to the small sample size and all participants being from within one local collegiate group of PRU provisions, there may be issues regarding the generalisability of the study. Gaining access to pupil participants proved challenging in terms of difficulties regarding consent forms. Often, parents had not signed (or pupils had not returned) the forms by the scheduled interview dates. Furthermore, there were frequent circumstances where the researcher arrived at the PRU prepared to conduct pupil interviews, but sessions were unable to commence due to various factors, such as pupils being in a state of dysregulation following an incident or due to erratic attendance. There were also local context difficulties observed in real-time when one provision was forced to close due to a lack of funding during the data collection stage of the research. One pupil attending the provision withdrew from the study because of this. As a result of these issues, the sample size was small and only two provisions were included in the research.

Another possible limitation of the study was that it did not include the voices of mainstream teachers who knew the pupils prior to exclusion. This may have provided another dynamic to the story and provided a richer reflection opportunity when considering future practice.

Although semi-structured interviews provided flexibility and a person-centred approach to the data collection, there was the possibility of 'respondent bias'. This means that some responses may have been interpreted incorrectly by the researcher (Summers & Hammond, 1969), participants may have carefully adjusted their responses to conceal information, or to give the interviewer the answers they felt would be helpful to the research. All participants were initially selected at the discretion of the PRU head teachers, which, although full confidentiality and anonymity were assured, may have made participants feel cautious regarding comments they made about their provision. Therefore, full transparency may not have been possible.

5.8 Reflexivity

Reflexivity involves an awareness and understanding that the researcher and participant affect each other mutually and continually in the research process (Alvesson & Skoldburg, 2000). Essentially, researcher reflexivity involves being mindful of our biases, responses, and preconceptions, and how these may impact participant responses and, ultimately, shape the research.

The researcher is a White British, 38-year-old female from a relatively middle-class background with a strong vocal accent indicative of not being from the local area where the research was conducted. This may have had the potential for participants to perhaps feel the researcher's background and experiences were very different from the young people's experiences and, therefore, could have led to a lack of trust or feelings of being misunderstood. Many of the young people interviewed communicate using locally and culturally developed slang dialects. It was important for the researcher to ensure pupil participants were comfortable sharing their experiences and were able to use their natural manner of speaking, whilst also being keen to ensure the pupils' views were not misinterpreted due to different locality or cultural definitions. One example of this was the use of the word 'calm'. Pupils often referred to teachers or experiences as 'calm', which was used in lieu of 'great/ nice/ decent' and indicated they liked the teacher. Similarly, pupils sometimes referred

to others as “wet” or “a neek”, which is used as a derogatory term to describe a peer they perceive to be of lower social status or who is viewed as ‘soft’, dull, or unpopular. It was important for the researcher to understand local slang terms well and to ask clarifying questions regarding ambiguous or unfamiliar terms used by participants to ensure their views were represented accurately.

Greig et al. (2012) refer to the potential problems with interpreting children’s responses. They pay particular attention to the adolescent stage of development and the issues of over-and-under estimation of their abilities. This felt particularly pertinent during the current study to the knowledge that many pupil participants had unmet learning and/or social communication difficulties. The researcher provided paper and pens and allowed participants to draw or write responses if this felt more comfortable to them. The researcher regularly checked in with participants to ensure they understood questions and expectations and ensured clear, unambiguous instructions or leading questions.

Furthermore, it is important to consider the concept of participant bias or response bias. The concept of which, is that participants may wish to please the researcher, to be helpful, to respond in ways that will make the researcher happy with them, and to consider pupils’ concerns, their responses may be accessed by people who hold power over them (for example, teachers or parents). Greig et al. (2012) highlight the importance of ensuring attempts are made in designing adolescent research to provide privacy of responses. The researcher made it very clear to pupils that all their responses were entirely anonymous, and they would be referred to by a pseudonym throughout the written study.

Throughout the data collection process, the researcher’s purpose and intent was to remain impartial and not reveal any biases or personal judgements. However, there were moments when feelings of empathy overrode impartiality. For example, when Sam referred to being permanently excluded after having a knife planted on him by bullies, the following comments were made to him about the teachers-

P- “Ohh. Like I said. I felt like I was betrayed because... Like, I'd never done it. I've been here... For basically no reason. Ummm, so I was like, OK...? That school was just... Not OK.”

R- “Yeah...”

P- “They- they gotta sort something out... You know..?”

R- “It sounds like you were really let down.”

(Sam- Lines 128-133)

Upon reflection, it was considered that perhaps the comment made by the researcher that Sam was “let down”, whilst expressing empathy, may have revealed bias towards the pupil and indicated blame and distrust towards the mainstream school without the researcher’s knowledge of the school’s perspective or their reasons for his permanent exclusion. Balancing impartiality in interviewing with relationship building, addressing power dynamics, and encouraging students who may have negative experiences of professionals to put their trust in the researcher is intrinsic to the research. This further explains why the interviewer was occasionally inclined to make empathetic comments. This was an important point of reflection when listening to the recordings after the interviews.

Similarly, in the interest of reflexivity, the researcher was mindful of preconceived ideas regarding excluded pupils and unmet needs. Although the research was conducted with a

hypothesis that many children who are excluded from school have unmet learning needs, the researcher was mindful of not assuming every pupil participant had learning needs and approached this aspect with curiosity and without bias or asking leading questions. The researcher also considered whether interviews conducted later in the research process may have led to the researcher holding more assumptions due to previous participant responses and an unconscious expectation of hearing similar views and experiences. It felt important to consider whether this could have impacted the interviewing style and, ultimately, the data, despite every intention of drawing authentic findings and objective data. In terms of validity, all responses shared by participants were taken as their version of reality. Hence, no “fact-checking” measures were taken, such as accessing school files, speaking to mainstream staff members regarding incidents discussed, or perusing permanent exclusion reports.

5.9 Implications for further research

The research limitations may be addressed by extending the study to a larger sample size from a wider area, for example, across the whole of London or nationwide. As mentioned in section 5.7, it would be interesting to include the views of mainstream teachers who know the permanently excluded pupils well to add a deeper understanding of the differences in approaches to behaviour and views on permanent exclusion. Furthermore, opportunities for a collaborative discussion between PRU staff and mainstream teaching staff, through the use of focus groups, may provide positive solutions to reducing permanent exclusions and consider alternative opportunities for therapeutic and restorative support in place of ineffective punitive measures.

Many of the themes could be explored in greater depth with more stakeholders as they provided rich areas for discussion. The theme of communication highlighted issues around information sharing and how young people are often described in transition papers when they are permanently excluded and begin their placement in the PRU. Further research may explore the processes of information sharing to examine the language used to describe young people during and after permanent exclusion and explore the impact this has on the receiver provision and the pupils’ experience.

5.10 Feedback to Stakeholders / Dissemination Strategies

Stakeholders for the research include the staff participants, who each showed a keen interest in the findings and possibilities for impacting future practice. There are also opportunities to share findings with pupil participants by developing and disseminating a one-page feedback poster or arranging feedback sessions. Additional stakeholders include the Local Authority’s Children’s Services, particularly the Educational Psychology Service of the Local Authority, where the research occurred. The researcher aims to provide a summary and present the findings of this study to the EPS team during a service development meeting and present the findings to the three cohorts of DEdPsy trainees at the University of East London.

There is potential for training schools on reducing the risk of permanent exclusions and supporting schools with earlier identification and support of learning needs, neurodiversity, and SEN and how these may impact behaviour. Furthermore, the study provides opportunities for EP involvement in reworking schools’ behaviour policies and strategies and considering more nurturing and therapeutic options before punitive measures.

Following the viva examination, there are possibilities for publishing the research, from which the findings will contribute to national strategy and may underpin further training for

mainstream schools and trainee teachers in identifying the needs underpinning behaviour and how to better support pupils at risk of permanent exclusion.

5.11 Conclusion- Opportunities for improving practice.

Findings from the study highlight the scope in numerous areas for re-thinking permanent exclusions and the processes prior to this. The following section will draw on findings from the study and outline possible opportunities at different systemic levels for improving practices in relation to permanent exclusion processes. Early support for pupils who are at risk of exclusion is also considered.

Individual Level

- It is imperative that schools strive to cultivate positive relationships between teachers and students.
- Special needs must be identified earlier.

School Level

- Evaluation of sanctions and punitive measures should be conducted to determine their effectiveness in reducing disruptive behaviour. Practices based on SDT should be incorporated to support intrinsic motivation on the part of students.
- Schools should provide additional support to pupils going through a transition, including students transitioning from primary to secondary education.
- Consider the information shared between schools and PRUs carefully and the words and terms used to describe children.

Local Authority Level

- In consultation with schools, local authorities need to develop a more comprehensive list of formal processes that must be met prior to permanent exclusion, such as emotional and cognitive assessment, a mandatory literacy and language screener, nurturing interventions, and additional educational in-class support.
- There needs to be more formal and consistent data-sharing processes after permanent exclusion to ensure that any information sent to PRUs from the excluding schools is timely, thorough, and accurate.
- Shorter waiting times for services are needed. It is clear from the data that in-house services like those referred to within the staff data will significantly benefit schools and pupils.
- Additionally, smaller provisions are needed for pupils who cannot tolerate a large, busy mainstream environment.
- It is important to re-examine zero-tolerance policies, considering the flaws within the current system. Furthermore, the reasons behind a pupil carrying a weapon should be thoroughly explored, with support being put in place before a knee-jerk permanent exclusion.
- Anti-bullying strategies must be incorporated into school curriculums to address bullying. Formal processes should be implemented to monitor this as an ongoing initiative.

Government Level

- Embed trauma-informed approaches to behaviour within the teacher training curriculum.
- Further training for teachers on how to identify and support the learning or social and emotional needs underpinning behaviour rather than reactive and punitive measures.
- Provide training and policies regarding labels attached to children and their potential impact.

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List of Appendices

Appendix 1.

TAPUPAS Weight of Evidence Table

STUDY	TAPUPAS DIMENSIONS	OVERALL WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE BASED ON ABC (low/med/high)
<p>Stanforth & Rose (2020)</p>	<p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE A: <i>Quality of execution of study</i></p> <p>Transparency- Clear research questions, clear abstract including methodology, participants and findings. Unclear how specific participants (20 staff, 13 students) were selected. Quantitative data taken from school referrals. Data collection and analysis appear to be appropriate to the research.</p> <p>Accuracy- Knowledge claims clearly referenced. Findings through study backed up sharing reflections and references of previous studies. Questionnaires are not available to view in paper. Limited generalisability due to sample from just one secondary school.</p> <p>Accessibility- Available through EBSCO databases (ERIC), published by T&F Reasonably accessible but certain sections ie key findings very jargon heavy, not clear for range of readers</p> <p>Specificity- Mixed methods approach to consider trends within referrals and an analysis of how students displaying challenging behaviour are constructed within the discourse of the school. Article is Peer reviewed.</p>	<p>Med</p>

	<p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE B: <i>Appropriateness of method and design related to research question</i></p> <p>Purposivity- The research design is appropriate to the aims of the study. Both qualitative and quantitative data were included. Quantitative data included examining school referral data and qualitative included semi structured interviews with staff and pupils regarding challenging behaviour and exclusionary practises within the school. Triangulation of data provided. Adequate sample size for provision of rich data. Sample refers to “82% White British” but names no other ethnic groups within sample.</p> <p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE C: <i>Review specific of focus/ approach of study to answer research question</i></p> <p>Utility- Although this paper does not focus explicitly on permanent exclusions, it provides qualitative data extracted through Interviews with staff and secondary aged students and considers how the students are constructed within the school. Mixed methods but use semi-structured interviews for qualitative analysis. Themes generated. The paper includes a specific focus on pupil behaviour and also reflects on referrals. Did not focus retrospective views on how specific exclusions could have been prevented, however</p> <p>Propriety- Ethical procedures followed as per the author’s institutional guidelines. All participants are non-identifiable, consent forms used and right to refuse to participate or withdraw data.</p>	
<p>Gersch & Nolan (1994)</p>	<p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE A: <i>Quality of execution of study</i></p> <p>Transparency-Clear aims and objectives are outlined although specific research questions are not explicit. Refers to increasing concern regarding numbers of exclusions from school and processes of exclusion. Refers to importance of gaining the views of the pupils. Aims to propose practical implications for future development. Transparent about aims and method. Clear data collection and analysis methods. Data collected through two methods- examination of pupil files and staff were consulted to validate if the files presented an accurate presentation of the pupil. And interviews. The data was analysed using cluster analysis. Quotes are included within the key findings. Limitations appear to be acknowledged, although this is not explicit.</p>	<p>Med</p>

	<p>Accuracy- The sample size is very small- just 6 pupils from one area, reducing the generalisability of the study. Themes are evidenced with direct quotes. Pupil ethnicity “as described by their parents are 5 UK and 1 African Caribbean/UK”. Triangulation is evidenced.</p> <p>Accessibility- The paper is not available on online databases, only accessible through a hard copy of the journal found in UEL library periodicals. Easy to read, appropriate for range of audiences.</p> <p>Specificity- Small scale empirical study featuring the views of six pupils. All pupils attended PRU. Data collection consisted of examination of school files, and pupil interviews.</p> <p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE B: <i>Appropriateness of method and design related to research question</i></p> <p>Purposivity- The design met the studies aims. Results of the study supported the production of a student booklet and leaflet for parents to support the pupil and family or carers through exclusions. Small sample size reduced the generalisability of results.</p> <p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE C: <i>Review specific of focus/ approach of study to answer research question</i></p> <p>Utility- Focuses on the views of excluded pupils with the aims of informing future practice. Young people’s views were central to the research and used to provide future support.</p> <p>Propriety- No reference to specific ethical protocol or ethics committees, however ethical considerations were stated. All participation was voluntary and entirely anonymous.</p>	
<p>Murphy (2022)</p>	<p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE A: <i>Quality of execution of study</i></p> <p>Transparency- The context and aims of the study are clearly defined. Interview questions are shared within the paper. Data collection methods and data analysis processes are described and outlined. Limitations are briefly acknowledged. Participant inclusion criteria is clear. Participant demographics are somewhat clear but information regarding ability and ethnicity were omitted due to considerations of this data impacting confidentiality.</p>	<p>High</p>

	<p>The research is qualitative in nature and based on a critical realist epistemology.</p> <p>Accuracy- Themes generated are clearly defined. Students' views are recorded throughout the themes, however use of quotes within the themes are limited. Data analysis is clear and thorough. More female participants volunteered for the study, despite there being more males permanently excluded from school. Researcher acknowledges this and reflects on existing research indicating that boys statistically have lower language skills than girls. This may impact on generalisability and pose a limitation for findings.</p> <p>Accessibility- The paper is highly accessible.</p> <p>Specificity- Relatively small sample size (N=18) Thoughtful data collection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with individual students between the ages of 6 and 16 from four PRUs in the South of England. The topic has high relevance.</p> <p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE B: <i>Appropriateness of method and design related to research question</i></p> <p>Purposivity- The methods used were appropriate. Pupils' views are central to the research. Qualitative data ensured rich data was gathered.</p> <p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE C: <i>Review specific of focus/ approach of study to answer research question</i></p> <p>Utility- The study specifically examines the impact that permanent exclusion has on pupils by extracting their views and sharing their voices. Thematic analysis identifies key themes. Semi-structured interviews support the exploration of young people's experiences of permanent exclusion. Key findings highlight the need to replicate the research in other areas of England.</p> <p>Propriety- Rigorous ethical consideration applied and approval gained. Participants were made entirely anonymous, and data adhered to Data Protection Act (2018). Full consent from participants and guardians was gained. Issues of disclosure and mental health concerns were addressed by the author- a psychotherapist holding preliminary interviews to gain informed consent and ensure mental health needs were met during participation of study.</p>	
Hart 2013	<p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE A: <i>Quality of execution of study</i></p> <p>Transparency- The aims and focus of the study are clear. Information regarding participants, methodology and findings are provided clearly.</p>	Low/med

	<p>The research questions are clear. Data collection and analysis processes are transparent. Limitations are acknowledged and referred to thoroughly.</p> <p>Accuracy- Research was conducted in just one PRU in the UK. All pupil participants are of White British ethnicity. Small sample size- just six children and four staff members.</p> <p>Accessibility- The paper is accessible</p> <p>Specificity- The sample size is very small, featuring participants from just one UK PRU and with all pupil participants from a White British ethnic background. This does not provide generalisability and is not necessarily representative of other children. These factors limit the impact of different cultural and environmental contexts. The participants (pupils and staff) are however relevant, and the topic is moderately relevant, as it focuses on the experiences of young people excluded from school who are attending a pupil referral unit.</p> <p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE B: <i>Appropriateness of method and design related to research question</i></p> <p>Purposivity- The methods used were appropriate and the research met the studies aims. The qualitative nature of the study provided rich, person-centred data and shared and explored the views of both pupils and staff. Research findings are limited, as the research was conducted in just one pupil referral unit.</p> <p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE C: <i>Review specific of focus/ approach of study to answer research question</i></p> <p>Utility- This study specifically focuses on gaining the views of young people and staff in a pupil referral unit, which is highly relevant to the current research. However, this study focuses on protective factors and themes of resilience, rather than considering the processes which led to their exclusions and retrospective views on how exclusion may have been prevented.</p> <p>Propriety: Ethical approval was granted by an ethics committee. The study follows ethical protocol and refers to extra care taken with consideration to ethical procedures due to the vulnerable category of participants.</p>	
<p>Caslin (2021)</p>	<p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE A: <i>Quality of execution of study</i></p> <p>Transparency- Context and aims are clearly described</p>	<p>High</p>

	<p>Aims are relatively clear and researcher makes explicit that the study is a “snapshot” into experiences of young people and the adults who surround them.</p> <p>Objectives are clear</p> <p>Information is provided about participants, with mentions of recruitment strategy</p> <p>A constructivist grounded theory approach was employed</p> <p>Research questions are not clearly defined.</p> <p>Quotes are clearly included throughout the article.</p> <p>There is little to no focus on limitations of the study.</p> <p>Accuracy- Themes are clearly evidenced with headings and direct quotes</p> <p>The sampling size is good- 13 in depth case studies, 13 pupils, 10 parents and 10 teachers</p> <p>Research took place in 3 educational settings, supporting good generalisability</p> <p>Accessibility- The paper is very accessible</p> <p>Specificity- 13 in depth case studies, drawing on the work of Parson’s and Howlett examining how far processes of exclusion have come. Themes and quotes are drawn but not explicitly thematic analysis. The sample is representative.</p> <p>Qualitative data is used, and relatively rich data is gathered.</p> <p>Care was taken to identify appropriate participants.</p> <p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE B: <i>Appropriateness of method and design related to research question</i></p> <p>Purposivity</p> <p>The research design was appropriate to the aims of the study. The qualitative data is rich and focusses heavily on sharing the pupil voice through direct quotes.</p> <p>Although the study is based on a relatively small sample size, there is rich data shared by the pupils and adults included.</p> <p>Triangulation of this data provides a holistic picture.</p> <p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE C: <i>Review specific of focus/ approach of study to answer research question</i></p> <p>Utility- The study focusses on the views of pupils who have been excluded from school and the staff who know them well, as well as parents’ views.</p> <p>Qualitative data is collected and analysed and themes with quotes are examined.</p> <p>Study is conducted within the English education system.</p> <p>Large focus on voices of young people.</p> <p>Focus on the young people’s views and experiences of the process of exclusion from school.</p>	
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	<p>Propriety- The study refers to ethical considerations and issues of power relations. Participants requested to select their own pseudonyms which may somewhat impact on anonymity. Study refers to “process” consent and refers to consent being negotiated as an on-going concern throughout the research.</p>	
<p>Trotman et al (2015)</p>	<p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE A: <i>Quality of execution of study</i></p> <p>Transparency- Background, context and aims of study are clearly defined. Although specific research questions are not explicitly stated, the rationale and aims are very clear. The objectives of the study are clear. Information regarding participants is explicit. Quotes are included within themes. Sampling strategy is clear. Research was commissioned by a well-established consortium of schools. Limitations are not explicitly acknowledged.</p> <p>Accuracy- The sample size is good and provides good generalisability. Themes are generated and quotes are used explicitly to evidence themes. The themes identified are in line with the findings of other research studies.</p> <p>Accessibility- The paper is extremely accessible</p> <p>Specificity- The study uses an ethnographic approach and involved individual semi-structured interview questions and qualitative data analysis. The study involves 49 pupils in year 9 and 8 behaviour co-ordinators from seven secondary schools and two alternative provisions in one area of England.</p> <p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE B: <i>Appropriateness of method and design related to research question</i></p> <p>Purposivity- Pupil and staff views were central to the research. The design met the aims of the study. Aims were to explore the views of young people and staff to provide a holistic view and encourage a shared dialogue. The sample size is relatively large. Provides a rich understanding of the impact that poor behaviour, inadequate teaching practices and poorly thought-out management practice can have on young people’s outcomes.</p> <p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE C: <i>Review specific of focus/ approach of study to answer research question</i></p> <p>Utility- The study focuses on the views of pupils and staff and applies a thematic analysis.</p>	<p>Low</p>

	<p>The purpose of the research was to focus on and enable young people and staff to enter into a dialogue that encouraged the exploration of their views, opinions and beliefs.</p> <p>The study focusses on Secondary School provision and is not explicitly examining the views of young people post exclusion.</p> <p>The main focus of the study is on the effects of transition.</p> <p>Propriety- Specific ethical protocol is not explicitly named, however ethical considerations are referred to and the importance of researcher sensitivity.</p> <p>Informed consent was gained prior to data collection and participants were anonymised and pseudonymised.</p>	
<p>Jalali & Morgan (2018)</p>	<p>Transparency- Research questions are clearly defined. Phenomenological investigation and qualitative design are stated. Aims and objectives are clear. Methodology and data analysis are clear. Sampling strategy is clear. Limitations are clearly explored. Implications are clearly stated.</p> <p>Accuracy- Sample size is good. Study conducted within one part of England, slightly reduces generalisability. Very thorough data analysis- Moustakas (1994) phenomenological data analysis was used. Themes are generated and evidenced with quotes.</p> <p>Accessibility- The paper is reasonably accessible.</p> <p>Specificity- Five secondary and 8 primary aged participants took part. Participants were recruited from one secondary and two primary PRUs across 3 different LAs in the south of England. Participant age range between 7 and 16. Ethnicity of pupils selected is representative of PRU population in national statistics.</p> <p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE B: <i>Appropriateness of method and design related to research question</i></p> <p>Purposivity- The research methods are appropriate. Pupil views are central to the research. The conclusion and implications are stated clearly.</p> <p>WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE C: <i>Review specific of focus/ approach of study to answer research question</i></p> <p>Utility- The study compares student perceptions across primary and secondary to examine change in views. Study is conducted in three PRUs. Study examines views of pupils who have either been excluded or are at risk of exclusion.</p>	<p>Med/high</p>

	<p>Propriety- Ethical considerations are not explicitly discussed, however parent/carers were sent information regarding the study and participants were approached for consent prior to the study. All data was anonymised using pseudonyms.</p>	
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Appendix 2.

Staff interview schedule

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR STAFF

What can you tell me about the pupil's educational background prior to permanent exclusion?

What is your understanding of the processes which led to permanent exclusion?

Are you aware of any special educational needs (SEN), learning needs or other difficulties that may impact the pupil(s)? Are you aware of any support they may have received previously if so?

What additional support (if any) do they feel the pupil may have benefitted from prior to exclusion?

In your view, do you feel the pupils could have avoided permanent exclusion, and if so, how?

Appendix 3.

Pupil interview schedule



How was your experience of

Primary School in general?

Did this continue throughout your time at Secondary School or did things change for you?

Tell me about the lead up to your exclusion.

How did it feel to be permanently excluded?

Did you ever feel you had any difficulties with any areas of learning or school life?

If so, what help did you receive for these?

Tell me about any support you received *before* your exclusion

Tell me about any support you received *after* your exclusion

How has school life been for you since you began attending the PRU?

Appendix 4.

Ethical approval from university

School of Psychology Ethics Committee

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION LETTER

For research involving human participants

BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

Reviewer: Please complete sections in **blue** | **Student:** Please complete/read sections in **orange**

Details

Reviewer:	Hebba Haddad
Supervisor:	Miles Thomas
Student:	Jo Blanchard
Course:	Prof Doc in Educational and Child Psychology
Title of proposed study:	What can be learned from pupils, parents and Key Stage 3 & 4 staff about processes leading to permanent exclusion? Opportunities for improving practice.

Checklist

(Optional)

	YES	NO	N/A
Concerns regarding study aims (e.g., ethically/morally questionable, unsuitable topic area for level of study, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Detailed account of participants, including inclusion and exclusion criteria	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Concerns regarding participants/target sample	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Detailed account of recruitment strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Concerns regarding recruitment strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All relevant study materials attached (e.g., freely available questionnaires, interview schedules, tests, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Study materials (e.g., questionnaires, tests, etc.) are appropriate for target sample	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clear and detailed outline of data collection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Data collection appropriate for target sample	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If deception being used, rationale provided, and appropriate steps followed to communicate study aims at a later point	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If data collection is not anonymous, appropriate steps taken at later stages to ensure participant anonymity (e.g., data analysis, dissemination, etc.) – anonymisation, pseudonymisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Concerns regarding data storage (e.g., location, type of data, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Concerns regarding data sharing (e.g., who will have access and how)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Concerns regarding data retention (e.g., unspecified length of time, unclear why data will be retained/who will have access/where stored)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If required, General Risk Assessment form attached	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any physical/psychological risks/burdens to participants have been sufficiently considered and appropriate attempts will be made to minimise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any physical/psychological risks to the researcher have been sufficiently considered and appropriate attempts will be made to minimise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If required, Country-Specific Risk Assessment form attached	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If required, a DBS or equivalent certificate number/information provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If required, permissions from recruiting organisations attached (e.g., school, charity organisation, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All relevant information included in the participant information sheet (PIS)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information in the PIS is study specific	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Language used in the PIS is appropriate for the target audience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All issues specific to the study are covered in the consent form	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Language used in the consent form is appropriate for the target audience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All necessary information included in the participant debrief sheet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Language used in the debrief sheet is appropriate for the target audience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Study advertisement included	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Content of study advertisement is appropriate (e.g., researcher’s personal contact details are not shared, appropriate language/visual material used, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Decision options

APPROVED	Ethics approval for the above-named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice), to the date it is submitted for assessment.
APPROVED - BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED <u>BEFORE</u> THE RESEARCH COMMENCES	In this circumstance, the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box at the end of this form once all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to the supervisor. The supervisor will then forward the student’s confirmation to the School for its records.

	<p>Minor amendments guidance: typically involve clarifying/amending information presented to participants (e.g., in the PIS, instructions), further detailing of how data will be securely handled/stored, and/or ensuring consistency in information presented across materials.</p>
<p>NOT APPROVED - MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED</p>	<p>In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.</p> <p>Major amendments guidance: typically insufficient information has been provided, insufficient consideration given to several key aspects, there are serious concerns regarding any aspect of the project, and/or serious concerns in the candidate's ability to ethically, safely and sensitively execute the study.</p>

Decision on the above-named proposed research study

<p>Please indicate the decision:</p>	<p>APPROVED - MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES</p>
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Minor amendments

Please clearly detail the amendments the student is required to make

Be sure to insert Version and Date into the Participant Information Sheets and Consent forms.

Major amendments

Please clearly detail the amendments the student is required to make

Assessment of risk to researcher

	YES	NO
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Has an adequate risk assessment been offered in the application form?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	If no, please request resubmission with an <u>adequate risk assessment</u> .	
If the proposed research could expose the <u>researcher</u> to any kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard, please rate the degree of risk:		
HIGH	Please do not approve a high-risk application. Travel to countries/provinces/areas deemed to be high risk should not be permitted and an application not be approved on this basis. If unsure, please refer to the Chair of Ethics.	<input type="checkbox"/>
MEDIUM	Approve but include appropriate recommendations in the below box.	<input type="checkbox"/>
LOW	Approve and if necessary, include any recommendations in the below box.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Reviewer recommendations in relation to risk (if any):	Please insert any recommendations	

Reviewer's signature

Reviewer: (Typed name to act as signature)	Hebba Haddad
Date:	09/05/2022

This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Ethics Committee

RESEARCHER PLEASE NOTE

For the researcher and participants involved in the above-named study to be covered by UEL's Insurance, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

For a copy of UEL's Personal Accident & Travel Insurance Policy, please see the Ethics Folder in the Psychology Noticeboard.

Confirmation of minor amendments

(Student to complete)

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data

Student name: (Typed name to act as signature)	Jo Blanchard
Student number:	U2064588
Date:	09/05/2022

Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed if minor amendments to your ethics application are required

Appendix 5.

Ethical approval from local authority



Local Approval Form


Research Study- *What can be learned from pupils, parents and Key Stage 3 & 4 staff about processes leading to permanent exclusion? Opportunities for improving practice.*

Please complete the below form to confirm that you agree for Jo Natasha Blanchard (Trainee Educational Psychologist) to approach and recruit participants from Pupil Referral Units that are linked to and receive service from XX Educational Psychology Service, under the supervision of Dr Miles Thomas and Dr Lucy Browne, Academic tutors at University of East London.

The proposed research will aim to gain and examine the views of permanently excluded children and young people attending Key Stages 3 and 4 Pupil Referral Units, (and similar Alternative Provisions for excluded pupils), as well as the views of their parents and the staff who work with them. The study will focus particularly on whether any Special Educational Needs (SEN) have been identified at school, and if the pupils and adults feel they may have avoided exclusion had their needs been better identified and supported earlier in their educational history.

The research will involve one-to-one semi structured interviews with participants and held within the provision. Each participant will be invited to take part in the research and asked to provide informed consent after being provided with full information sheets and given the opportunity to ask any questions or raise any concerns. Head Teachers of each provision will be asked for permission to conduct research within their school and with their staff, parents and pupils prior to inviting participants.

I confirm that I give permission for Jo Blanchard (Trainee Educational Psychologist) to recruit participants from schools that are linked to and receive a service from the XX Educational Psychology Service.

Name	XX
Role	Chief Educational Psychologist
Educational Psychology Service	XX Educational Psychology Service, XX Council
Signature	

Appendix 6.

Head Teacher of PRU collegiate approval form

Head Teacher Approval Form

Research Study- *What can be learned from pupils and Key Stage 3 & 4 staff about processes leading to permanent exclusion? Opportunities for improving practice.*

Please complete the below form to confirm that you agree for Jo Natasha Blanchard (Trainee Educational Psychologist) to approach and recruit participants from Pupil Referral Units within the [redacted] that are linked to and receive service from [redacted] Educational Psychology Service, under the supervision of Dr Miles Thomas and Dr Lucy Browne, Academic tutors at University of East London.

The proposed research will aim to gain and examine the views of permanently excluded children and young people attending Key Stages 3 and 4 Pupil Referral Units, (and similar Alternative Provisions for excluded pupils), as well as the views of the staff who work with them. The study will focus particularly on whether any Special Educational Needs (SEN) have been identified at school, and if the pupils and adults feel they may have avoided exclusion had their needs been better identified and supported earlier in their educational history.

The research will involve one-to-one semi structured interviews with participants and held within the provision. Each participant will be invited to take part in the research and asked to provide informed consent after being provided with full information sheets and given the opportunity to ask any questions or raise any concerns. Head Teachers of each provision will be asked for permission to conduct research within their school and with their staff, parents and pupils prior to inviting participants.

I confirm that I give permission for Jo Blanchard (Trainee Educational Psychologist) to approach and recruit participants from schools within the [redacted] Collegiate, that are linked to and receive a service from the [redacted] Educational Psychology Service.

Name	[redacted]
Role	[redacted]
Signature	[redacted]

Appendix 7.

Parent information sheet



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET- PARENTS

Title of research: What can be learned from pupils and Key Stage 3 & 4 staff in Pupil Referral Units about processes leading to permanent exclusion? Opportunities for improving practice.

Contact person: Jo Blanchard

Email: u2064588@uel.ac.uk

Your child is being invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether to consent to their taking part or not, please carefully read through the following information which outlines what their participation would involve. Feel free to talk with others about the study (e.g., your child, friends, family, etc.) before making your decision. If anything is unclear or you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above email.

Who am I?

My name is Jo Blanchard. I am a Doctorate student in the School of Psychology at the University of East London (UEL) and am studying on the Educational and Child Psychology course. As part of my studies, I am conducting the research that your child is being invited to participate in.

What is the purpose of the research?

I am conducting research into permanent exclusions, the processes and how we may focus on preventing them in future. I'd like to meet pupils currently attending key stage 3 and 4 Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and some of the staff who work with them, to discuss how they feel their exclusions may have been prevented and to focus on how practice may be improved in future. I would like to offer your child the opportunity to share their views on the support they received prior to permanent exclusion in a safe and relaxed space.

Why has my child been invited to take part?

To address the study aims, I am inviting pupils who have been permanently excluded from school and PRU staff who know the pupils well, to take part in my research. You are receiving this information because your child is eligible to take part in the study.

It is entirely up to you and your child whether they take part or not, participation is voluntary.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to take part?

If you agree for your child to take part, they will be asked to meet with me for a short chat, to talk about their experiences of permanent exclusion and share any views on if/how they feel this may have been prevented. The conversation will be in the form of a relaxed, informal, interview (some questions will already be outlined, but there will be lots of opportunity and space for them to share as much or as little as they choose). The session is aimed to feel more like a chat than a formal interview.

The interview audio will be recorded (your child will not appear on camera). They will remain completely anonymous and no identifying features (name, school, etc) will be included in the transcripts or final thesis.

Participation will take place in the PRU setting, in a quiet and private space.

Your child will be asked questions about their school experiences and how they feel their exclusion may have been prevented. They are fully encouraged to only disclose things they are comfortable with and reserve the right to not answer any specific questions if they don't want to.

Can I change my mind?

Yes, you can change your mind at any time and withdraw without explanation, disadvantage, or consequence. If you would like to withdraw your child from the study either during or after the discussion and interview, you can do so by contacting me via email at jo.blanchard@XX.gov.uk and letting me know you no longer wish for them to be a part of the study. If you withdraw, the data will not be used as part of the research.

Separately, you can also request to withdraw their data from being used even after your child has taken part in the study, provided that this request is made within 3 weeks of the data being collected (after which point the data analysis will begin, and withdrawal will not be possible).

Are there any disadvantages to taking part?

The research aims to examine the views of pupils and staff on permanent exclusions and how these may have been avoided if different support had been put in place sooner. There are no foreseen disadvantages, however in the extremely unlikely event that pupils do feel

uncomfortable, distressed, or emotional during or after the sessions I will be available to speak with you and them, and the following support agencies are also available:

Text SHOUT to 85258 for free, confidential 24/7 text support.

Phone the Samaritans on 116 123 for free at any time for support.

How will the information I provide be kept secure and confidential?

Data will be collected via informal, semi-structured interviews which will be recorded. Any identifying information disclosed during the interview (such as names etc) will be removed when the transcripts are written up.

Transcripts from recordings will be securely stored in password protected files and saved to The University of East London's OneDrive for Business secure cloud. All recordings will be deleted once recordings are written up. Personal details will be stored securely for up to 3 years.

Data may be exchanged between myself and my academic tutor (Dr Miles Thomas) but every measure will be taken to ensure data is anonymised and sent securely through university email.

If participants' wish to disclose confidential information, they should be aware that if the researcher has concerns for their safety or the safety of others, this will need to be shared with the PRU's designated safeguarding lead.

For the purposes of data protection, the University of East London is the Data Controller for the personal information processed as part of this research project. The University processes this information under the 'public task' condition contained in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Where the University processes particularly sensitive data (known as 'special category data' in the GDPR), it does so because the processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, or scientific and historical research purposes or statistical purposes. The University will ensure that the personal data it processes is held securely and processed in accordance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information about how the University processes personal data please see www.uel.ac.uk/about/about-uel/governance/information-assurance/data-protection

What will happen to the results of the research?

The research will be written up as a thesis and submitted for assessment. The thesis will be publicly available on UEL's online Repository. Findings may also be disseminated to a range of audiences (e.g., academics, clinicians, public, etc.) through journal articles, conference presentations, talks, magazine articles, blogs. In all material produced, your identity will remain completely anonymous, in that, it will not be possible to identify you personally.

You will be given the option to receive a summary of the research findings once the study has been completed for which relevant contact details will need to be provided.

Anonymised research data will be securely stored by myself and Dr Miles Thomas for a maximum of 3 years, following which all data will be deleted.

Who has reviewed the research?

My research has been approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. This means that the Committee's evaluation of this ethics application has been guided by the standards of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

Who can I contact if I have any questions/concerns?

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Jo Blanchard – u2064588@uel.ac.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted, please contact my research supervisor Dr Miles Thomas. School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,
Email: m.thomas@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of School Research Ethics Committee: Dr Trishna Patel, School of Psychology,
University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: t.patel@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet

Appendix 8.

Staff information sheet



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET- STAFF

Title of research: What can be learned from pupils and Key Stage 3 & 4 staff in Pupil Referral Units about processes leading to permanent exclusion? Opportunities for improving practice.

Contact person: Jo Blanchard

Email: u2064588@uel.ac.uk

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether to take part or not, please carefully read through the following information which outlines what your participation would involve. Feel free to talk with others about the study (e.g., friends, family, etc.) before making your decision. If anything is unclear or you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above email.

Who am I?

My name is Jo Blanchard. I am a Doctorate student in the School of Psychology at the University of East London (UEL) and am studying on the Educational and Child Psychology course. As part of my studies, I am conducting the research that you are being invited to participate in.

What is the purpose of the research?

I am conducting research into permanent exclusions, the processes and how we may focus on preventing them in future. I'd like to meet pupils currently attending key stage 3 and 4 Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and some of the staff who work with them, to discuss how they feel their exclusions may have been prevented and to focus on how practice may be improved in future.

Why have I been invited to take part?

To address the study aims, I am inviting pupils who have been permanently excluded from school and PRU staff who know the pupils well, to take part in my research. If you are a staff member who currently works with pupils in a key stage 3 and/or 4 pupil referral unit, you are eligible to take part in the study.

It is entirely up to you whether you take part or not, participation is voluntary.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to take part?

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to meet with me for one, individual one-to-one conversation, to chat about your understanding of the processes that led to the permanent exclusion of some of the young people you work with and share any views on if/how you feel this may have been prevented. The conversation will be in the form of an informal, semi-structured interview (some questions will already be outlined, but lots of opportunity and space for you to share as much or as little as you choose). The interview will be recorded, but you will remain completely anonymous and no identifying features (name, school, etc) will be included in the transcripts or final thesis.

You will be given the option to draw or write during the interview if this feels more comfortable for you than speaking.

Participation will take place in the PRU setting, in a quiet and private space.

The session will be a relaxed and informal chat. You will be asked questions about your understanding of the needs of the pupils, the processes that led to permanent exclusion and how (of if) you feel their exclusion may have been prevented. You are fully encouraged to only disclose things you are comfortable with and reserve the right to not answer any specific questions if you don't want to.

Can I change my mind?

Yes, you can change your mind at any time and withdraw without explanation, disadvantage, or consequence. If you would like to withdraw from the study either during or after the discussion and interview, you can do so by contacting me via email at jo.blanchard@xxx.gov.uk and letting me know you no longer wish to be a part of the study. If you withdraw, your data will not be used as part of the research.

Separately, you can also request to withdraw your data from being used even after you have taken part in the study, provided that this request is made within 3 weeks of the data being collected (after which point the data analysis will begin, and withdrawal will not be possible).

Are there any disadvantages to taking part?

The research aims to examine the views of pupils and staff on permanent exclusions and how these may have been avoided if different support had been put in place sooner. There

are no foreseen disadvantages, however in the unlikely event that you do feel uncomfortable, distressed, or emotional during or after the sessions I will be available to speak with you and the following support agencies are also available:

Text SHOUT to 85258 for free, confidential 24/7 text support.

Phone the Samaritans on 116 123 for free at any time for support.

How will the information I provide be kept secure and confidential?

Data will be collected via semi-structured interviews which will be recorded. Any identifying information disclosed during the interview will be removed when the transcripts are written up. All participants and school provisions will be given pseudonyms.

Transcripts from recordings will be securely stored in password protected files and saved to The University of East London's OneDrive for Business secure cloud. All recordings will be deleted once recordings are written up. Personal details will be stored securely for up to 3 years.

Data may be exchanged between myself and my academic tutor (Dr Miles Thomas) but every measure will be taken to ensure data is anonymised and sent securely through university email.

If participants' wish to disclose confidential information, they should be aware that if the researcher has concerns for their safety or the safety of others, this will need to be shared with the PRU's designated safeguarding lead.

For the purposes of data protection, the University of East London is the Data Controller for the personal information processed as part of this research project. The University processes this information under the 'public task' condition contained in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Where the University processes particularly sensitive data (known as 'special category data' in the GDPR), it does so because the processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, or scientific and historical research purposes or statistical purposes. The University will ensure that the personal data it processes is held securely and processed in accordance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information about how the University processes personal data please see www.uel.ac.uk/about/about-uel/governance/information-assurance/data-protection

What will happen to the results of the research?

The research will be written up as a thesis and submitted for assessment. The thesis will be publicly available on UEL's online Repository. Findings may also be disseminated to a range of audiences (e.g., academics, clinicians, public, etc.) through journal articles, conference presentations, talks, magazine articles, blogs. In all material produced, your identity will remain completely anonymous, in that, it will not be possible to identify you personally.

You will be given the option to receive a summary of the research findings once the study has been completed for which relevant contact details will need to be provided.

Anonymised research data will be securely stored by myself and Dr Miles Thomas for a maximum of 3 years, following which all data will be deleted.

Who has reviewed the research?

My research has been approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. This means that the Committee's evaluation of this ethics application has been guided by the standards of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

Who can I contact if I have any questions/concerns?

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Jo Blanchard – u2064588@uel.ac.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted, please contact my research supervisor Dr Miles Thomas. School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,
Email: m.thomas@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of School Research Ethics Committee: Dr Trishna Patel, School of Psychology,
University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: t.patel@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet

Appendix 9.

Pupil information sheet



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET- PUPILS

Title of research: What can be learned from pupils and Key Stage 3 & 4 staff in Pupil Referral Units about processes leading to permanent exclusion? Opportunities for improving practice.

Contact person: Jo Blanchard

Email: u2064588@uel.ac.uk

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether to take part or not, please carefully read through the following information which outlines what your participation would involve. Feel free to talk with others about the study (e.g., friends, family, etc.) before making your decision. If anything is unclear or you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above email.

Who am I?

My name is Jo Blanchard. I am a Doctorate student in the School of Psychology at the University of East London (UEL) and am studying on the Educational and Child Psychology course. As part of my studies, I am conducting the research that you are being invited to participate in.

What is the purpose of the research?

I am conducting research into permanent exclusions, the processes and how we may focus on preventing them in future. I'd like to meet pupils currently attending key stage 3 and 4 Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and some of the staff who work with them, to discuss how they feel their exclusions may have been prevented and to focus on how practice may be improved in future.

Why have I been invited to take part?

To address the study aims, I am inviting pupils who have been permanently excluded from school and PRU staff to take part in my research, enabling me to share the views and experiences of young people. If you are a pupil currently attending a key stage 3 and/or 4 pupil referral unit, you are eligible to take part in the study.

It is entirely up to you whether you take part or not, participation is voluntary.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to take part?

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to meet with me for one, individual one-to-one conversation, to chat about your experiences of permanent exclusion and share any views on if/how you feel this may have been prevented. The conversation will be in the form of a relaxed, informal, interview (some questions will already be outlined, but there will be lots of opportunity and space for you to share as much or as little as you choose). The session is aimed to feel more like a chat than a formal interview.

The interview audio will be recorded (you will not appear on camera). You will remain completely anonymous and no identifying features (name, school, etc) will be included in the transcripts or final thesis.

You will be given the option to draw or write during the interview if this feels more comfortable for you than speaking.

Participation will take place in the PRU setting, in a quiet and private space.

You will be asked questions about your school experiences and how you feel your exclusion may have been prevented. You are fully encouraged to only disclose things you are comfortable with and reserve the right to not answer any specific questions if you don't want to.

Can I change my mind?

Yes, you can change your mind at any time and withdraw without explanation, disadvantage, or consequence. If you would like to withdraw from the study either during or after the discussion and interview, you can do so by either letting me know at the time, or contacting me via email at jo.blanchard@croydon.gov.uk and stating you no longer wish to be a part of the study. If you withdraw, your data will not be used as part of the research.

Separately, you can also request to withdraw your data from being used even after you have taken part in the study, provided that this request is made within 3 weeks of the data being collected (after which point the data analysis will begin, and withdrawal will not be possible).

Are there any disadvantages to taking part?

The research aims to examine views on permanent exclusions and how these may have been avoided if different support had been put in place sooner. There are no foreseen

disadvantages, however in the unlikely event that you do feel uncomfortable, distressed or emotional during or after the sessions I will be available to speak with you and will share information of supporting agencies you may contact for further support. The following support agencies are available:

www.kooth.com Online mental wellbeing community.

Text SHOUT to 85258 for free, confidential 24/7 text support.

Phone the Samaritans on 116 123 for free at any time for support.

How will the information I provide be kept secure and confidential?

Data will be collected via semi-structured interviews which will be recorded. Any identifying information disclosed during the interview will be removed when the transcripts are written up. All participants and school provisions will be given pseudonyms.

Transcripts from recordings will be securely stored in password protected files and saved to The University of East London's OneDrive for Business secure cloud. All recordings will be deleted once recordings are written up. Personal details will be stored securely for up to 3 years.

Data may be exchanged between myself and my academic tutor (Dr Miles Thomas) but every measure will be taken to ensure data is anonymised and sent securely through university email.

If participants' wish to disclose confidential information, they should be aware that if the researcher has concerns for their safety or the safety of others, this will need to be shared with the PRU's designated safeguarding lead.

For the purposes of data protection, the University of East London is the Data Controller for the personal information processed as part of this research project. The University processes this information under the 'public task' condition contained in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Where the University processes particularly sensitive data (known as 'special category data' in the GDPR), it does so because the processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, or scientific and historical research purposes or statistical purposes. The University will ensure that the personal data it processes is held securely and processed in accordance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information about how the University processes personal data please see www.uel.ac.uk/about/about-uel/governance/information-assurance/data-protection

What will happen to the results of the research?

The research will be written up as a thesis and submitted for assessment. The thesis will be publicly available on UEL's online Repository. Findings may also be disseminated to a range of audiences (e.g., academics, clinicians, public, etc.) through journal articles, conference

presentations, talks, magazine articles, blogs. In all material produced, your identity will remain completely anonymous, in that, it will not be possible to identify you personally.

You will be given the option to receive a summary of the research findings once the study has been completed for which relevant contact details will need to be provided.

Anonymised research data will be securely stored by myself and Dr Miles Thomas for a maximum of 3 years, following which all data will be deleted.

Who has reviewed the research?

My research has been approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. This means that the Committee's evaluation of this ethics application has been guided by the standards of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

Who can I contact if I have any questions/concerns?

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Jo Blanchard – u2064588@uel.ac.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted, please contact my research supervisor Dr Miles Thomas. School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,
Email: m.thomas@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of School Research Ethics Committee: Dr Trishna Patel, School of Psychology,
University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: t.patel@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet

Appendix 10.

Parent consent form



PARENT CONSENT TO CHILD PARTICIPATING IN A RESEARCH STUDY

What can be learned from pupils and Key Stage 3 & 4 staff in Pupil Referral Units about processes leading to permanent exclusion? Opportunities for improving practice.

Contact person: Jo Blanchard

Email: u2064588@uel.ac.uk

	Please initial
I confirm that I have read the participant information sheet dated 17/11/2022 for the above study and that I have been given a copy to keep.	
I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
I understand that my child's participation in the study is voluntary and that I and they may withdraw at any time, without explanation or disadvantage.	
I understand that if my child withdraws during the study, their data will not be used.	
I understand that I have 3 weeks from the date of the interview to withdraw my child's data from the study.	
I understand that the interview will be recorded using a Dictaphone.	
I understand that my child's personal information and data, including audio recordings from the research will be securely stored and remain confidential. Only the research team will have access to this information, to which I give my permission.	
It has been explained to me what will happen to the data once the research has been completed.	
I understand that short, anonymised quotes from my child's interview level data may be used in material such as conference presentations, reports, articles	

in academic journals resulting from the study and that these will not personally identify my child.	
If I decide I would like to receive a summary of the research findings once the study has been completed, I am willing to provide contact details for this to be sent to.	
I consent to my child taking part in the above study.	

Child's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Parent's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Parent's Signature

.....

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Researcher's Signature

.....

Date

.....

Appendix 11.

Participant consent form



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

What can be learned from pupils and Key Stage 3 & 4 staff in Pupil Referral Units about processes leading to permanent exclusion? Opportunities for improving practice.

Contact person: Jo Blanchard

Email: u2064588@uel.ac.uk

	Please initial
I confirm that I have read the participant information sheet dated 17/11/2022 for the above study and that I have been given a copy to keep.	
I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time, without explanation or disadvantage.	
I understand that if I withdraw during the study, my data will not be used.	
I understand that I have 3 weeks from the date of the interview to withdraw my data from the study.	
I understand that the interview will be recorded using a Dictaphone.	
I understand that my personal information and data, including audio recordings from the research will be securely stored and remain confidential. Only the research team will have access to this information, to which I give my permission.	
It has been explained to me what will happen to the data once the research has been completed.	
I understand that short, anonymised quotes from my interview/group level data may be used in material such as conference presentations, reports, articles in academic journals resulting from the study and that these will not personally identify me.	
If I decide I would like to receive a summary of the research findings once the study has been completed, I am willing to provide contact details for this to be sent to.	

I agree to take part in the above study.	
--	--

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant's Signature

.....

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Researcher's Signature

.....

Date

.....

Appendix 12.

Staff participant debrief sheet



PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF SHEET- Staff

What can be learned from pupils and Key Stage 3 & 4 staff in Pupil Referral Units about processes leading to permanent exclusion? Opportunities for improving practice.

Thank you for participating in my research study on the experiences of permanently excluded pupils. This document offers information that may be relevant in light of you having now taken part.

How will my data be managed?

The University of East London is the Data Controller for the personal information processed as part of this research project. The University will ensure that the personal data it processes is held securely and processed in accordance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. More detailed information is available in the Participant Information Sheet, which you received when you agreed to take part in the research.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The research will be written up as a thesis and submitted for assessment. The thesis will be publicly available on UEL's online Repository. Findings may also be disseminated to a range of audiences (e.g., academics, clinicians, public, etc.) through journal articles, conference presentations, talks, magazine articles, blogs. In all material produced, your identity will remain anonymous, in that, it will not be possible to identify you personally. Personally identifying information (such as your name or the name of your previous or current school) will either be removed or replaced with a pseudonym.

You will be given the option to receive a summary of the research findings once the study has been completed for which relevant contact details will need to be provided.

Anonymised research data will be securely stored by Dr Miles Thomas for a maximum of 3 years, following which all data will be deleted.

What if I have been adversely affected by taking part?

It is not anticipated that you will have been adversely affected by taking part in the research, and all reasonable steps have been taken to minimise distress or harm of any kind. Nevertheless, it is possible that your participation – or its after-effects – may have been challenging, distressing or uncomfortable in some way. If you feel affected in any of those ways, please feel free to contact me, or if you'd prefer- you may find the following resources/services helpful in relation to obtaining information and support:

Text SHOUT to 85258 for free, confidential 24/7 text support.

Phone the Samaritans on 116 123 for free at any time for support.

Who can I contact if I have any questions/concerns?

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Jo Blanchard
u2064588@uel.ac.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted, please contact my research supervisor Dr Miles Thomas. School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,
Email: m.thomas@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of School Research Ethics Committee: Dr Trishna Patel, School of Psychology,
University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: t.patel@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you for taking part in my study

Appendix 13.

Pupil participant debrief sheet



PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF SHEET- Pupil

What can be learned from pupils and Key Stage 3 & 4 staff in Pupil Referral Units about processes leading to permanent exclusion? Opportunities for improving practice.

Thank you for participating in my research study on your experience of permanent exclusion. This document offers information that may be relevant in light of you having now taken part.

How will my data be managed?

The University of East London is the Data Controller for the personal information processed as part of this research project. The University will ensure that the personal data it processes is held securely and processed in accordance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. More detailed information is available in the Participant Information Sheet, which you received when you agreed to take part in the research.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The research will be written up as a thesis and submitted for assessment. The thesis will be publicly available on UEL's online Repository. Findings may also be disseminated to a range of audiences (e.g., academics, clinicians, public, etc.) through journal articles, conference presentations, talks, magazine articles, blogs. In all material produced, your identity will remain anonymous, in that, it will not be possible to identify you personally. Personally identifying information (such as your name or the name of your previous or current school) will either be removed or replaced with a pseudonym.

You will be given the option to receive a summary of the research findings once the study has been completed for which relevant contact details will need to be provided.

Anonymised research data will be securely stored by Dr Miles Thomas for a maximum of 3 years, following which all data will be deleted.

What if I been adversely affected by taking part?

It is not anticipated that you will have been adversely affected by taking part in the research, and all reasonable steps have been taken to minimise distress or harm of any kind. Nevertheless, it is possible that your participation – or its after-effects – may have been challenging, distressing or uncomfortable in some way. If you have been affected in any of those ways, you may find the following resources/services helpful in relation to obtaining information and support:

www.kooth.com Online mental wellbeing community.

Text SHOUT to 85258 for free, confidential 24/7 text support.

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If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Jo Blanchard

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If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted, please contact my research supervisor Dr Miles Thomas. School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,
Email: m.thomas@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of School Research Ethics Committee: Dr Trishna Patel, School of Psychology,
University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: t.patel@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you for taking part in my study

Appendix 14.

Extract from an interview transcript

Transcription Key

P	Participant
R	Researcher
...	Indicates pause
[]	Anonymisation of identifying name
Bold	Emphasised word

5. P- In primary school it was fine, it was just normal, I was really quiet. But then something happened to me. Basically right. One of my - in my Year 4 class, yeah? Must have been in the library. And this teacher dragged me across the floor, yeah? And ever since then I started getting rude to everyone.
6. R- A teacher dragged you across the floor?! But what? Why?
7. P- Because I wasn't getting up.
8. R- So what you were sitting and they were like, get up and you didn't want to?
9. P- No, so he grabbed my hand and he pulled me and some stuff
10. R- and then you were like that's it? that's me now?
11. P- Yeah.
12. R- OK. So, Year 4 that happened to you. You were very quiet and kind of not getting into trouble or anything like that. So then what happened after Year 4?
13. P- Then in year five, I got bullied so that made me have even thicker skin. That made me a bit more defensive and stuff
And then after that it was just like I was a very different person. Like, I wasn't quiet or... I was really, really loud. I would always do things to people before they could do it to me.
14. R- Oh, I see. So when you say that you would like to do stuff to other people before they could do it to you, was that. Like, was it kind of like hurting them or what? What kind of stuff are we talking?
15. P- Like some, like, sometimes I would just. I'll just do something just because I know you're gonna do it to me. But it's gonna hurt you more when I do it first. Uh, stuff like that. Or like, if someone is trying to argue with me, I will argue better. I know how to argue. I learned how to argue in year five and year six.
16. R- So you learned how to argue in year five and year six. So then you finished your primary education and year six and then you went up to secondary school.
17. P- mm hmm
18. R- And then how? How did that go?

19. P- In secondary school I was like let me turn over a new leaf and be quiet again, 'cause that was working out great for me. And then...
 In your seven, I had a good strong friendship group and then by the end of year seven, I lost all my friends. ,So that's when I started. Like, this is when I was in [deleted school name] I started [deleted school name] in Year 7. So I had a strong group of friends and everything. And then, in the end of Year 7 I lost all my friends, literally everyone I lost everyone. So that's when I just started like not going to my lessons like, coming into school late, just fighting all the time, Just been rude to everyone. Just making everyone be mad like how I was mad... and then that's when like, more like the end of Year 8, I got excluded and I got permed from [deleted school name] in Year 8... Whatever! And then in year nine in the September, or like July not July like what's the month before July?
20. R- June? May?
 P- May, May, May- I got excluded in May. So then I didn't go to school for that and then it was summer. And then I started [new mainstream school] in September. That started off good... And then it got bad... Yeah...
21. R- OK, so let's go back to, you started in year seven, you had a really good group of friends you like turned over a new leaf as you said, and then by the end of year seven, you lost everybody. So what happened? What changed with your friends?
22. P- Umm.. All my friends wanted to do things that I didn't want to do.
23. R- What kind of things?
24. P- Like... See, I smoke now yeah, but back then I didn't wanna do that. I didn't wanna do nothing like that. Everyone just wanted to do it and then everyone just kept calling me boring cause I never wanted to do it.
25. R- So you kind of had your own, like, 'no, I'm not doing it. You can't pressure me into doing it'. And then you sort of lost your friendship group. So that's when your behaviour changed?
26. P- Yeah.
27. R- And so you were excluded from [school 1] and then you went to [school 2]. So what were you permanently excluded for?
28. P- From where?
29. R- Well, both if youre happy to chat about it?
30. P- Ohh, at [school 1] yeah? I would get in a lot of fights. And then they told me if I get one more fight, they're gonna exclude me. And I thought they was joking. And so I smacked this boy up yeah?
31. R- Mm-hmm.
32. P- And then they they told me my mum was waiting for me outside, and then they just. They didn't even tell me. They didn't tell me. But my mom, like, kind of knew. So she came, brought me. I was actually really upset. I was actually **really** upset.
 And then for [school 2], I got in a big fight with this girl. She ended up in hospital. I thumped her up because she, she was just giving me verbal and then yeah... And then they kicked me out for that.

Appendix 15.

Example of coding process during thematic analysis

