

An Exploration of the Factors that Support a Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School for Children with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties: The Child's Perspective

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August 2014

A programme of independent study resulting in the production
of a thesis to partially fulfil the requirements of the
University of East London for the degree of
Doctor of Educational and Child Psychology.

Abstract

Primary to secondary transition has been identified as a poignant marker in a child's education. Most children adapt to their new school following an initial dip in attainment and well-being. However for a small minority, the negative impacts are more long lasting (West, Sweeting & Young, 2010). The aim of this research was to explore the factors which support successful transition from primary to secondary school for young people with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, in order that support can be developed.

The study utilised a sequential mixed methods design, with a complementary quantitative and principal qualitative phase, to elicit and explore the transition experiences of the young people. The sample comprised of 24 Year 7 students who were placed on the Special Educational Needs register for Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. Questionnaires gathered quantitative data, highlighting which participants experienced more and less successful transition to secondary school. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was chosen to frame the qualitative phase. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine students, those who reported experiencing the most and least successful transitions.

The quantitative data analysis revealed the majority of participants experienced success within one area of their transition, with most students noting an increased interest and school and school work. The qualitative data built upon this to provide a more in-depth account of the students' experiences. This revealed that while their experiences were similar to those reported in previous research, the importance of receiving social and emotional support throughout this process was highlighted. For those in the most successful group, secondary school seemed to better meet their social, emotional and behavioural needs, whereas for the least successful group the increased independence and freedom was often experienced as overwhelming. This study provides a unique insight into the primary to secondary transition for YP with SEBD

Declaration

University of East London

School of Psychology

Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

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

This research is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology.

This thesis is the result of my own work and investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references in the text. A full reference list is included in the thesis.

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Lauren Thackeray

2014

Acknowledgements

I would like to start by thanking the children who gave their time and shared their stories with me. It was a privilege to hear them. I am also grateful to the school staff who generously supported me to recruit participants and gather my data.

I would to thank my academic tutor, Dr Laura Cockburn, for her enthusiasm, academic guidance, and kindness throughout the training programme. I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr Carla Stavrou, for her encouragement, patience, and calming words over the past years. I would also like to acknowledge the support I received from my colleagues on placement.

To my fellow Trainee Educational Psychologists, what a three years it has been! In particular, Becky and Coleen, my study buddies and friends, I don't think I would have completed my thesis or made it through the last year without you both. In addition, I would like thank my amazing friends for propping me up in some of the trickier times and for providing me with endless words of support. I would especially like to thank Laura, Annie, Katie and Bec for grounding me, for showing me love and kindness, for dancing to Beyonce with me, and for always making me laugh.

Finally I would like to say thank you to my lovely family. To Nanny, for instilling a sense of curiosity which has driven me into a profession whereby I get to be curious for a living! To Soph, for being a best friend and sister all rolled into one, without you I might have found it difficult to giggle so much this past year. To Dad, for encouraging me to have high aspirations, for your endless love and support, and for the family motto! To Mum, for everything. Without you and your unconditional love, kindness, thoughtfulness, and caring I might not have made it though these difficult times and I would definitely not have an IPA thesis to hand in! And finally to all my family and friends, I thank you for giving me 'roots with wings'.

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List of Abbreviations Used

| | |
|--------|---|
| ADHD | Attention Deficit Disorder |
| ASC | Autistic Spectrum Condition |
| CAMHS | Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service |
| CoP | Code of Practice |
| DCSF | Department for Children, Schools and Families |
| DfE | Department for Education |
| DfES | Department for Education and Skills |
| EI | Emotional Intelligence |
| EP | Educational Psychologist |
| EPS | Educational Psychology Service |
| IPA | Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis |
| LA | Local Authority |
| LAC | Looked After Children |
| NEET | Not in Education or Employment |
| OfSTED | Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills |
| PEP | Principal Educational Psychologist |
| QoL | Quality of Life |
| SA | School Action |
| SA+ | School Action Plus |
| SDT | Self Determination Theory |
| SEBD | Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties |
| SEN | Special Educational Needs |
| SENCO | Special Educational Needs Coordinator |
| SEND | Special Educational Needs and Disability |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| VoC | Voice of the Child |
| YP | Young People |

Introduction

‘Transitional periods in the lives of children and young people are times of threat but also of opportunity for change’ (Newman & Blackburn, 2002, p.17).

1.1 Overview of the chapter

This chapter outlines the rationale for the present study. It begins by highlighting the focus of the research, before providing an introduction to the background and context of the study. The extant literature and national contexts are considered in relation to the primary to secondary school transition, Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, and listening to the views of children. A consideration of the local context within which the research was conducted is followed by an outline of the researchers’ position. Finally, a rationale for the current project is presented.

1.2 Research focus

This study looked at the experience of moving to secondary school for young people (YP) identified as having Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD). In exploring the views of the YP, it was hoped that the process by which they experienced more or less successful transitions would be illuminated.

1.3 Background and Context

1.3.1 Educational Transitions

Transition has been defined as a process that YP move through in response to major changes in their school or personal life (Williams, 1999). The term captures the ‘experience of changing, of living the discontinuities between the different contexts’ (Gorgorio, Planas and Vilella, 2002, p.24). Learning to manage transition is considered a key skill which supports YP to adapt to the

changes they experience throughout their lives (Stringer & Dunsmuir, 2012). Researchers from around the world have carried out studies to examine the various transitions YP experience throughout their education (e.g. Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm & Splittgerber, 2000). Within the United Kingdom (UK) education system there are a number of transition points to be negotiated, with one of the most significant being the transition from primary to secondary school (Stringer & Dunsmuir, 2012).

1.3.2 The primary to secondary transition

1.3.2.1 Defining the primary to secondary transition

The transition to secondary school describes the process of students moving from one educational provision, within which they are likely to have spent the previous seven years, to another. Researchers note the numerous environmental and relational changes this transition entails (e.g. Tobbell, 2003). Zeedyk et al. (2003) highlight that YP are expected to negotiate discontinuities in the size, culture, teaching experiences, and social opportunities of primary and secondary schools. They consider this experience to be 'one of the most difficult in pupils' educational careers' (p.67).

1.3.2.2 The impact of moving to secondary school

Within the international research community there appears to be a consensus that following the transition from primary to secondary school, students experience a dip in their attainment and emotional well-being (e.g. Anderson et al., 2000). Longer term implications for students' attainment were identified by Galton, Gray and Ruddock (1999), who reported that two out of five students failed to make academic progress in their first year of secondary school. This 'attainment dip' has been attributed to a lack of curriculum continuity between Year 6 (primary school) and Year 7 (secondary school) (e.g. Fouracre, 1993), an underestimation of Year 7 students' ability (Galton et al., 1999), and a decrease in students' academic interest (McGee, Ward, Gibbons & Harlow, 2004).

In considering the impact upon YP's emotional well-being, Jindal-Snape and Miller (2008) highlight the anxiety that is induced by transition. Tobbell (2003) implicates this fear in the limited academic progress made by some students, suggesting that their capacity for cognitive processing is hampered by their heightened level of anxiety. Other research has indicated that some students experience a decline in self-esteem on moving to secondary school (Wigfield, 1991), while West, Sweeting and Young (2010) identified longer term implications for students' psychological well-being.

1.3.2.3 The importance of examining the primary to secondary transition

In light of concerns that too many students were experiencing negative outcomes as the result of transition to secondary school (DfES, 2004) a considerable body of UK based research has sought to better understand this multi-faceted phenomenon. These studies have explored students' experiences of transition, examined risk factors for poorer transitions, and evaluated transition support (Bloyce & Frederickson, 2012). A small proportion of research has investigated transition for YP with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), incorporating them as part of a wider sample (e.g. Evangelou et al., 2008) or examining this process for specific groups such as YP with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) (e.g. Dann, 2011). In exploring the psychological processes which underpin this educational transition, it is hoped that support can be targeted to better support YP during this process (Tobell, 2003).

1.3.2.4 Transition in educational policy

The importance of transition from primary to secondary school has been recognised by the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE have demonstrated a commitment to improving students' outcomes following transition by commissioning research (e.g. Evangelou et al., 2008) and addressing transition within legislation and statutory/non-statutory guidance (e.g. DfE, 2014). The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OfSTED, 2002) outlined the crucial importance of schools facilitating smooth primary to secondary transitions. Within their evaluation of transition arrangements,

OfSTED (2002) considered that the transition practices employed within a significant number of primary and secondary schools were inadequate. They recommended that Local Authorities (LAs) and schools engage in systematic evaluations of their transition support, in order that it can be targeted to better meet the needs of their YP.

The DfE's statutory guidance for supporting YP with SEND (DfE, 2014) highlights the importance of schools actively supporting transition to secondary school. The SEND Code of Practice (CoP) (DfE, 2014) stipulates that primary schools share information in order that secondary schools can best prepare for the student's arrival. Schools are advised to consult YP and parents within this process (DfE, 2014, p.91).

In advising LAs and schools about the importance of transition arrangements, the DfE are ensuring that this remains a priority, particularly when considering transition to secondary school for YP with SEND.

1.3.3 Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

1.3.3.1 Defining SEBD – “*like where you get angry or out of control*” (Lucey & Reay, 2000, p.297)

Research findings demonstrate a lack of consensus in defining SEBD (Taylor-Brown, 2012), with numerous terms having been employed across the decades to capture the needs of YP who experience difficulties within their behavioural, social, and emotional development (Frederickson & Cline, 2009). O'Connor, Hodgkinson, Burton & Torstensson (2011) consider SEBD 'a fluid concept which has evolved over time' reflecting the developing understanding of YP's needs and the shifting culture within education.

SEBD is one area of need recognised in the Special Educational Needs (SEN) CoP (DfES, 2001). Identified as Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) within this statutory guidance, it describes YP who present as 'withdrawn or isolated, disruptive and disturbing, hyperactive and lacking concentration; those with immature social skills and those presenting challenging behaviours arising from other complex special needs' (DfES 2001a:

87). Given the breadth of need this definition encompasses and its primary focus upon observable behaviours, the current government have questioned whether it is fit for purpose (DfE, 2011). The new SEND CoP (DfE, 2014) has moved away from the term BESD, instead employing 'Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties' to better reflect the underlying difficulties of YP. The DfE (2014) have maintained some aspects of the previous definition while highlighting that 'these behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other children and young people may have disorders such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder' (p.98). Again this illustrates the breadth and complexity of need captured within this area of SEND and the increased focus upon mental health.

For the purposes of this study, SEBD has been employed to describe the needs of this group of YP. Although the researcher considers the new construct and definition (DfE, 2014) helpful, given the educational context within which this research was conducted, the term SEBD will be maintained. 'SEBD' was chosen over 'BESD' in accordance with leading researchers in this field, who place the 'S' at the beginning to highlight the importance of social factors (Visser, 2003). This research project considers that YP have been 'labelled' or 'described' as having SEBD, reflecting the critical realist framework. However, for the purposes of brevity the term 'YP with SEBD' will be employed throughout.

1.3.3.2 The national context

With 23% of the SEND population in UK identified with SEBD, it is the most frequently recognised area of SEND (Cole & Knowles, 2011). In 2009, there were reported to be 154,000 YP with SEBD in the UK, with the majority attending mainstream schools (DCSF, 2009). Cole and Knowles (2011) highlight that these figures may not be a true reflection, given that there is likely to be a significant number of students who have instead been labelled as 'naughty' or having 'behaviour difficulties'. In addition those who display withdrawn

behaviours may be less likely to be identified as having SEBD (Cole & Knowles, 2011).

1.3.3.3 The impact of SEBD upon educational attainment and life outcomes

Students with SEBD could be considered some of the most vulnerable in our society. Outcomes for these YP tend to be poorer than for the general population, with SEBD being associated with poor educational attainment, school failure, poorer life prospects, and mental health problems in adulthood (Cefai & Cooper, 2011). Within education, YP labelled with SEBD are more likely to be excluded (Jull, 2008) and 'go missing' from the system, particularly at points of transition (Visser, Daniels & MacNab, 2005).

Researchers have long been calling for the UK education system to better support, include, and enable these YP (e.g. Cefai & Cooper, 2009). Failing to meet the complex and multifaceted needs of this group has resulted in a significant number of YP with SEBD being identified as 'Not in Employment of Education' (NEET) upon finishing school (SEBDA, 2010). This indicates that more needs to be done to promote the educational and life outcomes for YP with SEBD.

1.3.3.4 Theoretical approaches to understanding SEBD

Various theoretical orientations have been drawn upon to conceptualise SEBD, including behaviourist theories, ecological models, and resilience theory. In line with their new construct of 'social, emotional and mental health difficulties' the DfE (2014) have published guidance for supporting behaviour and mental health needs in schools. The primary theoretical framework posited within this document is that of resilience. Resilience theory seeks to explain why some YP are better able to cope and bounce back from traumatic events than others (Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008). Rutter (1985) identified protective factors which promote YP's resilience and risk factors which make them more vulnerable to negative outcomes. The DfE (2014) identify the 'complex interplay between risk factors in children's lives and promoting their resilience' (p.6). Brown, Khan and Parsonage (2012) argue that risk factors can be considered cumulative, with

those YP exposed to numerous risk factors, more likely to develop SEBD. Some of the risk factors pertinent to SEBD include familial adversity, social disadvantage, and cognitive or attentional difficulties (Brown et al., 2012).

In adopting this framework, the DfE (2014) acknowledge the individual, relational, and environmental factors which underpin SEBD. This serves to further highlight the complexity within this area of need, hinting at the lack of homogeneity amongst these YP and the importance of considering each YP and their SEBD individually.

1.3.4 Seeking the voice of the child in education and research

Another key facet of this research pertains to eliciting the voice of the child (VoC). In 1989 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child signed a declaration stating that children have the right for their opinion to be taken into account regarding any matters that affect them. This was later reflected in UK government policy which highlighted the importance of ensuring the views of YP were listened to. Within the educational arena of SEND, involving YP as active participants within all matters that affect them has been embedded within the new SEND CoP (DfE, 2014).

An extensive literature review examining the pupil voice within the UK, revealed that listening to the VoC had numerous positive impacts for YP, including increased self-confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and a promotion of a sense of responsibility and autonomy (Halsey, Murfield, Harland & Lord 2006). Such arguments for listening to the VoC have inspired an increase in researchers gathering the views of YP (Flutter, 2007). Cefai and Cooper (2009) consider that 'children with SEBD are usually the least empowered and liked group of students' (p. 39). Concerns have been raised that the views of this group are rarely sought (Thomas, 2007). In relation to research, Thomas (2007) comments upon the 'hard to reach' nature of YP with SEBD, suggesting that this may reflect an education system which silences this group. These comments indicate the importance of seeking the views and experiences of YP with SEBD in order that a unique insight into their worlds might be garnered.

1.4 Local Context

The data for this study was gathered from schools located in a large county in the east of England, where the researcher worked as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP). Within this LA, school students moved from primary to secondary school at the age of 11 years. Transition practices differed between schools and the provision of additional in-school support by charities varied across the county. Additional support was provided to parents by the Parent Partnership, who shared advice around supporting their child during transition.

Of particular relevance to the current research was the development of a new SEND Strategy by the LA's Children and Young People's Service. One strand of this larger project was the 'Strategy for Transition' which aimed to enable successful transitions for YP with SEND, by developing effective policies and procedures. The Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP) of the researcher's Educational Psychology Service (EPS) identified that research exploring transition for SEND could support the development of this policy. In March 2013 there were 52 Year 7 students with a statement for SEBD in the LA, with many more receiving additional support for SEBD at School Action (SA) and School Action plus (SA+). The majority of these students attended mainstream schools, with a handful attending specialist SEBD or primary mental health provisions. It was hoped that an exploration of transition to secondary school for YP with SEBD would provide a unique perspective, from which elements of the policy could be developed.

1.5 Researcher's Position

It was deemed important that the researcher adopt a reflective stance throughout the research process in order that she provides clarity around the impact of her experiences, beliefs, knowledge, and skills. A key point for reflection pertains to the researcher being a TEP, completing the Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology at the University of East London (UEL). In completing this study as a practitioner-researcher, all aspects of the research reflect the skills and knowledge developed through the training programme.

Prior to beginning the doctorate, the researcher worked as a Behaviour Support Worker within a specialist provision for students with SEBD. This experience sparked an interest in SEBD. Witnessing the impact of the YP's past experiences and chaotic home lives upon their emotional and social development, a role for psychology in understanding and supporting these YP was identified.

Subsequent experience of working as a Teaching Assistant within an inner London secondary school further developed the researcher's passion for working to promote YP's psychological well-being. This has continued during the doctorate, where opportunities to gain experience and develop knowledge in supporting YP with mental health needs, has been provided in abundance. In addition, a commitment to promoting the importance of listening to the VoC has grown. This may reflect the underlying ethos of the course at UEL, which cites empowerment and equality for all YP and their families as two of its key principles.

1.6 Research Rationale

West et al. (2010) suggest that experiencing a negative transition to secondary school can have long-term implications for YP's educational attainments and psychological well-being. Given the possible ramifications of providing inadequate support to students during this transition, research has sought to elucidate the factors which promote success within this process (e.g. Evangelou et al., 2008). In spite of research which indicates that successful transition is promoted by resilience to cope with major stressors, high emotional intelligence, a secure attachment, and a sense of belonging (Stringer & Dunsmuir, 2012), no published research has explored the primary to secondary transition for YP with SEBD. Given the evidence discussed above (e.g. Rutter, 1985), it is likely that YP with SEBD will not have access to the resources described by Stringer and Dunsmuir (2012). Therefore, this group of YP may be particularly vulnerable to negative transition outcomes.

In light of the gap within the extant literature, researchers have called for an exploration of this significant educational transition for students with behavioural

difficulties (e.g. West et al., 2010). The current study sought to bridge this gap and develop understanding around this process for YP with SEBD. In seeking to explore the transition to secondary school, through their own voices, it was hoped that factors supporting successful transition for this group could be illuminated.

Literature review

2.1 Overview of chapter

A literature review is defined as ‘a systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing the existing body of completed and recorded work’ (Fink, 2005, p. 3). It enables researchers to identify gaps within the extant body of literature and gain an overview of the current knowledge base. In order to provide focus for literature reviews, Gough (2007) highlights the importance of selecting a review question. To gain an overview of the body of research within which the current project will be situated, this review will aim to answer:

What do we know about the influences on and the outcomes of the primary to secondary transition for the YP involved?

In the absence of published empirical research examining transition for YP with SEBD, a systematic literature review is presented in which the following areas are addressed: factors influencing transition outcomes for YP; transition for vulnerable groups; YP’s experiences of transition; evaluations of support and interventions; and what makes a successful transition. The theoretical frameworks used to conceptualise and understand this phenomenon are discussed. Finally, links are made with the current research where it is argued that there is a need for studies exploring the transition experiences of YP with SEBD.

2.2 Details of the systematic search

A systematic search was conducted of available, published research looking into the primary to secondary transition in June 2013. Several databases and search terms were used to promote the scope of identified studies. Tables presenting the details of searches conducted in EBSCO Host are presented in

Appendix 1. The abstracts of these identified studies were read and papers selected according to the inclusion criteria presented in Table 2.1 and relevance to the review question.

In addition, a hand search was carried out. Relevant journals including 'Educational Psychology in Practice', 'Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties' and 'Educational and Child Psychology' were searched. A search of Google Scholar was also conducted using the following terms:

- 'primary to secondary school transition'
- 'primary to secondary school transition and students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties'

Finally, the references of key papers were checked. As with the systematic search, the abstracts of papers which met the inclusion criteria were read and included according to their relevance in answering the review question. A subsequent systematic and hand search were carried out in June 2014 to explore whether any further research had been published. One additional paper was identified.

Table 2.1: Inclusion criteria.

| Inclusion Criteria | |
|--------------------|--|
| Participants | School aged students, parents/carers, primary/secondary teachers educational professionals. |
| Location | UK. |
| Design | Empirical research of qualitative, quantitative mixed methods design (<i>literature reviews excluded</i>). |
| Topic | Transition from mainstream primary secondary school (<i>transition to 'middle school' and transition to 'special schools' excluded</i>). |
| Dates | Published in the last 10 years (2003-2014) |
| Language | English |

| | |
|--------------|------------------------|
| Publications | Peer reviewed journals |
|--------------|------------------------|

On completion of this process 29 papers were identified. The researcher read each for relevance and quality; those that were deemed highly relevant to the review question and demonstrated validity, reliability and/or trustworthiness were selected for the literature review. Based upon these judgements, 12 empirical studies were selected. Appendix 2 provides an overview of these studies.

2.2.1 Weight of Evidence

To promote the transparency of this literature review a framework to assess the weight of evidence (WoE) for the final 12 papers was adopted. According to Gough (2007) 'weight of evidence is a concept...referring to preponderance of evidence to inform decision making' (p. 223). It allows the researcher to make separate judgments regarding the generic quality of the research and the relevance to the review question, which are later combined to gauge the overall WoE. Gough (2007) proposes a WoE framework which can be applied to support the researcher in making such judgments. The ratings applied for each judgment are classified as low, medium or high. Gough (2007) advocates the use of the TAPUPAS framework (Pawson, Boaz, Grayson, Long & Barnes, 2003) in making WoE judgements. The TAPUPAS framework stipulates that the quality and relevance of research be judged against the following dimensions: transparency, accuracy, accessibility, specificity, purposivity, utility, and propriety. Gough's (2007) proposed framework is as follows:

1. **WoE A** – A judgment regarding the 'coherence and integrity' of the research that is not review-specific. Researchers are encouraged to consider the transparency, accuracy, accessibility and specificity of the study to determine the overall quality of the study.
2. **WoE B** – A 'review-specific' judgement whereby the researcher determines how appropriate each particular form of evidence is in answering their review question. Consideration is given to the purposivity

of the research, to determine the relevance of the methodology employed to the review question.

3. **WoE C** - A 'review-specific' judgment regarding the relevance of the focus of a particular piece of research in answering the review question. The utility and propriety of a study should be considered to determine a WoE C judgement.
4. **WoE D** – An overall judgment of the WoE for a paper. This is determined by combining the ratings from A, B and C.

Appendix 3 presents the ratings given for the final 12 papers and Appendix 4 provides a summary of the critical judgments for each study

In grouping these papers according to the focus of their research, five strands were identified which encompass this body of literature and seek to answer the review question. The strands are:

1. Influences on transition outcomes
2. Transition and vulnerable groups
3. Children's experiences of transition
4. Supporting the primary to secondary transition
5. Successful transition

These strands will be presented sequentially, within which each paper will be critically discussed.

2.3 Strand 1: Influences on Transition Outcomes

Transition to secondary school is a complex and multi-faceted process to which individual children respond differently (Galton et al., 1999). Much research within this field has investigated the impact that transition can have upon children's attainment and psychological well-being. In addition, studies have aimed to elucidate which factors influence the primary to secondary transition in order to better support children to make successful transitions. The following literature is reviewed in Strand 1:

- **The long term consequences of transition - West et al. (2011)**
- **The impact of transition upon risk and resiliency - Bailey and Baines (2012)**
- **Transition and YP's Quality of Life - Gillison, Standage and Skevington (2008)**

2.3.1 West et al. (2011)

West et al. (2011) conducted a large scale, longitudinal study to investigate the impact of individual differences and school effects upon children's experiences of the primary to secondary transition, their post-transition psychological well-being, and their attainment. Given the transparency in procedural methods, robust longitudinal design, and relevance to the review question, it was considered that the overall WoE was 'high'.

West et al. (2011) report that a large, representative sample of YP, parents, and class teachers completed questionnaires post-transition to gather data on a range of factors including parenting styles, academic ability, students psychological well-being, and school characteristics. The students also completed questionnaires about their experiences of transition which focused upon possible 'school concerns' (e.g. timetable) and 'peer concerns' (e.g. bullying). Three follow up collections were conducted with the YP, to attain data on their academic outcomes and psychological well-being, with the last of these taking place after the YP had left school. West et al. (2011) discuss the reliability of their measures.

A thorough analysis indicated a great variety of transition experiences with 68% of pupils reporting that one or more school concern was 'hard' to cope with, while 47% found one or more peer concerns difficult to deal with. West et al. (2011) identified the following predictive factors of school and peer concerns

- Lower ability
- Higher anxiety
- Lower self-esteem
- Had been victimized
- Unpreparedness for secondary school
- Higher aggression
- Disengagement in primary school

Although personal factors were most influential, the findings also indicated a role for primary schools to better support children with school related concerns.

In light of the longitudinal data, a key finding from this study pertains to the impact of students' transition experiences upon their long-term psychological well-being and educational outcomes. West et al. (2011) report that experiencing school concerns at the age of 13 was associated with lower self-esteem and fewer qualifications at 18/19 years. While experiencing peer concerns was associated with higher levels of psychological distress at 18/19 years.

The quality of the research design adopted for this study promotes the generalisability of the results to other populations of school children. However, it should be noted that this sample moved to secondary almost 20 years ago. Given the ever changing educational context within the UK it is likely the experiences of today's transitioning students may differ. However, given the reliability of the measures and the representative sample, this study provides a valuable insight: a child's experience of their primary to secondary transition can have a long term impact upon their well-being and attainment.

2.3.2 Bailey and Baines (2012)

Bailey and Baines (2012) sought to investigate the impact of various risk and resilience factors upon the adjustment of Year 7 students to their secondary school. Resilience has been defined as the ability to respond to stressful events in an adaptive way, drawing upon social competence and self-confidence

(Rutter, 1985). Within the resilience framework, risk and protective factors are considered to be those within-child and environmental factors that either cause a child to be vulnerable to or protected from poor outcomes (Rutter, 2006). Bailey and Baines (2012) suggest this framework is useful in seeking to understand which YP are most vulnerable to negative transition outcomes. The WoE was rated 'high' for this study given the clear theoretical framework, the reliability of the measures, and relevance.

Four primary schools and two secondary schools participated in this longitudinal non-experimental study. In the initial and follow up phase of data collection, 133 Year 6 students, who broadly represented the general population, and their teachers completed questionnaires measuring resilience, risk, and school adjustment. The researchers ensured that all students were given the opportunity to participate, providing reading support where necessary.

Bailey and Baines (2012) found some links between school adjustment outcomes and students' risk and resilience factors. In light of these findings, they argue the importance of the role of emotional regulation in supporting students' adjustment to secondary school. In addition, the risk factor of 'SEN' was found to moderate the relationships between risk and resilience factors and school adjustment outcomes. The researchers suggest that students with SEN may have found it more difficult to draw upon the positive resilience factors they developed in primary school, to support them to adjust to secondary school. In addition the possible sources of resilience (e.g. 1-1 Teaching Assistant) may have caused them to be less prepared for their transition.

Overall, given its clear theoretical framework, this study allows a unique insight into those resiliency factors which are particularly important in promoting good school adjustment on joining secondary school. Bailey and Baines (2012) highlight the differing perceptions of school adjustment for teachers and students, suggesting the importance of triangulating data.

2.3.3 Gillison et al. (2008)

Gillison et al. (2008) conducted a study to investigate changes in the Quality of Life (QoL) of Year 7 students following the transition to secondary school. QoL is a 'multi-dimensional holistic measure of how well life is going and its meaning' (Gillison et al., 2008, p.150). The researchers examined whether changes in QoL during transition were related to the satisfaction of three basic needs identified by Ryan & Deci (2000) in their Self Determination Theory (SDT). SDT is a theory of motivation which proposes that the needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness must be satisfied in order for people to thrive (Ryan & Deci, 2000). By examining a possible link between needs satisfaction and QoL, the researchers sought to establish whether a role exists for schools in promoting QoL through meeting the needs of their Year 7 students. The evidence has been weighted as 'Medium' given its relevance and the quality of the research design.

Gillison et al. (2008) drew on a sample of 76 Year 7 students who comprised the Year 7 cohort of a mainstream secondary school. Self-report measures of QoL and 'needs satisfaction' were completed by the participants at three time points during their first term of Year 7. A thorough analysis of the data revealed that the QoL domains of psychological well-being and financial resources increased significantly across the three time points. Needs satisfaction (autonomy, relatedness and competence) also increased across all time points, and was statistically significant for 'competence'. Finally, regression analyses illustrated that an increase in autonomy and relatedness significantly predicted an increase in QoL. Overall, the findings indicate that during the primary to secondary transition, Year 7 students are able to adjust relatively quickly, reporting an increase in psychological well-being, financial resources, and competence within the first ten weeks of Year 7. It was concluded that schools should seek to promote students autonomy and relatedness to enhance their QoL when joining secondary school.

The quality of this research was somewhat compromised by the limited internal reliability of the measure of 'needs satisfaction' and the limitations of using a sample of students from one secondary school. However, the clear theoretical framework adopted for this research was a strength. This study adds to an ever

growing body of research seeking to prove the validity of SDT and provides an alternative theoretical perspective of the psychological processes underpinning transition.

2.3.4 Summary

The research discussed in Strand 1 represents a body of predominantly quantitative research investigating influences on transition outcomes. The findings from these studies indicate that not only do the individual differences of YP impact upon their transition outcomes, but school factors also. Characteristics including SEN, poor emotional regulation, low self-esteem, disengagement, and victimisation, all predict poorer transition experiences and difficulties with school adjustment. It is important to identify such risk factors in order that those children can be better supported during their transition. In addition, the research indicates that primary schools have a role in preparing their students for secondary school, whilst secondary schools should promote feelings of autonomy and relatedness within their Year 7 cohort. Finally, a key finding to emerge from this research pertains to the relationship between the YP's transition experiences and long term psychological well-being and educational attainments. This illustrates the importance of eliciting YP's experiences of the primary to secondary transition in order that support can be available for those most vulnerable to negative psychological and academic outcomes.

2.4 Strand 2: Transition and vulnerable groups

Strand 2 is concerned with research which examines the primary to secondary transition in relation to vulnerable groups of students. The Oxford Dictionary defines vulnerability as 'in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability or risk of abuse or neglect' (Soanes & Stevenson, 2003). YP with SEBD could be considered some of the most vulnerable in society, however given the dearth of research examining transition for this group; studies exploring this process for other vulnerable groups have been considered. The papers selected for this review focus upon YP who are in care and those who have a diagnosis of ASC. Although the additional needs of these groups differ

from those of YP with SEBD, it may be possible to observe some similarities in how they experience this process and the additional support available to them. The literature to be reviewed is:

- **Transition experiences of YP with ASC - Dann (2011)**
- **Supporting transition for Looked After Children (LAC) - Brewin and Statham (2011).**

2.4.1 Dann (2011)

Dann (2011) conducted a qualitative study which aimed to explore the transition experiences of pupils with ASC. This constituted a gap in the extant literature which previously focused upon 'typically developing' students. Given the rigidity of thought and resultant difficulties in coping with change that is commonly observed in YP with ASC (Wing & Gould, 1979) it was deemed important to develop understanding of their experiences of the primary to secondary transition. The WoE for this paper was rated 'high' due to the transparency and quality of the research design and its relevance.

The sample comprised six pupils with a diagnosis of ASC and a statement of SEN, their parents, and key school staff. Half the students were moving to their local mainstream secondary schools (all but one had SEN bases) and half to a mainstream school with a specialist ASC unit. The first phase of data collection was completed when the students were in Year 6 and a second when the students had spent one term in their secondary school. The researcher used a technique called 'Talking Mats' when interviewing the students, ensuring they understood the questions and concepts posed to them and promoting the validity of the data.

Dann (2011) reports that a thematic analysis was conducted, however conflicting information is provided regarding the epistemological position and the analytic process, compromising the study's trustworthiness. Dann (2011) reports high inter-rater reliability scores for all interview data and identifies several themes which are evidenced with quotations. The findings highlight factors

which help and hinder the transition to secondary school for students with ASC. Dann (2011) highlights the 'overwhelming positivity' shared by all participants who attended/worked in schools with specialist ASC units or SEN bases. It was reported that having a safe, familiar space for students was particularly helpful. The transition experiences of one student who attended a school without either type of provision were distinctly more negative. Participants also valued additional preparation around the organisation and structure of school e.g. knowing the timetable in advance. It was also deemed helpful to make changes gradually, share information, and provide opportunities to develop relationships with key school staff. Finally, Dann (2011) reports that students became increasingly interested in friendships on starting secondary school, with friendships developing more successfully for those students accessing the specialist units.

The researcher highlights similarities between the transition experiences of her sample and those articulated in previous research, suggesting the 'transition experience for those with ASC may not be "qualitatively" different from that of pupils without ASC' (p.305). Dann (2011) acknowledges that the limited sample size may create issues for the transferability of the findings, however it is considered within qualitative research that smaller sample sizes allow for richness and depth in the data.

2.4.2 Brewin and Statham (2011)

Brewin and Statham (2011) conducted a qualitative study to examine key factors that support LAC during their primary to secondary transition. The study evolved from concerns that LAC find this experience more difficult than other children. The evidence was weighted as 'medium' given the relevance to the review question and the limited clarity around the epistemological position and process of analysis.

A sample of 14 children, their carers, and a key member of school staff were interviewed. The sample was a mix of Year 6 and 7 students who were in care

at the start of the study. A post-transition data collection was conducted with the Year 6 students. In addition, a group of social work managers participated in a focus group interview and three 'LAC Education Support Officers' were interviewed. A framework analysis (Richie, Spencer & O'Connor, 2003) was applied to the data and a number of themes were developed. Due to the multitude of factors which impact upon LAC during the primary to secondary transition, Brewin and Statham (2011) used Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of development to conceptualise their findings. In identifying factors at all levels which supported or hindered the students' transition, four principles to guide practice in supporting LAC in their move to secondary school were developed:

1. There should be an emphasis on planning and information sharing by key stakeholders.
2. Support should be holistic.
3. Children's differences should be minimised.
4. Support should be individualised

Brewin and Statham (2011) conclude that transition support for LAC should be holistic and individualised. By applying their principles flexibly, the authors state that LAC can be supported to experience successful transition to secondary school. The strength of this study derives from its triangulation of data from key stakeholders. In using a qualitative design they enabled participants to discuss what is salient to them within the transition process, however by including so many voices they were prevented from presenting an in depth analysis for each group. This research provides a unique perspective of transition for this particular group of vulnerable YP, with clear implications for practice.

2.4.3 Summary

In investigating the primary to secondary transition for these vulnerable groups, the researchers have prioritised the views of key stakeholders. The YP have been supported to share their views which provide a unique perspective within

the research. In conclusion, these studies highlight the importance of examining transition for vulnerable groups of children, while recognising the similarities with the wider literature. With the right support, it seems that those most vulnerable YP can experience 'successful' transitions.

2.5 Strand 3: Young people's experiences of transition

Given the arguments posited in Chapter 1, Flutter (2007) identified an increase in researchers seeking the VoC to gain unique insights into phenomena which affect them. Within the transition literature several studies have gathered the views of YP to better understand this complex process. In developing our knowledge of how the YP experience and understand this process it is hoped that support can be targeted to better meet their needs. Strand 3 presents two qualitative studies which have exclusively sought the views of YP, the papers are:

- **Students' experiences of transition - Tobbell (2003)**
- **Children's experiences of belonging in their new secondary school - Sancho and Cline (2012)**

2.5.1 Tobbell (2003)

Tobbell (2003) utilised a qualitative design to explore YP's primary to secondary transition experiences. In line with the current study, Tobbell (2003) placed the YP's stories at the centre of the research. The overall WoE was weighted as 'high' due to the transparency around the selection of methodology, ethical considerations, process of analysis, and reflexivity.

Five focus groups were conducted using a semi-structured interview technique to elicit the experiences of 30 female Year 7 students at the end of their first year of secondary school. The use of an all female sample means that care is required when transferring the findings to male students. This is pertinent as research has identified gender differences in transition experiences and associated psychological well-being (e.g. Jordan, McRorie, & Ewing, 2010).

Tobbell (2003) carried out a thematic analysis and provides details regarding this process and her role within this. Five themes were identified from the data:

- 'School as a community'
- 'Adult or child?'
- 'What makes a good teacher?'
- 'The learning experience'
- 'Feeling lost'

In light of these themes, Bronfenbrenner's (1999) ecological model of child development and 'Vygotskian notions of learning' were identified as key theoretical frameworks. Bronfenbrenner (1999) suggests that behaviour can be explained by the individual's interaction with proximal, distal, and environmental relationships. These relationships have been utilised by the researcher to understand the students' experiences and feelings around the transition. In addition, Vygotskian notions of learning, which highlight the importance of student-teacher relationships within the learning process, were applied to better understand the students' experiences of being treated like adults when they still felt like children. Tobbell (2003) suggests that if there exists differing perceptions of this relationship, the conditions for learning may not be optimal.

Tobbell (2003) concludes that given the participants' negative experiences, the structure and organisation of secondary schools may not be conducive to the forming of effective learning relationships. Tobbell (2003) suggests this research adds to our understanding of transition by sharing the experiences of these particular students, in this specific context. She qualifies this by noting that the ever changing educational context restricts researchers in the generalisation of findings from studies within the area.

2.5.2 Sancho and Cline (2012)

Sancho and Cline (2012) aimed to explore the transition experiences of students within the psychological framework of 'belonging'. Belonging was defined as 'the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or

environment' (Hegarty, Sauer-Lynch, Patusky, Bouwsema & Collier, 1992). The evidence was weighted as 'medium' due to the clear theoretical framework, pre- and post-transition data, and clarity around selection of qualitative methodology. In addition, a lack of transparency around the process of analysis and sampling techniques informed this decision.

Sancho and Cline (2012) drew on a purposive, non-random sample of students who were deemed to have specific opinions regarding transition and belonging. In Year 6, five focus group interviews were conducted to identify themes for subsequent individual interviews. When the participants were in Year 7, ten were invited to participate in individual interviews.

Semi-structured interviews explored the participants' transition experiences, and understanding and feelings of belonging within their new school. The authors identified Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as their chosen methodology, yet cite Braun and Clarke's (2006) paper on thematic analysis, creating some confusion around the analytic process. The authors describe three main themes: 'school context', 'growing independence and maturity', and 'descriptions of belonging'. These themes map closely onto the interview schedule suggesting a limited level of analysis and interpretation.

Sancho and Cline (2012) identified that a sense of belonging was primarily associated with the development of friendships and peer acceptance, in addition to being listened to by teachers and the school environment. In contrast to Tobbell (2003), many of the students highlighted how the structure of secondary school was more conducive to developing and maintaining friendships than primary. The students felt that a sense of belonging promoted psychological well-being, positive attitudes to learning, and proactive approaches to making friends and seeking out support from teachers. The implications of these findings for schools and EPs were discussed.

2.5.3 Summary

Strand 3 illustrates the importance of adopting research designs which elicit the VoC. In taking such an approach, Tobbell (2003), and to some extent Sancho and Cline (2012), produced data which reflected the most salient factors of transition for the YP themselves, primarily social and learning relationships. These studies further develop understanding of how the primary to secondary transition is experienced by the YP participating in this process.

2.6 Strand 4: Supporting the primary to secondary transition

In light of research which indicates that the primary to secondary transition can be a time of academic, social, and emotional upheaval (e.g. Galton, Gray & Ruddock, 2003), several studies have sought to evaluate interventions which aim to support YP through this process. Various approaches have been evaluated including widely used programmes such as 'Protective Behaviours' (Choi, 2012) and those developed to specifically support transition (e.g. Humphrey & Ainscow, 2006). The literature reviewed in this strand illustrates the varied theoretical and operational approaches to supporting the primary to secondary transition:

- **Improving transition for vulnerable students - Bloyce and Frederickson (2012)**
- **Promoting Emotional Intelligence to support transition - Qualter, Whiteley, Hutchinson and Pope (2007)**
- **Facilitating learning and psychological adjustment - Humphrey and Ainscow (2006)**

2.6.1 Bloyce and Frederickson (2012)

Bloyce and Frederickson (2012) examined the effectiveness of an intervention developed to minimise anxieties and adjustment problems during the transition to secondary school. The intervention was delivered to 351 students identified as vulnerable to experiencing negative transition, including LAC and those with SEBD. The programme drew upon previous research, addressing three areas of adjustment: social, institutional, and curriculum and was delivered 6 weeks prior

to and post-transition. The sample also comprised a non-equivalent comparison group of 106 students who had access to the universal transition support. Although the authors recognised the limitations of using a non-equivalent comparison group, it was deemed unethical to utilise a randomised design whereby students identified as vulnerable would be excluded from the intervention to serve as a control group. The overall WoE was 'high' given the transparency regarding ontology, methodology and sampling techniques.

All participants completed self-report measures of pupil well-being and adjustment, and concerns regarding transition, of which the validity and reliability have been established. Participants completed these on three occasions: pre-intervention, post-intervention, and at follow up. The findings indicated that post-intervention, the level of concern reported by the experimental group had reduced to the same level as the comparison group and continued to diminish during the first term of secondary school. In addition, emotional symptoms and peer relationship problems had also reduced post-intervention for the experimental group. These were areas specifically targeted by the intervention.

Bloyce and Frederickson (2012) concluded that even a short programme of intervention to support vulnerable children during their transition to secondary school can be beneficial in promoting well-being and reducing concern.

2.6.2 Qualter et al. (2007)

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is defined as 'a constellation of emotion-related self-perceptions and dispositions located at the lower levels of the personality hierarchy' (Petrides, Frederickson & Furnham, 2004, p.278). Evidence suggests that children with higher EI are better able to cope with stressful events (e.g. Petrides et al., 2004). In light of such findings, Qualter et al. (2007) adopted a quantitative design to examine whether EI impacts upon how students are able to cope with their primary to secondary transition. In addition they sought to establish the efficacy of an intervention aimed at promoting EI during Year 7. The overall WoE for this study was rated as 'medium' due to the clear

theoretical framework, the use of reliable and valid measures, and the limited transparency around the context of data collection.

The sample comprised two cohorts of Year 7 students from the same secondary school. The first cohort acted as a control group while the second cohort participated in an intervention to promote the development of EI. The findings indicate that those students with 'average' and 'high' EI had fewer logged concerns from teachers and achieved higher grades. In light of these findings, Qualter et al. (2007) argue that students with higher levels of EI are better able to cope with transition. In evaluating the intervention they report significant increases in EI post-intervention for those students with a low baseline EI, suggesting the intervention was most effective with this group. Qualter et al. (2007) suggest that promoting EI provides a possible avenue for improving their ability to cope with transition.

The authors acknowledge several limitations of the design. The most significant of these refers to the dual role of teachers in facilitating the intervention and providing information regarding student adjustment. It is possible that this biased the data, with the teachers giving more favourable ratings to students in the intervention group.

2.6.2 Humphrey and Ainscow (2006)

Humphrey and Ainscow (2006) conducted an exploratory evaluation of a programme developed and implemented by one secondary school. The programme aimed to support a prospective cohort of Year 7's to enhance their learning, school participation, and psychological adjustment during transition. Children's views, gathered by questionnaire and focus group interview, were triangulated with researcher observations of the 'Transition Club'. Thirty-eight Year 6 students who were under-achieving in literacy and numeracy participated. The overall WoE rating is 'Medium' given the transparency around sampling and data collection, the clear justification for the qualitative design, and the noted lack of attainment data.

The 'Transition Club' was attended by students for six weeks in their last term of primary school, during which they attended secondary school three days a week to work on basic literacy and numeracy skills, social skills, and confidence. This exploratory evaluation indicated positive outcomes for those participating in the intervention with reference to promoting their feelings of belonging, familiarising them with their new school, and promoting their enjoyment of learning.

Although a clear argument is made for utilising qualitative methodology to evaluate this intervention, the researchers acknowledge the limitations of failing to incorporate quantitative data to assess the impact on attainment. However, Humphrey and Ainscow's (2006) commitment to collecting the students' views, allowed them to explore any potential benefits for the students and the process by which these developed.

2.6.3 Summary

Strand 4 suggests that intervening in the process of transition to support EI, promote school adjustment, enhance confidence, and develop social skills, can lead to positive outcomes for YP. These studies demonstrate the efficacy of interventions in supporting vulnerable groups of students. Given the potential long term outcomes of experiencing a negative transition (West et al., 2011) these findings have important implications for education professionals.

2.7 Strand 5: Successful transition

Much of the research cited above has focused on the issues and problematic outcomes associated with transition from primary to secondary school. Where successful transitions have been referred to, there has been a lack of clarity concerning what the markers of a successful transition are (Lam & Pollard, 2006). In order to develop the policies and procedures to support children through this process, it is important to establish what constitutes a successful transition and how this can be achieved. One paper is reviewed here:

- **What makes a successful transition from primary to secondary school? – Evangelou et al. (2008)**

2.7.1 Evangelou et al. (2008)

Evangelou et al. (2008) conducted a large scale study to examine effective practice with regard to the primary to secondary transition. They aimed to elucidate those factors which support pupil's transition using a mixed methods design. During the initial phase of the predominantly quantitative data collection, questionnaires were completed by 550 Year 7 students and 569 parents/carers, to attain their experiences of different aspects of the transition. The overall WoE for this study was 'high' given the large, representative sample, the triangulation of viewpoints, and the use of a mixed methods design whereby the qualitative data built upon the quantitative.

Evangelou et al. (2008) carried out a factor analysis on the questionnaire data which enabled the identification of five aspects which comprise a successful transition. These can be found in Appendix 5.

Overall, the majority of students scored highly in all five areas, with 73% of the students feeling happy at their new school. Vulnerable students did not experience less successful transitions, although students with SEN were more likely to be bullied. Successful transition was found to be predicted by supportive secondary schools, transitioning with friends, friendly older students and peers, having older siblings at school, and finding the work interesting. A high proportion of students felt well prepared for transition, with their families having played a key role. The most effective support consisted of addressing any worries, providing reassurance, and advising them on how to cope.

Following the initial data collection, 12 students who reported experiencing successful transitions, along with their teachers, participated in semi-structured interviews. The authors sought to gain an in-depth understanding of positive transition experiences, while exploring how school structures may have enabled these. The authors provide no details regarding the process of analysis or epistemology.

In sharing their stories of success around moving to secondary school the students augmented the information already gathered in the questionnaires. Evangelou et al. (2008) concluded that transition appears to be successful when it is fully integrated into both the primary and secondary school programme, there are strong communication links between schools, and where there exists a focus on individual children.

2.7.2 Summary

Evangelou et al. (2008) drew on data gathered from parents and YP to surmise that a successful transition consists of social adjustment, institutional adjustment, and curriculum interest and continuity. They identify a role for secondary schools in supporting their new students to experience success within these domains, advocating a proactive approach to ensuring successful transition for all children.

2.8 Theoretical Perspectives of the Primary to Secondary Transition

This body of research is grounded in a variety of theoretical perspectives including: resilience theory, belongingness, and ecological theory. This range of psychological theories reflects the complex nature of the primary to secondary transition. Their respective contributions to understanding transition will be discussed below.

Resilience has been posited by a number of researchers as providing a helpful framework to conceptualise the primary to secondary transition (e.g. Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008). Resilience seeks to explain why some children are better able to cope with traumatic events than others (Bailey & Baines, 2012). With the numerous changes involved, Jindal-Snape and Miller (2008) argue that this transition can fall into the category of a traumatic event for YP. In considering why some children are better able to cope, resilience theory considers both within-child and environmental risk and protective factors (Newman & Blackburn, 2002), allowing a holistic understanding of the individual differences observed within transition. Bailey and Baines (2012) suggest that in developing

our understanding of these factors schools and parents can ensure that where possible, the appropriate protective factors are developed.

Belonging was proposed as a helpful theoretical framework to understanding the psychological processes around transition by Sancho and Cline (2012). Belonging is considered to be a basic human need and refers to feelings of being a part of a system/environment (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Research has established that a sense of school belonging promotes pupil engagement and learning (e.g. Finn, 1989). During the primary to secondary transition, Anderson et al. (2000) highlight that students leave an environment where it is likely they experienced belonging, to somewhere completely new. Sancho and Cline (2012) suggest that this lack of belonging on starting secondary school could partially explain the well-being and attainment dip reported in the literature (e.g Galton et al., 2003).

The ecological model of child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) has been utilised to draw together the numerous factors which influence the process of transition (e.g. Tobbell, 2003). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model conceptualises the multiple systems with which a child interacts throughout their development. The model proposes that this reciprocal interaction between within-child factors and the systems which comprise their environment, informs a child's development.

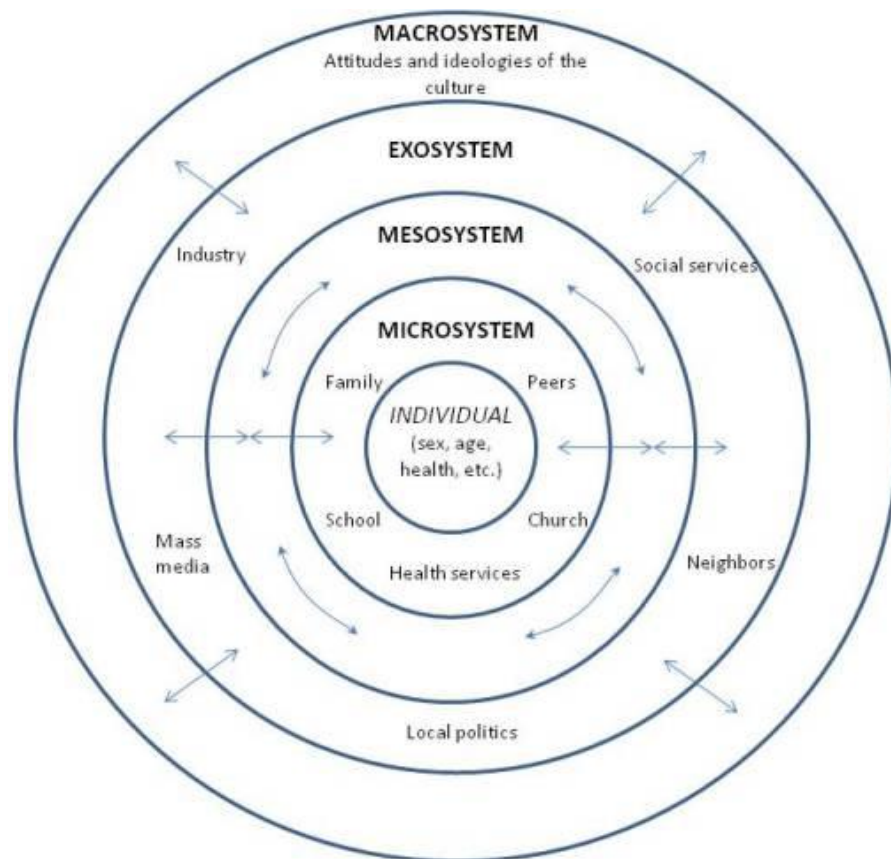


Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model.

Researchers have utilised this theoretical framework to synthesise the factors which interact to determine transition outcomes for individual children. Tobbell (2003) highlights the number of changes a child experiences in their proximal, distal, and environmental. For Brewin and Statham (2011) the application of this model has enabled them to identify the support that needs to be implemented at the differing levels, to promote positive transition outcomes for LAC.

Although it was acknowledged that elements of each of these theories may emerge through the data, the researcher decided to draw upon the ecological model of child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). A focus of this research is to gather children's experiences and views of any support they received. Therefore those 'factors that support a successful transition' under examination in this study, are considered within the educational and familial systems, whose influence is conceptualised in the ecological model. In addition, belongingness provides a

useful framework for understanding the process of adjustment and settling during the process of transition.

Finally, positive psychology underpinned this research. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) define positive psychology as the 'science of positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions ... that will come to understand and build the factors that allow individuals, communities and societies to flourish' (p. 5). With a focus on exploring what supports a successful transition, positive psychology has provided a useful lens through which to plan and carry out the research.

2.9 Conclusions

This literature review aimed to answer the following question:

What do we know about the influences on and the outcomes of the primary to secondary transition for the young people involved?

In considering a broad range of research from differing theoretical, epistemological, and methodological positions, this review of the literature has provided a comprehensive answer to this question. A complex tapestry of findings indicates numerous influences upon transition outcomes including individual differences, social relationships and contexts, school characteristics and support, and familial factors. In elucidating these, researchers have been able to identify and evaluate support that would ensure all students, regardless of additional needs or vulnerabilities, experience successful transition to secondary school.

As argued in Chapter one, the evidence suggests that YP with SEBD maybe particularly vulnerable during the process of transition to secondary school. In order to develop understanding of transition for this group and ensure the efficacy of transition support for YP with SEBD, exploratory research was required. In using a mixed methods design, with a principal qualitative component, it was hoped that stories of successful and less successful

transitions could be explored in order to develop our understanding of how this group of students makes sense of the primary to secondary transition. In exploring their transitions it was considered that the process by which they experienced more or less successful transitions could be elicited and the findings applied to better support future transitioning students with SEBD.

Methodology and Data collection

3.1 Overview of Chapter

This chapter provides a detailed description of the approach to methodology and data collection. The critical realist ontology is discussed. The research questions are presented and an argument is made for a mixed methods research design. An examination of IPA and the rationale for its selection to guide the principal qualitative phase of the study is explored. The sample and sampling technique is presented, with the data technique and process of data collection described in detail. Issues of ethics and trustworthiness are considered. The chapter closes with a consideration of the role of reflexivity within this research process.

3.2 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the current research was to explore how those YP with SEBD experienced their primary to secondary transition. It was hoped that by carrying out an in-depth investigation of how these YP made sense of this process and any support they received, local policy and practice could be adapted to better support YP in their transition. A core motivating factor for this approach was a strong belief in the importance of seeking the experiences and views of the YP experiencing this process. It is only by taking the time to listen to their stories that a more complete understanding of transition can be gained.

Four different types of research have been identified by Robson (2002): exploratory, descriptive, explanatory and emancipatory. The nature of the current research is exploratory. Exploratory research seeks to explore what is happening, particularly for little known phenomena. This is achieved through seeking new insights and asking questions to elucidate a topic in a new light (Robson, 2002). It often generates ideas and hypotheses which guide future research. As stated previously, there appears to be a gap in the extant literature with regard to researching how YP with SEBD experience primary to secondary

transition. With a focus on exploring the experiences of YP with these distinctive needs, this research seeks to provide new insight into the phenomenon.

3.3 Ontological and epistemological framework

Research paradigms provide a set of beliefs about how the world should be understood, these include: a view of reality (ontological position), a perspective on how knowledge is created (epistemological position) and ideas around how this knowledge can be acquired (methodology) (Matthews, 2003). Robson (2002) describes several current paradigms within social research; these include post-positivism, social constructionism, critical realism and pragmatism. Madhill, Jordan and Shirley (2000) suggest that these differing paradigms should be considered as located at different points along a continuum. In the planning and development of the current research project, all of the approaches mentioned above were considered in terms of what they had to offer this particular area of research and how they fitted with the researcher's own values and beliefs. Critical realism was chosen to frame this research; the reasons for this decision will be discussed below. A discussion of the ontological and epistemological positions which are asserted by other research paradigms can be found in Appendix 6.

3.3.1 Researcher's theoretical position - Critical Realism

'Realism can provide a model of scientific explanation which avoids both positivism and relativism' (Robson, 2002, pp. 29). Fox, Green and Martin (2007) support this assertion, suggesting that while realism offers a scientific way of thinking, it continues to recognise the importance of the individual and context. Several strands of realism have been conceptualised which privilege different features (Robson, 2002). Critical realism has been adopted to frame this research project.

Researchers working within a critical realist paradigm believe the aim of scientific enquiry is to explain the complex real-world through a critical lens (Robson, 2002). There are no facts that cannot be disputed as knowledge is seen as socially and historically located. Critical realists consider there is an external reality which exists independently of our awareness, yet each person's

experience of reality is mediated by a variety of factors including social and cultural contexts (Robson, 2002). This is particularly pertinent for the current research which was carried out with YP with SEBD. Although the YP all have the same label, the variation in the nature and degree of their needs is vast. By adopting a critical realist paradigm the impact of their differing backgrounds, social context, and individual differences upon their experience of transition can be fully accommodated. In addition critical realist ontology marries well with research conducted on behalf of a LA which is responsible for a number of YP with SEBD. By recognising an external reality, such as the reality that when children reach the end of Year 6 they will transition to secondary school, the LA is provided with nuanced and contextual data relating to a process they can improve.

Critical realist approaches emphasise the processes underlying causal mechanisms. Research aims to understand the process which underpins why 'a' causes 'b', within the complex and open system in which it operates (Matthews, 2003). A key focus within this study was to explore the process by which students experience more or less successful transitions, rather than to simply focus upon outcomes. In order to gain an understanding of the phenomena under examination, realist research tends to be carried out within the 'open systems' in which it occurs. As such it lends itself to practice and value-based professions (Anastas, 1998), including educational psychology. With a focus upon critically examining the social practices they seek to explain, adopting a critical perspective within realism can sometimes lead to positive change within the real world system being researched (Robson, 2002). The current study is concerned with improving transition for YP with SEBD.

Critical realists consider that knowledge is developed in a context where there exists an interactive link between the researcher and the researched (Robson, 2002). Willig (2008) argues that in this way, critical realism is similar to social constructionism as 'they recognize the subjective element in knowledge production' (pp. 153). This stance on epistemology is particularly pertinent for the qualitative phase of the research, which will employ IPA. IPA proposes the concept of 'double hermeneutics'; whereby the 'researcher is making sense of

the participant, who is making sense of x.' (Smith et al, 2009, p.35). This acknowledges that data gained from IPA studies is highly subjective as it is dependent upon the participants' personal sense-making, the way and manner in which the information is elicited by the researcher, and how the researcher interprets this information.

Given the ontological and epistemological stance of critical realism it has been considered that this paradigm provides the most coherent framework for the current study. By situating the research within this paradigm it has been possible to explore the single reality of the primary to secondary transition through the lens of YP with SEBD. A focus upon the process, as opposed to simply the outcomes, has provided a rich understanding of how this phenomenon is experienced.

3.4 Research Questions

The overarching question for this exploratory research project is:

How do YP identified with SEBD experience the transition from primary to secondary school?

Within this there are six focused research questions:

Quantitative questions

1. What proportion of the YP experienced a successful primary to secondary transition?
2. What are the social and emotional implications of transition?
3. How helpful did the YP find any support they received in preparing them for transition and settling into their secondary school?

Qualitative questions

1. What are the similarities and differences between the experiences of those students who experienced the most and least successful transitions?

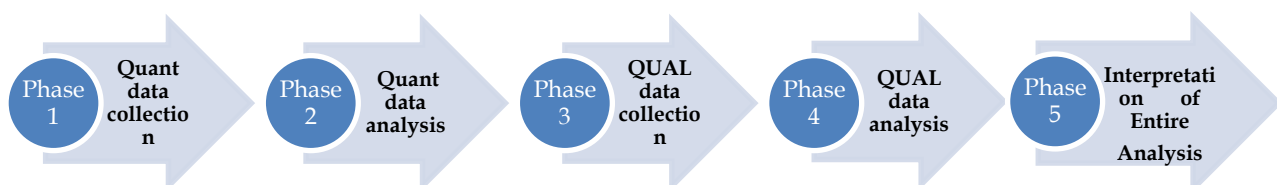
2. How did the YP make sense of the changes they experienced?
3. What does being a secondary school student mean to the YP?
4. How did the YP experience any support they received for their primary to secondary transition?

3.5 Research design

A mixed methods design was adopted for this research. Critical realism allows the researcher freedom to select their preferred methodology, as it considers that theory, as opposed to methodology or data, is central to developing an understanding of reality (Robson, 2002). Mixed methods research combines quantitative and qualitative methodology to investigate a given area (Creswell, 2009). Fox et al. (2007) state 'the key goal is to use the strength of one method to enhance the impact of the other' (p.22). By drawing on these two approaches the limitations of both qualitative and quantitative research can be neutralised (Creswell, 2009), offering depth, accuracy and generalisability (Shah & Corley, 2006). It was thus decided that by combining the power of numerical, quantitative data with the richness and depth offered by qualitative data, an in depth and valid insight into this complex, multifaceted phenomenon could be achieved

A sequential quantitative-QUALITATIVE design has been selected, in which the quantitative data is complementary to the principal qualitative data. A first wave of quantitative data was collected and analysed, followed by a second wave of qualitative data.

Figure 2: The research process



3.5.1 Quantitative Design

Quantitative research is concerned with numbers, control, rigour, and the generalisation of findings (Robson, 2002). A quantitative phase of data collection was primarily conducted in order that participants could be selected for the qualitative phase of this study. To gain an understanding of the factors that support successful transition to secondary school it was initially decided that those YP who had experienced success in their transition would be interviewed. In order to ascertain which of those YP fitted these criteria, a quantitative measure was utilised for the YP to determine the success of their transition. However, on completion of the questionnaires it was decided that those YP who reported experiencing the least successful transitions should also participate in the interviews in order that a comparison between the two groups could be conducted. The process of seeking their views around transition outcomes reflects a central ethos of the research: the importance of listening to the VoC.

The quantitative data elicited by the questionnaires was also utilised to gain a broader understanding of the students' experiences of moving to secondary school, with particular reference to any support they received and the social and emotional aspects of their transition. Within this research design the 'smaller quantitative study help(ed) guide the data collection in a principally qualitative study' (Fox et al., 2007, p. 23).

3.5.2 Qualitative Design

The principal phase of this study adopts a qualitative design. Given the lack of published research investigating the primary to secondary transition for those YP with SEBD, it was deemed important to explore this phenomenon from a new perspective. Qualitative research designs enable researchers to carry out research in a bottom-up, participant led manner which allows for new understandings to emerge (Willig, 2008). In order to develop understanding around the transition from primary to secondary school for YP with SEBD, an open-ended, inductive qualitative research design was selected to frame the principal phase of this study. Differing approaches were considered when planning the qualitative phase including Grounded Theory, Narrative Analysis and Thematic Analysis. Although these approaches provided viable and

interesting perspectives on how to carry out the qualitative data collection and analysis, IPA was selected for this study. An overview of IPA and the reasons for this selection are discussed below.

3.5.2.1 Overview of IPA

IPA is an inductive qualitative approach to psychological research, which aims to 'capture and explore the meanings that participants assign to their experiences' (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005, p.20). Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) emphasise that central to IPA research is the capturing of rich and detailed data which reflects the texture and depth of lived experience. Participants are considered 'experiential experts' with the IPA researcher seeking to reveal something of the experience for each of their participants (Smith et al., 2009). This approach to research was developed by Jonathan Smith and first presented to the public in 1996. It has since become one of the most widely used qualitative methodologies within psychological research (Smith, 2010).

IPA is underpinned by three philosophies of knowledge: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. Phenomenology is the study of the lived experience which has a particular focus upon the things that matter to people and their lived worlds (Smith et al., 2009). Phenomenological philosophy is grounded in the ideas of Edmund Husserl (Moran, 2000). Husserl presented the argument that scientific inquiry should be 'getting back to things themselves' (Moran, 2000, p. 9). Smith et al. (2009) consider that this refers to the 'experiential content of consciousness' (p. 12) which is often overlooked in our rush to assimilate and categorise new experiences/knowledge with prior knowledge. Husserl acknowledges the many obstacles to accurately knowing our own experiences and highlights the importance of examining our everyday experiences reflexively, focusing upon the internal experience of an event rather than the event itself. In doing so, Husserl believes that the essence of the experience can be attained. Smith et al. (2009) consider that the philosophy of Husserl has much to offer psychologists in terms of considering how to examine and understand the lived experience, which is 'the very stuff of life' (p.16). Smith et al. (2009) also discuss the contributions of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and

Sartre who built upon Husserl's phenomenological philosophy, developing a more interpretive worldly position. Their respective consideration of the impact of context and relationships upon a person's experience highlights the 'perspectival directness' of our interaction with the world, which is unique to each of us (Smith et al., 2009). This invokes in IPA a respect for the context in which experiences are made sense of, shared, and interpreted, and promotes the idea that seeking an individual's account of a specific phenomenon to further our understanding is a valid form of knowledge. Phenomenological philosophy highlights value in seeking to understand the experiences of an individual as a starting point for discovering new scientific accounts (Husserl, 1970).

Having explored the influential ideas of phenomenology, Smith et al. (2009) turned to hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation, to inform the interpretative aspects of IPA. They defer to the hermeneutic philosophers Schleiermacher, Heidegger and Gadamer in their discussion of this area. In response to their readings, the concept of the 'double hermeneutic' was developed by Smith and Osborn (2003). It describes a process whereby 'the researcher is making sense of the participant, who is making sense of x' (Smith et al., 2009, p.35). Due to the necessary involvement of the researcher within the research process, the true essence of a person's experience cannot be truly gained (Willig, 2008).

Heidegger (1962) recognises the role of interpretation within phenomenology and posits an argument for a hermeneutic phenomenology. He disagrees with Husserl positing that when an experience is shared, interpretation can never be pre-suppositionless. Heidegger (1962) suggests that 'interpretation is grounded in something we have in advance – in a fore-having' (p.191). In this way interpretation can never be purely objective as it is always contextualized by a person's prior experiences. Prior experience is not seen as something to be ignored to promote objectivity, but to be recognised and understood in terms of the impact upon the researcher's interpretation of participants' accounts. Smith et al. (2009) refer to the process of acknowledging one's preconceptions and minimising their impact upon analysis as 'bracketing'. Influenced by Gadamer (1990) and the hermeneutic circle, Smith et al. (2009) suggest that researchers may not be aware of which pre-conceptions will impact upon their interpretation

of a participants account until they are engaging in the process of interpretation. In this way, interpretation is conceived as a dynamic, iterative and cyclical process, whereby researchers move between their interpretation and the participant's account, and between extracts of text and the text as a whole (Shinebourne, 2011). The importance of positively engaging with the participant in an attempt to understand *their* sense making is emphasised.

Idiography is the final philosophy of knowledge from which IPA draws. Idiography refers to a form of knowledge which privileges the unique and specific (Shinebourne, 2011). IPA is committed to the idiographic, applying it at two levels (Smith et al., 2009). The first pertains to the focus upon detail which is attained through rigorous and in-depth analysis of participants' accounts. The second refers to a commitment to understanding a particular phenomenon from a particular perspective (Smith et al., 2009). In practice they advocate that researchers privilege the experience of individuals in the context of their lives, carrying out a case by case analysis. The idiographic commitment ensures that individual stories continue to be heard, even when themes are shared across participants.

3.5.2.2 Rationale for using IPA

The theoretical principles of IPA are consistent with the exploratory purpose of this study. Smith et al. (2009) highlight that 'the inductive procedures and its focus upon interpretation of meaning' (p.46) lend IPA to exploratory research. A second consideration pertained to selecting a qualitative methodology which was consistent with the critical realist stance of this research project. Smith et al. (2009) suggest that methodologically IPA falls within the critical realist paradigm due to the active role of the researcher in the interpretation of the participant's sense-making, a focus upon context, and the belief that specific phenomena exist as an external reality.

In contrast with thematic analysis, IPA is underpinned by a distinct epistemological and theoretical framework, enabling IPA researchers to be clear about the theoretical positioning of their research. With their grounding in phenomenology, IPA studies focus upon the participant's experience of a

particular event. Carefully selected interview questions enable researchers to elicit the participants' lived experiences of an event and maintain a level of openness to the participants in order that details salient to them can be explored (Smith et al., 2009). When considering how best to answer the research questions it was felt that IPA's focus upon experiential accounts of the primary to secondary transition would allow the generation of in-depth, participant-centered data and an analysis which is consistent with the experiential focus of the questions.

IPA's commitment to the idiographic was another key reason for adopting this approach. SEBD encapsulates a broad area of need. The participants in this study were all identified with SEBD, however the nature of their needs varied greatly. In using IPA to frame the data collection and analysis for this study, the researcher was able to focus on the experiences of each individual. This promoted the quality of the information elicited and the depth of analysis. The researcher was keen to privilege the individual's sense making of the transition process, in order to highlight the value that each of their stories has to offer.

Finally, initial concerns regarding whether YP with SEBD would be able to articulate themselves in such a way as to provide in-depth, rich accounts of their experiences, were soon discredited. Previous research conducted by Huws and Jones (2008) employed IPA to elicit the experiences of YP diagnosed with ASC. Using semi-structured interviews, which comprised the open reflective questions advocated by Smith et al. (2009), Huw and Jones (2008) were able to gather rich and meaningful data. It was therefore decided that this approach could be used sensitively to elicit in-depth and reflective accounts from YP with SEBD who, like those participants in Huws and Jones (2008) study, may have additional learning, attention, or communication difficulties.

3.6 Research Participants

Recruitment of participants was two-fold; the initial step involved approaching Head Teachers/Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) of secondary schools to invite their school to participate in the research. The

second step involved recruiting individual participants from within those schools. The first step used opportunity sampling. In accordance with service policy, the researcher contacted all Educational Psychologists (EPs) within the EPS to ask whether it would be appropriate to contact their mainstream secondary schools. To avoid a conflict of interests the schools the researcher worked within as a TEP weren't invited to participate. The decision was taken to invite only mainstream secondary schools to participate to promote the homogeneity of the sample. Initial investigations revealed that transition into specialist provisions differs from mainstream transition; therefore the experiences of pupils moving to specialist provisions would differ significantly from those attending mainstream schools.

As a result of the EPs' responses, a range of secondary schools across the three regions of the LA were invited to participate. The six participating schools represent the three regions and are located in cities, towns, and villages.

The second step drew upon purposive sampling, where the individual participants were selected in line with criteria of relevance to the research question. The criteria for participation in this research were:

- Students must be in Year 7, having joined the school in September 2012.
- Students must be on the SEN register at SA+ or with a Statement, with SEBD as their primary need.
- Students must have been placed on the SEN Register in primary school.

It was decided not to limit the scope of this study to those YP with a Statement in the hope that the researcher would access the views of YP with a broader range of need and experiences of support. The impact upon homogeneity is acknowledged, however SEBD is considered to be broad and difficult to define (Thomas & Loxley, 2007), therefore this would present a limitation of the research regardless. The decision was taken to only include YP who were identified with SEBD in primary school as this would promote the likelihood that they would have received targeted support for their transition to secondary

school. Additionally, for those identified with SEBD in secondary school, their difficulties may have escalated due to negative transition experiences. Although interesting, it is recognised that this could be investigated in future research.

These criteria for participation were shared with the SENCOs. It was acknowledged that these link school staff acted as gate keepers to the participants and although they were made aware that all YP meeting these criteria should be given equal opportunity to participate, this may not have occurred. Thirty-four YP were invited to participate across all participating schools (Appendix 7). Parents were sent information sheets (Appendix 8) and consent forms (Appendix 9) to complete and return to school. Many of the SENCOs identified parents who may struggle to access this written information. These parents were contacted by the researcher or school via the telephone to provide a verbal explanation. Some difficulty was experienced in gaining parental consent.

A purposive sample of 24 YP participated in Phase 1 of this study, completing a questionnaire in school during their third term in Year 7. School staff provided information regarding the nature of the students' need and this was triangulated with information within the Educational Psychology Files and the LA's database. Several of the participants had additional needs which included diagnoses of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Dyspraxia, ASC and literacy and numeracy difficulties. Some students had more than one identified additional need. One of the YP was a looked after YP, while others were on the Child Protection Register. Significantly more boys met the participation criteria and therefore only 4 girls participated. However, this is broadly representative of the wider population of YP with SEBD, who are predominantly male (DfES, 2007).

Following analysis of the quantitative data, a purposive, nested sample of 5 YP who reported experiencing the most successful transitions and a sample of 5 YP who reported experiencing the least successful transitions, were invited to participate in the qualitative phase of the study. Letters were sent to the students, via the link member of school staff, inviting them to meet with the

researcher again (Appendix 10). Central to this study was the empowerment of the YP and therefore these letters played a crucial part in promoting their choice in participating. Aside from one student who was absent due to illness, all of these YP participated, with nine interviews conducted in total. Although the sample for Phase 2 of the study is relatively small, Willig (2008) advocates smaller samples for qualitative research given the emphasis on depth and richness of the data produced. The qualitative sample comprised eight boys and one girl, who attended five of the participating schools. There was a varied level of need, with a mixture of those students who had statements and those who received additional support at SA+. Again this sample reflected the breadth of need within SEBD, with students having additional needs and diagnoses. Further details of these participants will be presented in the Findings.

3.7 Research Technique

3.7.1 Quantitative

The aim of Phase 1 was to examine how the participants experienced different aspects of their transition and whether they reported having successful primary to secondary transitions. The data from these questionnaires assisted the researcher in determining which YP were invited to participate in the interviews. It was considered important that the YP were able to give their perspective on their transition in order that a 'successful transition' could be determined by them. The questionnaire was developed specifically for this study. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire as a measure of 'successful transition', the researcher turned to the large-scale research project by Evangelou et al. (2008), which sought to understand what makes a successful primary to secondary transition.

Evangelou et al. (2008) consider that successful transition is 'a composite concept consisting of five underlying dimensions' which can be found in Appendix 5. These dimensions were identified by carrying out a factor analysis on the responses to 18 survey items drawn from both the children's and parents' questionnaires (Appendix 11). The authors found that these five aspects were positively and significantly correlated and therefore formed a valid measure of a

successful transition. Within the current study it was not possible to use the measure of successful transition created by Evangelou et al. (2008) given that the majority of survey items were taken from the parent questionnaire. Therefore, each of the 18 survey items was adapted for use with YP, while keeping the wording of the questions as similar to the original as possible (Appendix 12). All questions required the participants to rate how they experienced different aspects of their transition on closed question ordinal-polytomous response scales. In order to simplify scoring of the ordinal data, the present study used the same scale descriptors as those employed by Evangelou et al. (2008).

The validity of the questionnaire was further promoted through a piloting study. Two Year 7 students, who were identified by their SENCO as presenting with behaviour difficulties, completed the draft questionnaire (Appendix 13). The students were provided feedback around the ease of completion, the layout, the length and the presence of the researcher. On the basis of this feedback (Appendix 14) and the data provided by the draft questionnaire, adaptations were made to create the final version of the questionnaire.

3.7.2 Qualitative

Following the analysis of quantitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the transition experiences of the most and least successful YP. Semi-structured interviews are characterised by their flexibility in allowing researchers to ask predetermined questions, while using their judgment to decide which order and wording is most appropriate for each interview (Robson, 2002). An interview schedule was prepared (Appendix 15). A chronological structure was employed, with participants discussing their experiences of primary school, their first day of secondary school, and finally their current experiences of school. In accordance with the values of IPA, open questions were used to elicit information considered most salient to the YP. Guidance was sought from Smith et al. (2009) with regard to the wording of questions. To balance these open and expansive questions, probing questions were used to support participants to fully express their experience of transition. Smith and Osborn (2003) encourage the IPA researcher to maintain openness to the

interviewee, such that areas of individual importance can be pursued during the interview. Therefore, the interview schedule served as a guide rather than an agenda, allowing the YP the space to discuss what was important to them.

3.8 Procedures

The two phases of data collection were completed sequentially over a period of three months, during the summer term of 2012.

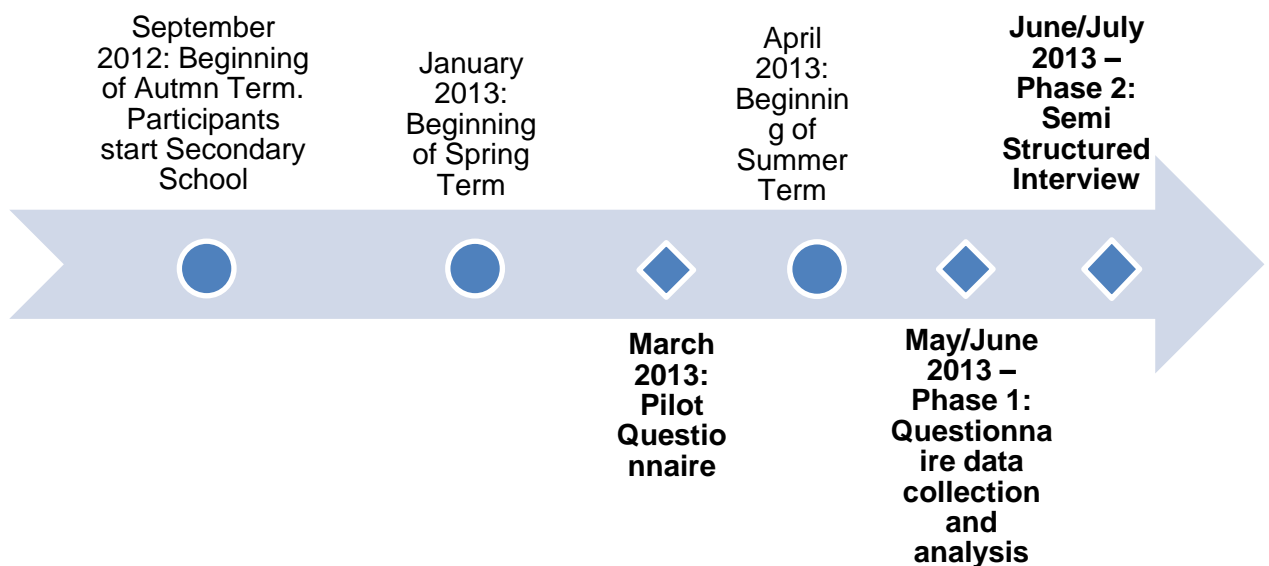


Figure 3: Timeline of data collection

3.8.1 Phase 1 – Quantitative Data Collection

The questionnaires were administered during the summer term 2013. This timing was crucial as research indicates the majority of YP experience a dip in their attainment and emotional well-being during their first term of secondary school (West et al., 2010). It was important that students had spent more than one term in their secondary school to have had the opportunity to settle, while remaining close enough to their transition to recall their experiences.

The researcher visited participating secondary schools to facilitate the completion of questionnaires. This ensured the conditions in which questionnaires were completed remained as similar as possible for all participants. In addition, it was hoped that meeting the researcher would ensure participants felt more comfortable when invited to interview. The questionnaires were completed in private rooms with limited distractions, in groups of two or three in an attempt to minimise any anxiety experienced by the students. Each session began with a brief overview of the research, and an explanation of confidentiality and their right to withdraw. If the participants had not previously seen the information sheet, this was read through with the group. Those students who had not completed consent forms, but were willing to participate, completed them at this point. Finally, the participants were given the opportunity to ask questions. Drawing upon previous experience of working with YP with SEBD, the researcher reflected that not all participants may have felt comfortable to state in front of their peers they were having difficulty reading. Therefore, to ensure all participants were able to access the questionnaires, the researcher read out each question while the participants marked their answers on the questionnaires. Where necessary the meaning of words was clarified. On completion of the questionnaires, the researcher explained the next steps. Participants were informed that some students would be invited to interview based upon their answers on the questionnaire. It was deemed important to clarify this in order that students weren't primed to give positive answers and didn't feel they were being judged. The YP were also told that they would receive a letter to thank them and share my findings.

Where necessary, adaptations to this process were made to ensure that all participants who wanted to take part were supported to do so. One participant, with a diagnosis of ASC, was initially apprehensive to complete the questionnaire. Having listened to the initial explanation given to all participants, she requested that the researcher visit her at home so she was able to complete the questionnaire in the presence of her parents. She explained that this would make her feel safe to share her views on such a 'personal' matter. Following a discussion with her parents, a second visit was made to the school. The student had agreed with her family that she would like to take part in the study, in

school, with the support of her SENCO. In adopting a flexible approach she was supported to participate in this research.

3.8.2 Phase 2 – Qualitative Data Collection

The individual interviews were conducted during the summer term 2013, within the YP's schools. This timing was crucial to the gathering of rich data as it allowed the YP a chance to settle into their new schools and the opportunity to reflect upon their transition. Following identification of the interview sample, the link school staff were contacted to arrange dates for interview. Letters were sent, via this link member of staff, to invite students to participate in the interview (Appendix 8). Although the students had already consented to the interview (Appendix 16), it was important for them to be invited given this project's underlying values of respect and empowerment.

The researcher carried out the interviews on a one-to-one basis in a quiet room with limited distractions. To create a relaxed atmosphere juice and biscuits were provided and time was given to developing rapport. As recommended by Smith et al. (2009) the researcher explained what the interview would entail, highlighting that there were no right or wrong answers and the researcher was simply interested in hearing about their experiences. In addition confidentiality and their right to withdraw were also discussed. All interviews were audio-taped with the consent of the participants and lasted between 30 to 45 minutes. To promote participants' recall of their experiences of primary school and starting secondary school, a visual timeline was used, whereby the students were invited to draw pictures onto the timeline (Figure 4 and 5). This supported the chronological structure of the interview. These drawings served to promote recall and were not analysed. Some YP opted out of this activity, instead providing verbal description. Some participants required additional support to engage in the interview process. One participant found it particularly difficult to maintain his attention for extended periods and to express himself fully when asked open questions which required a level of reflection. For this interview the researcher drew upon her prior experience and guidance around interviewing children (Greene & Hogan, 2005), to differentiate questions and support him to maintain his attention. Short, frequent breaks were taken and the researcher

took the time to re-focus him and repeat questions where necessary. Central to the ethos of this study and to promoting the trustworthiness of the data was ensuring that all participants were given the opportunity to share their experiences fully.

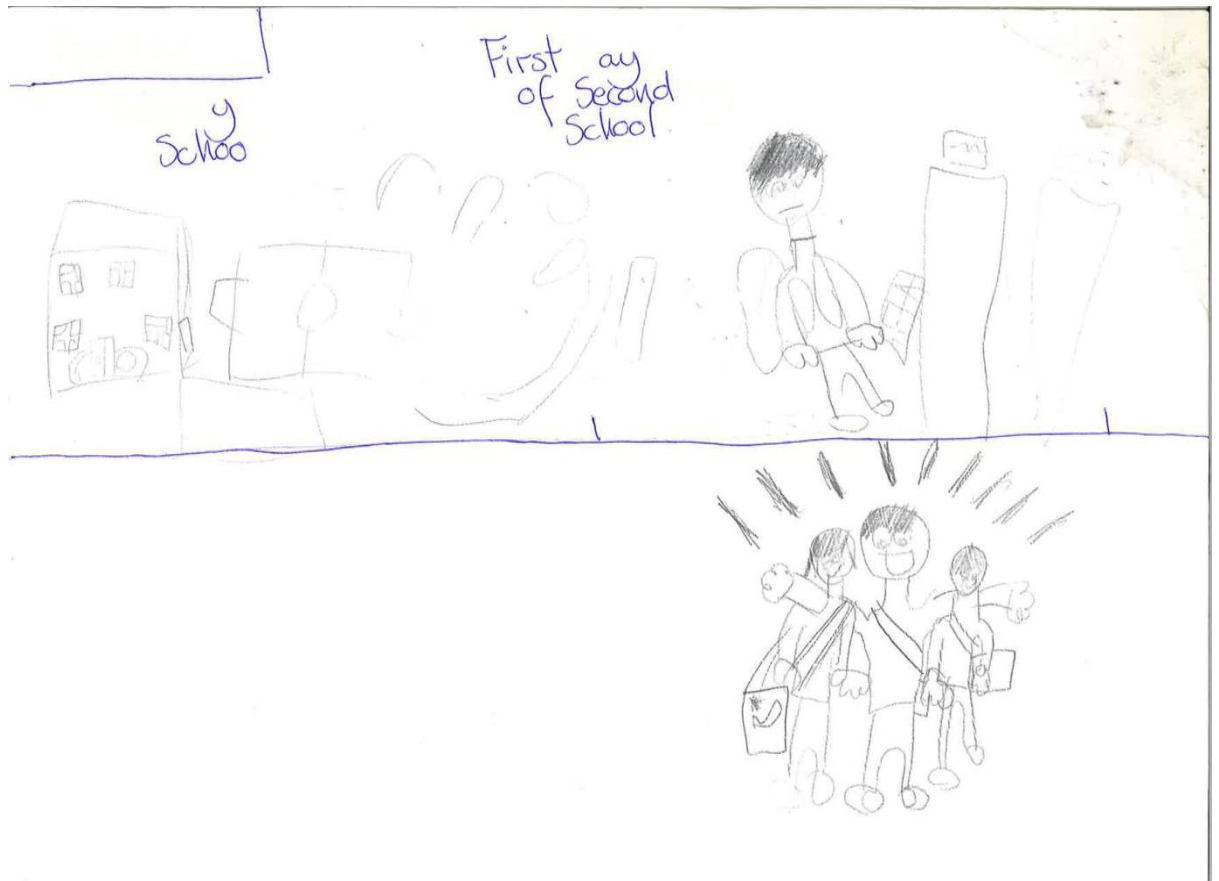


Figure 4: Participant's Timeline 1

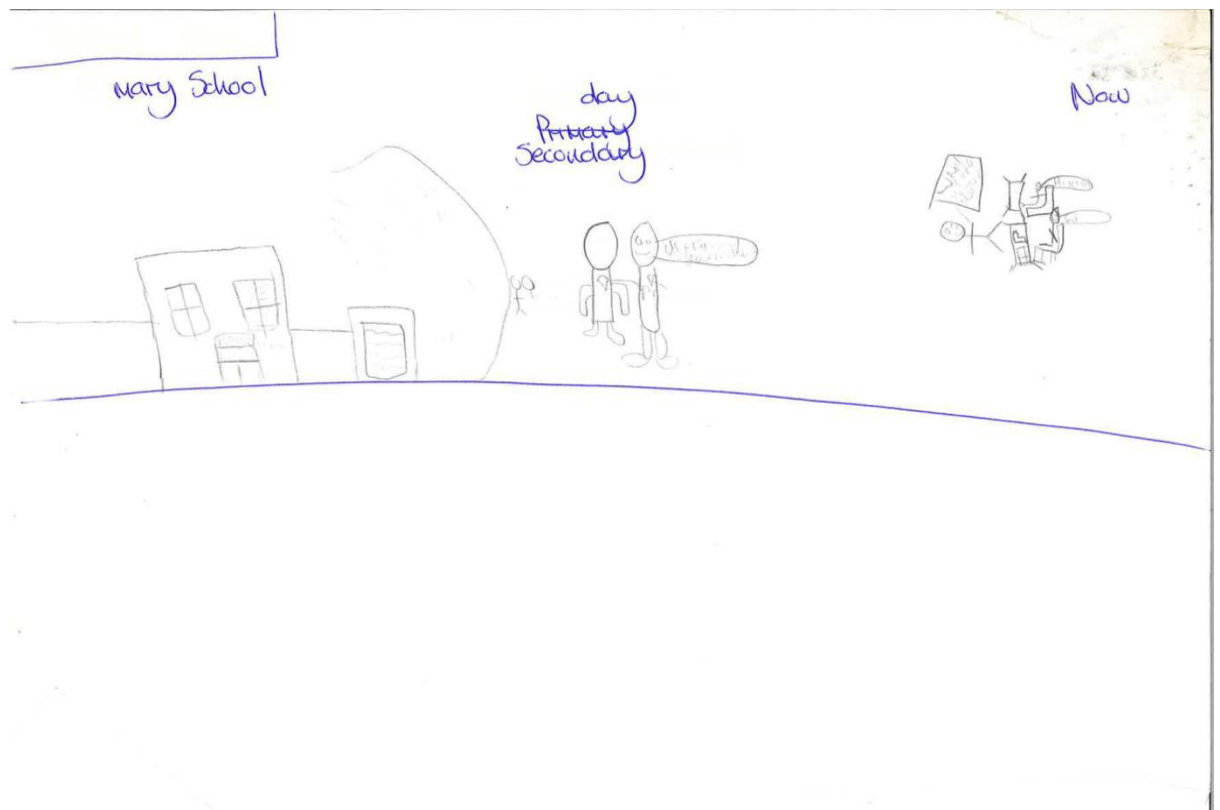


Figure 5: Participant's Timeline 2

The interviews were subsequently transcribed verbatim in preparation for analysis (See CD disk).

3.9 Data Analysis

The process of data analysis was carried out sequentially. The quantitative data was analysed first, followed by the qualitative data.

3.9.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

An initial analysis of the questionnaires was carried out to establish which participants had experienced the most and least successful transitions. The questionnaires were analysed using the same technique as that outlined by Evangelou et al. (2008). Each answer on the rating scales was given a number, with higher numbers representing more positive answers e.g. 'very easy' = 4 and 'very difficult' = 1. The median score was taken for each of the 5 sections of the questionnaire. As discussed above, Evangelou et al. (2008) conducted a

factor analysis upon their questionnaires in order to establish whether these five areas constitute a measure of successful transition. In doing so they identified the statistical parameters by which a transition could be deemed successful, based upon the median scores for each of the five dimensions of successful transitions. The parameters developed by Evangelou et al. (2008) are highlighted in the table below.

Table 3.1: The parameters by which ‘success’ is determined for each underlying dimension of a successful transition.

| Dimension | ‘Successful’ median scores | ‘Non-successful’ median scores |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Developing Friendships and Confidence | 1.75 - 3 | 1 - 2.5 |
| Settling into school life | 3.6 – 4 | 1.2 - 3.4 |
| Showing a growing interest in school and work | 3 | 1 - 2.5 |
| Getting used to new routines | 3.3- 4 | 1 – 3 |
| Experiencing Curriculum Continuity | 3.3 - 4 | 1 – 3 |

The median scores for each dimension were coded ‘successful’ or ‘non-successful’ for individual participants. Those participants who reported ‘successful’ median scores on all five dimensions (n=5) were invited to interview. Further scrutiny of the data suggested that although this approach to analysing the data was helpful in ascertaining which YP had experienced the most successful transitions, it was not so helpful in identifying those who had experienced the least successful transitions. Through a close inspection of the answers participants had given to individual questions, it became clear that those who had given answers signifying poorer transition experiences weren’t necessarily those who reported ‘non-successful’ median scores across all five dimensions. Therefore, a different approach was utilised whereby the researcher added together the scores from all questions to gain an overall score

for each participant. Those who had the lowest overall scores were deemed to have experienced the 'least successful' transitions and were invited to interview (n=5).

3.9.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Following the collection of qualitative data, the researcher's initial conceptions of each interview were noted. The interviews were later transcribed and analysed. When conducting IPA research, Smith et al. (2009) highlight the importance of engaging in an in-depth analysis which reflects the underlying tenets of IPA: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. Smith et al. (2009) propose that 'the essence of IPA lies in its analytic focus...that focus directs our attention towards our participants' attempts to make sense of their experiences' (p. 79). The researcher focuses upon each participant individually, carrying out an in-depth interpretative phenomenological analysis of one transcript at a time, so as to gain an 'insider perspective'. This focus on individual transcripts highlights IPA's commitment to the idiographic. In addition, researchers are encouraged to be reflexive during the research process, noting down any presuppositions in order to promote transparency. This also relates to the concept of the double hermeneutic, ensuring that clarity is provided around how the researcher made sense of participants' sense making. The authors provide guidelines to complete this process; these were adhered to in this study. These steps of analysis are summarised in Appendix 17.

3.10 Trustworthiness

In a mixed methods research project issues relating to trustworthiness are likely to differ for the quantitative and qualitative phases given the differing epistemological and methodological approaches (Robson, 2002). Issues pertaining to trustworthiness of this study will be discussed below for both the quantitative and qualitative phases.

3.10.1 Quantitative

Reliability, validity, and generalisability underpin the replicability of quantitative research. Fox et al. (2007) suggest that replicability is the ultimate goal of quantitative studies, meaning that other researchers could carry out the same

research and reach the same conclusion. Therefore the value and trustworthiness of research can be determined by these three concepts.

3.10.1.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to the 'stability or consistency with which we measure something' (Robson, 2002, p.101). The reliability of this research was promoted throughout the research process, with a particular focus upon reducing participant/researcher error and bias. To ensure all participants received the same information and guidance during data collection, the researcher facilitated the questionnaire completion. The researcher read out all of the questions and possible answers to enable the YP to complete the questionnaire regardless of any additional learning difficulties. To further promote the reliability, school staff weren't present during this time to ensure that students' answers weren't impacted by concerns that school staff may see them. However, given the real world context in which this research was conducted there was some variation in the contexts in which the questionnaires were completed. These differences included group size, the types of room (although these were always private), and the times of day. In addition some special adaptations were necessary to ensure that all YP who wanted to participate were able to. Finally, to minimise researcher bias and improve objectivity, the research was carried out in schools where the researcher did not work as a TEP.

3.10.1.2 Validity

The validity of a study pertains to the accuracy of the results (Robson, 2002). Fox et al. (2007) identify two forms of validity: construct and internal. In order to achieve high construct validity the questionnaire should measure what it sets out to measure, in this case whether the students experienced a successful transition to secondary school. A detailed explanation of the development of the questionnaire used in this research is presented above. By basing this questionnaire upon a measure developed in a large scale study commissioned by the DfES it was considered that the construct validity would be improved. To further build upon this a pilot study was carried out in which feedback was sought, explanations around completion and ethics were practised, and the data was examined (Appendix 14). Adaptations were made to the questionnaire

before the data collection commenced. Given that the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics, as opposed to inferential, it was considered that internal validity of the scales was not pertinent to this study.

3.10.1.3 Generalisability

Fox et al. (2007) define generalisability within quantitative research as the ability to generalise the results to populations in other settings. It is acknowledged that due to the limitations presented by the small sample size, the purposive sampling technique, and the relative homogeneity of the participants (e.g. attendance at mainstream schools in one LA) caution will be required when generalising the findings to wider populations. Drawing upon the underpinning critical realist framework it could be argued that the quantitative findings from this study could be generalised to YP with SEBD who are situated within a similar context to this sample.

3.10.2 Qualitative

Guba and Lincoln (1981) state that the quality of qualitative research is not determined by its reliability or validity, but instead by its trustworthiness. Willig (2008) discusses several frameworks to guide qualitative researchers in promoting the quality of their research. She argues that the criteria for assessing a study's trustworthiness should be consistent with the epistemological stance adopted by the researcher. Smith (2010) supports this argument, suggesting that although generic quality assurance guidelines for qualitative research can be helpful, more specificity is required when looking in depth at the quality of a study. He advocates the use of Yardley's (2000) criteria when considering the quality of IPA research and this was applied here.

The first criterion, 'sensitivity to context', stipulates that research be grounded within relevant theoretical literature. In addition, it advocates that researchers be sensitive to the socio-cultural context within which the research is conducted, to the relationship between the researcher and participant, and to the participants themselves (Shinebourne, 2011). In the current study these issues were addressed throughout the research process. The Introduction and Literature Review chapters discuss the relevant body of literature, building towards and

drawing links with the current study. The findings from this study are later discussed in relation to this body of literature. Consideration was given to the socio-cultural context of the UK education system within the Introduction and references have been made to conducting the research in schools throughout the Methodology. In line with the critical realist ontology all participants have been considered as being identified with SEBD. This reflects the socio-cultural tendency towards labelling our YP according to any presenting difficulties. The impact of the relationship between the researcher and participants has been given a great deal of thought. As a TEP the researcher has developed the skills to work with YP of all ages. These skills and knowledge were applied to ensure that rapport was developed, explanations were clear, questions were carefully worded, and all participants were supported to participate. Shinebourne (2011) suggests that this criterion is also met in IPA research through the grounding of analytic comments in the participants' own language. Quotes were used within the Findings chapter to evidence the interpretative claims.

'Commitment and rigour', Yardley's (2000) second criterion, can be achieved through demonstrating a prolonged engagement with the area of research and a thoroughness within the research process. In the current study the researcher has several years experience of working with YP with SEBD, including working for a year within a specialist SEBD provision. This has allowed her to develop understanding of how such YP experience their schooling. In addition the researcher immersed herself within the transition literature to develop a full understanding of the current knowledge base. In terms of ensuring thoroughness within the research process the researcher attended an IPA lecture given by Jonathan Smith and IPA seminars at UEL. Smith et al. (2009) highlight that within IPA, thoroughness refers to 'the appropriateness of the sample to the question in hand, the quality of the interview and the completeness of analysis' (p.181). As a TEP, the researcher's questioning skills have developed throughout the training programme, ensuring high quality interviews which ascertained rich accounts of the participants' experiences. During analysis, the researcher immersed herself in the data to achieve a depth to the analysis and a distinct focus upon each individual account.

Yardley's (2000) third criterion, 'transparency and coherence', has been promoted throughout the research and write up. Within this thesis a detailed account of the research technique and data gathering process has been provided. The numerous decisions involved in planning and conducting a piece of research have been approached here in a thoughtful and systematic manner. Many of these decisions and their reasons have been presented to the reader to offer justification for the researcher's chosen course of action. In addition to offering transparency around these more concrete choices, an account of the researcher's reflexive issues has also been presented in the Discussion. Within the Methodology and Findings chapters clarity around the process of analysis has been demonstrated. Yardley (2000) identifies that coherence refers to the fit between research questions, epistemological position, and methodology. For studies using IPA, Shinebourne (2011) argues that researchers must demonstrate a commitment to the philosophical underpinnings of IPA. This should be reflected through a focus upon the participants' lived experience of a phenomenon and the researcher's interpretative engagement with their participants' accounts. Within the qualitative phase, the researcher actively engaged with phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. This is demonstrated by the commitment to eliciting and interpreting how individuals made sense of their experience of transition. Guidance was sought from Smith et al. (2009) in the writing of the research questions, interview schedule, and process of analysis.

Finally, Yardley (2000) identifies 'impact and importance' as 'the decisive criterion by which any piece of research must be judged' (p.223). One facet of this criterion pertains to the contribution of new knowledge to an area of research. No research was found that had previously been conducted to explore primary to secondary transition in relation to students with SEBD. Therefore, it is the researcher's belief that this research offers a unique perspective into how this phenomenon can be experienced by YP with SEBD. The intended application for this study was to develop practice within one LA, to better support YP with SEBD in their transition to secondary school. Following completion of the thesis, letters summarising the findings were sent to participating schools and students. In addition the findings were disseminated to

the LA's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Development Committee and the EPS.

3.11 Ethics

Ethical Approval was given for this research to be conducted from UEL's Ethics Committee (Appendix 18). Permission was also sought from the PEP of the LA in which the research was conducted.

The BPS (2010) identify that 'research ethics refers to the moral principles guiding research from its inception through to completion and publication of results' (p. 5). Four principles have been presented by the BPS (2010) to guide researchers through the series of moral decisions they must make. These include: 'Respect for the Autonomy and Dignity of Persons', 'Scientific Value', 'Social Responsibility', and 'Maximising Benefit and Minimising Harm'. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest that ethical issues should be embedded at all stages of the research process. Therefore the ethical considerations which formed the basis for this study will be presented within the different stages in which they occurred.

3.11.1 Conception

During the conception of this study consideration was given to ensuring the research would benefit others, further knowledge and understanding, and be of high quality. As a result of these musings and the values and core beliefs of the researcher, it was decided the research would aim to empower a group of YP who are often disempowered by the systems in which they are situated. By taking the time to listen to their views and treating them respectfully it was hoped the YP would feel empowered and enjoy the experience of participating. Through enabling them to share their views it was hoped that the relevant parties, including the LA, would take on board their ideas to improve the primary to secondary transition for students with SEBD.

3.11.2 Design and Implementation

During the design and implementation of the study consideration was given to several ethical issues. These included the six core areas outlined by UEL: informed consent, deception, right of withdrawal, anonymity and confidentiality, protection from harm for the participants and researcher, and debriefing (UEL, 2012). Alderson (2008) highlights that the greatest risk when conducting research with YP pertains to potential power imbalances between researcher and participant. This argument is particularly pertinent to this study given that recruitment and data collection took place in schools. Within schools a hierarchy exists with adults placed higher than children, within this there is an expectation that children will follow adult instruction. It was deemed important to minimize the impact of these constructs upon the research process to ensure fully informed consent, and an understanding of the right to withdraw and confidentiality. Therefore, during the data collection time was allocated to explaining that participation was their choice. The right to withdraw was explained at several points in the research process to ensure their understanding of this concept. Letters of invitation were sent to those participants who had been selected to take part in the interview, which again highlighted that participation was a choice not an expectation (Appendix 9). Additionally, the researcher positioned herself as an outsider, not part of the school environment. This was meant to reassure participants that confidentiality would be maintained and their participation/non-participation would have no bearing upon their schooling. It appeared that this time and effort was well spent as many of the participants appeared to struggle to make of sense of being asked their permission to participate in a school based activity. One student chose not to participate and another requested that a familiar adult be present. Both of these requests were respected by the researcher.

Promoting transparency within the research process was deemed crucial to gaining fully informed consent from all parties. Information letters were sent to schools, parents and YP presenting details of the study (Appendices 6, 7 and 19). Parents with queries were offered the opportunity to speak with the researcher to gain further clarity and a discussion was held with all participants

prior to completing the questionnaire/interview. Informed consent was gained from every school, parent and YP, prior to the YP participating in the study (Appendices 8, 16 and 20).

When considering how to ensure the protection of the participants it was deemed important that the students felt in control of the process, particularly during the interview. It was made clear that the students could refuse to answer any question or stop the interview at any point. Secondly, participants were offered several opportunities to ask questions. Thirdly, all participants were debriefed verbally, and later in writing with the aim of promoting their understanding of the study. Finally, a member of staff was highlighted in school with whom they could speak after the questionnaire/interview, should they need to. Those YP who participated in the interview were also given an email address where they could reach the researcher should they have any further questions. In addition, Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures were adhered to and explained to the participants. No information was disclosed that compromised their safety or the safety of others and therefore confidentiality did not need to be broken.

3.11.3 Write up

Anonymity was the key ethical issue during the write up. All questionnaires were stored securely along with the recordings of the interviews. When analysing the quantitative data the participants and schools were assigned numbers which were used in place of their names. During transcription of the interviews all data was anonymised with names and places being removed or changed. Once the data had been analysed the raw data, questionnaires and interview recordings, were destroyed. As stipulated by the BPS (2010) the confidentiality of participants was respected during the write up. Any information which may have made the participants identifiable was not included.

3.12 Reflexivity

Willig (2008) suggests that qualitative researchers should consider the impact they have upon their research, including their own social identity, prior knowledge of the research area, and their belief systems. This can be achieved

through carrying out research in a reflexive manner (Willig, 2008). Smith et al. (2009) also highlight the importance of researcher reflexivity in promoting the trustworthiness of IPA research, particular given the interpretative nature of this approach. In being a TEP, reflexivity is ingrained within my day to day practice and carried out prior to, during and after completing a piece of work. The processes promoting reflexivity within this research included maintaining a research diary, supervision, and informal discussions with fellow researchers. Personal reflections upon the research process are presented in the Discussion.

Findings

4.1 Chapter overview

This chapter presents the findings from the present study. The research aimed to explore stories of successful and less successful transitions in order to develop understanding of how YP with SEBD make sense of this significant educational transition. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the quantitative data elicited through the questionnaires. Robson (2002) suggests descriptive statistics offer 'ways of representing some important aspect of a set of data by a single number' (p.407). These analyses provide an insight into the participants' transition experiences with a particular focus upon their perceived success in moving to secondary school, the social and emotional aspects of transition, and their perceptions of support. Percentages are utilised and presented in graphs to surmise the transition experiences of this group.

The qualitative data was analysed using the framework advocated by Smith et al. (2009) for IPA research. Participants' experiential accounts of their transition to secondary school were analysed idiographically and then synthesised across the data sets. Analyses of two groups of YP are presented sequentially, starting with those who reported experiencing the most successful transition, followed by those who described themselves as experiencing the least successful transitions.

4.2 Section 1 - Quantitative Findings

A statistical analysis was carried out upon the quantitative data to address the quantitative research questions. Twenty-four YP with SEBD completed the questionnaires in May/June 2013. The questionnaires were adapted from Evangelou et al's (2008) large scale study and aimed to examine whether students' experienced success within their transition to secondary school. From the students' ratings it was possible to identify those who experienced the most and least successful transitions. The details for these calculations have been presented within the Methodology, given that this formed the basis for the

qualitative participant selection. For the purposes of brevity the researcher will refer to the two groups of qualitative participants as those that have experienced the 'most' and 'least' successful transitions. However, it is recognised that this is based upon the students' responses and therefore cannot be considered fact but their perception of the situation. Critical realism allows the researcher to acknowledge that one reality exists but the way in which this is experienced or viewed differs according to contextual and individual lens through which it is observed (Fox et al., 2007).

In addition to supporting the identification of the qualitative sample, the quantitative data was analysed to help answer the quantitative research questions. In light of the small sample and an examination of previous research (e.g. Evangelou et al. 2008) it was considered that descriptive statistics, as opposed to inferential statistics, would be most appropriate to capture the views of the YP. Therefore percentages were utilised to enable an understanding of the data set as a whole.

The findings will be presented below in three sections, addressing the quantitative research questions in turn.

4.2.1 What proportion of the young people experienced a successful primary to secondary transition?

Having completed the analysis to establish which students experienced successful transitions to secondary school using the composite concept of successful transition outlined by Evangelou et al. (2008) (Appendix 5) further descriptive analyses were carried out. These sought to explore this data further, to gain an understanding of the proportion of students who had reported successful outcomes on the differing dimensions which comprise a successful transition. Figures 6 and 7 illustrate the number of dimensions upon which the students reported experiencing success and the proportion of students who experienced success upon each of those dimensions.

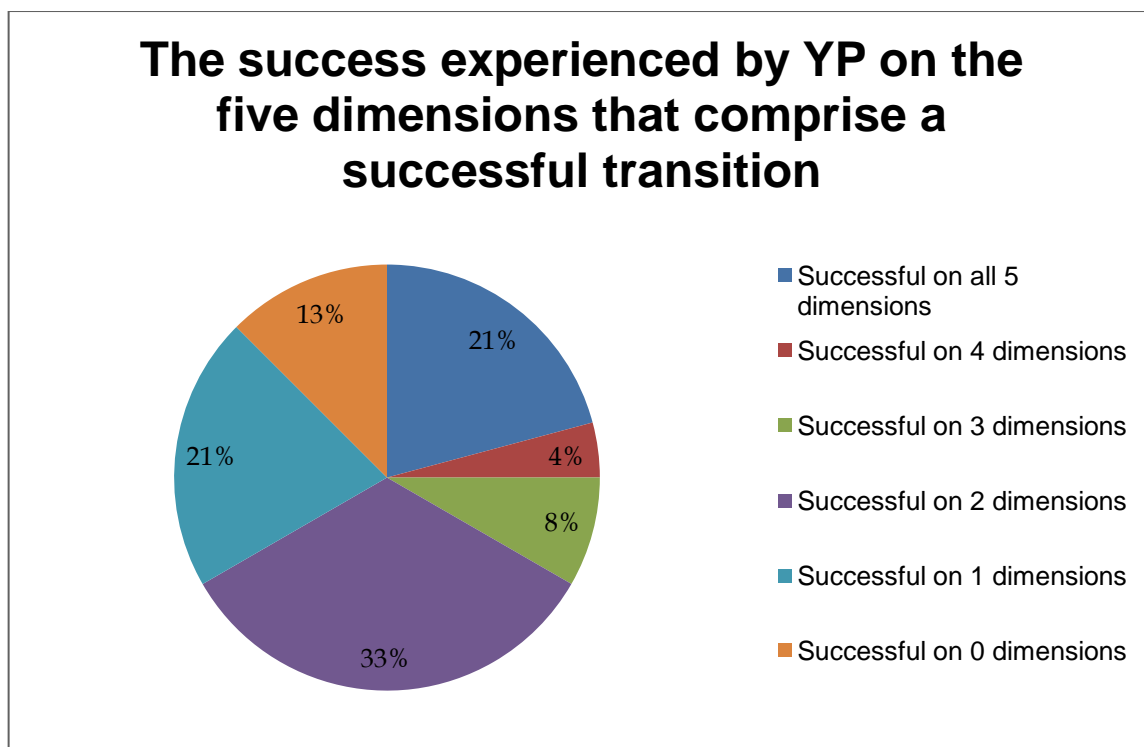


Figure 6: The number of dimensions which comprise a successful transition upon which the participants reported experiencing success.

Figure 6 presents the findings which indicate the level of success experienced by students in their transition to secondary school. Twenty-one percent (N=5) of the students stated they experienced success on all five dimensions, suggesting they experienced a successful transition to secondary school. Within this study, this group of YP are considered to have experienced the ‘most successful’ transitions.

The pie chart indicates that 87% (N=21) of the students experienced success within at least one area of their transition to secondary school, with the majority of students being successful in two areas. This leaves 13% (N=3) of students whose ratings upon the questionnaire did not enable them to meet the parameters for success upon any of the five dimensions.

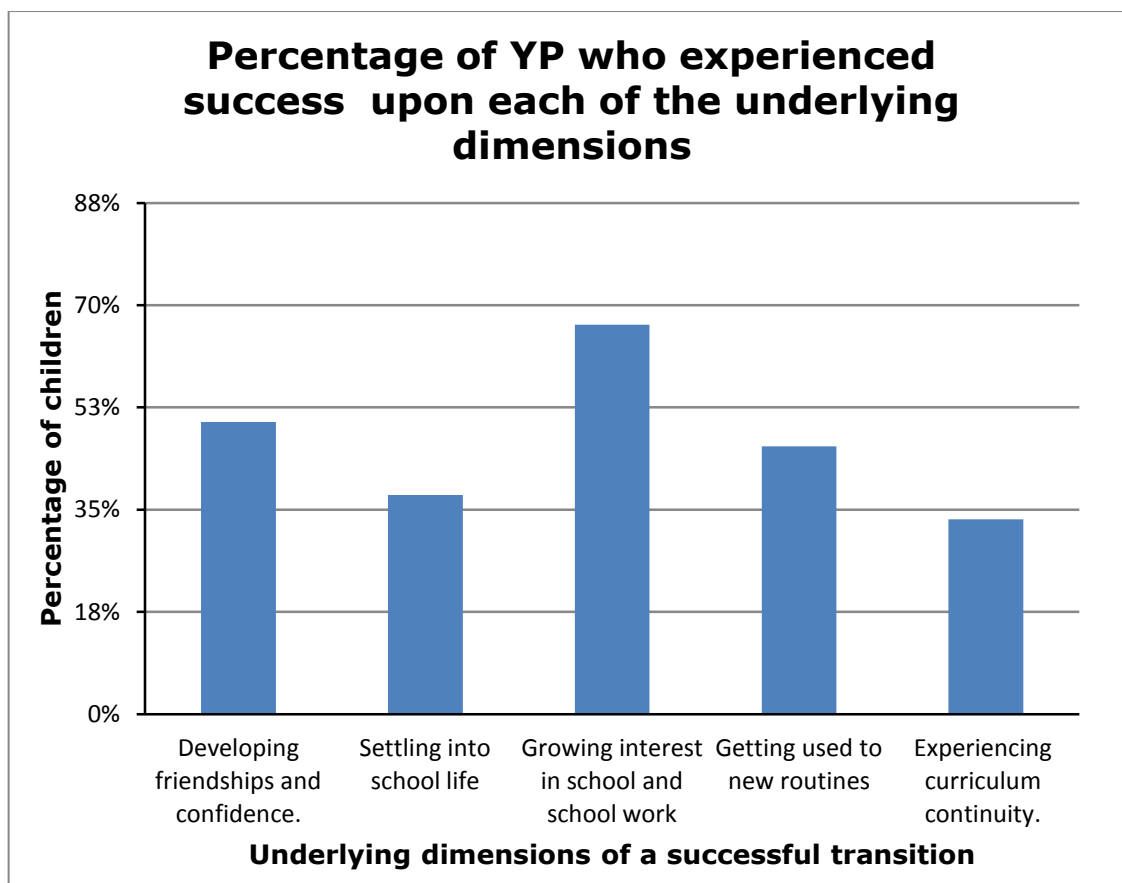


Figure 7: The proportion of students who reported experiencing success within each dimension.

The analysis indicates that half of the students considered they had developed new friends and boosted their confidence and self-esteem at secondary school. While 36% (N=9) reported they had settled into school life, no longer feeling worried. The dimension upon which most students described experiencing success was that of a 'growing interest in school and school work'. This demonstrates the majority of students felt their secondary school and school work were more interesting when compared with primary school. Forty-six percent (N=11) of the students reported successfully adapting to their new routines, the system of rules and rewards. Finally, the lowest level of success was experienced in relation to curriculum continuity, with 33% (N=8) of students reporting continuity between their Year 6 and Year 7 work.

4.2.2 What are the social and emotional implications of transition?

It was deemed important to carry out further scrutiny of the data relating to the social and emotional aspects of transition, given that this study sought to explore the transition experiences of YP with SEBD. Data was gathered in relation to the students' confidence, self-esteem, motivation, and number of friends in secondary school. These questions were comparative, asking the YP to compare how they felt now compared with primary school, as within the study conducted by Evangelou et al. (2008). It is considered these questions provided some insight into the social and emotional well-being of the students in secondary school, while recognising that these ratings are compared with their personal baseline from primary school, and are therefore highly subjective. This ordinal data was analysed and the percentage of responses given by the YP are presented in Figures 8 and 9. Percentages were calculated separately for the group who had experienced successful outcomes on all five dimensions (N=5) and those who had not (N=19). This provided an indication of whether the 'most successful' students were more inclined to have noted an increase in their social and emotional well-being as compared with those who had reported experiencing a less successful transition.

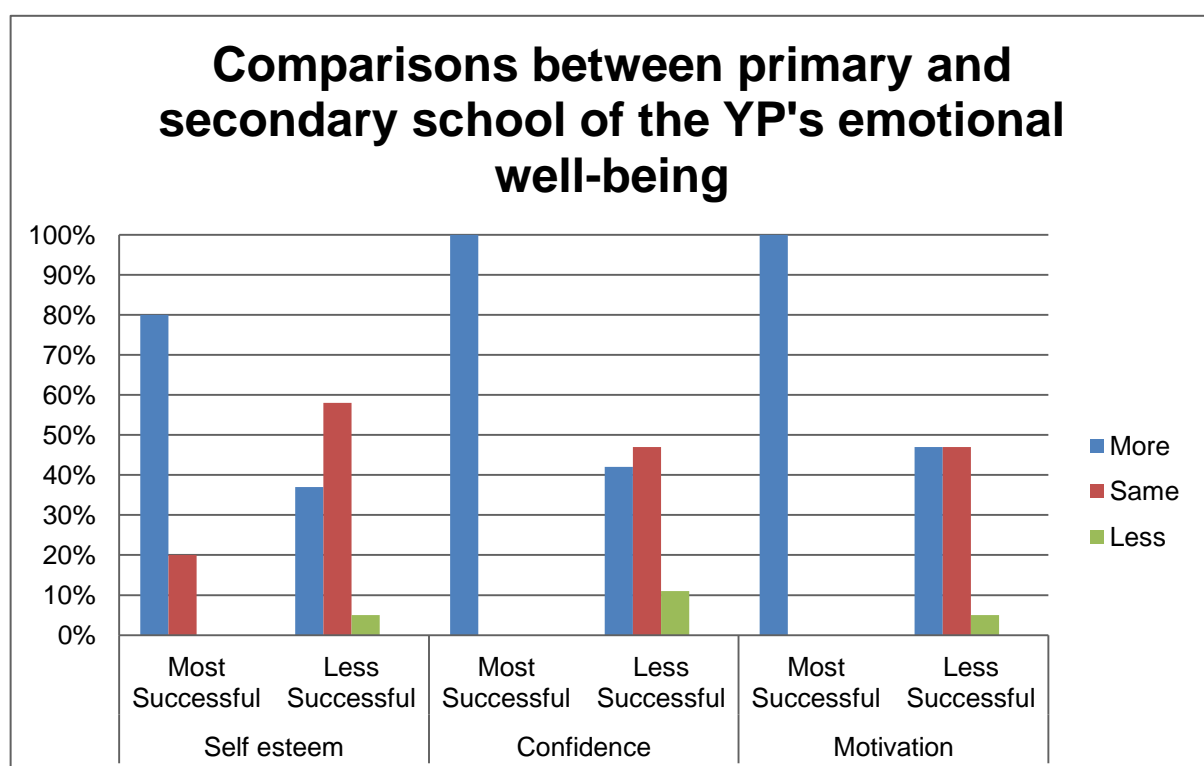


Figure 8: the YP's perceptions around their self-esteem, confidence, and motivation at secondary school, as compared with primary school.

When rating their comparative levels of confidence and motivation in secondary school, 100% (N=5) of the most successful students identified an increase in their confidence and motivation. In comparison, 42% (N=8) of the less successful YP reported feeling more confident, while the majority felt the same (47%, N=9). Forty-seven percent (N=9) of the less successful YP reported feeling more motivated at secondary school, while a further 47% (N=9) reported feeling the same level of motivation as in primary.

With regard to self esteem, 80% (N=4) of the most successful students reported feeling better about themselves at secondary school. This contrasts with 37% (N=7) of those less successful YP who reported an increase in self esteem at secondary school. The majority of less successful YP (58%, N=11) felt as good about themselves at secondary school as they had at primary, while one student felt worse about themselves.

These findings indicate that those students who reported experiencing the most successful transitions to secondary school also reported an increase in their emotional well-being in secondary school. While the majority of those less successful YP identified that their emotional well-being remained the same.

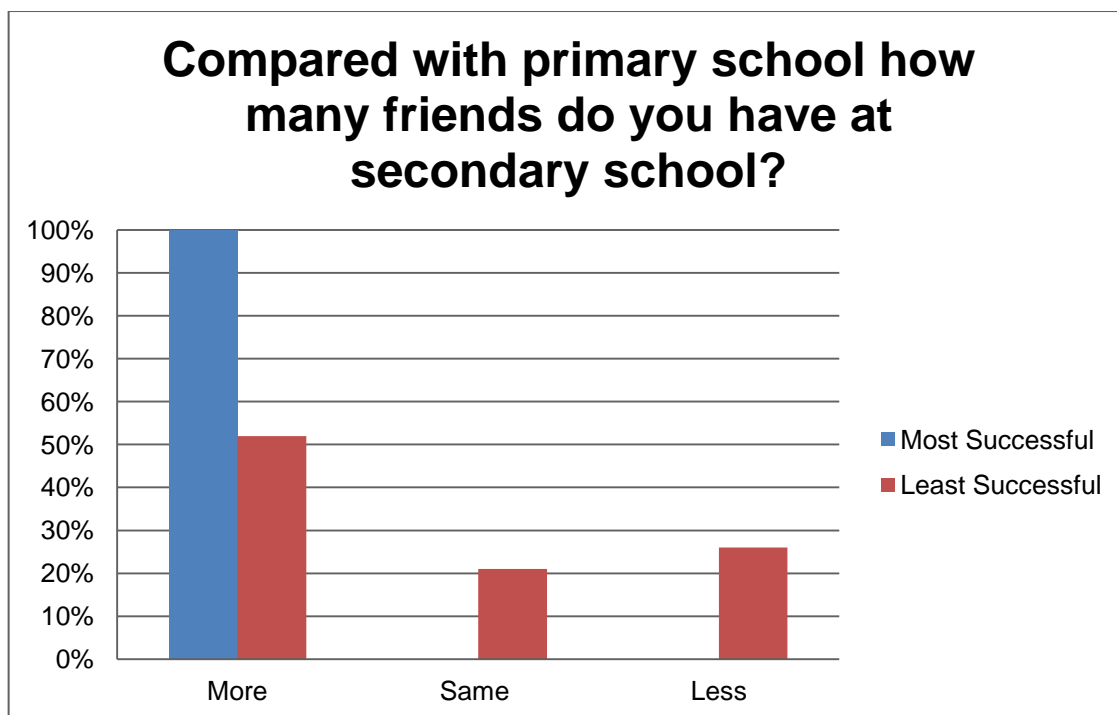


Figure 9: The number of friends the YP considered themselves to have at secondary school, as compared with primary school.

One hundred percent (N=5) of the most successful YP and 52% (N=10) of the less successful students reported having more friends at secondary school. In contrast five (26%) of those in the less successful group reported having less friends at secondary school than they had in primary school, while 21% (N=4) felt they had the same number of friends. These figures suggest that those students who experienced the most successful transitions were also more likely to report an increase in their number of friends, than those less successful students.

4.2.3 How helpful did the YP find any support they received in preparing for transition and on settling into their secondary schools?

Having explored the level of success experienced by these YP and their perceptions of the social and emotional aspects of their transitions, further descriptive analyses were carried out to ascertain the perceived efficacy of support provided by primary and secondary schools. This data was gathered via their responses to the following questions:

- How well did your primary school prepare you?
- How well did your secondary school help you to settle in?

The students were provided with four possible answers ranging from 'very well' to 'not at all well'. These were based upon the scales utilised by Evangelou et al. (2008) enabling the researcher to employ their method of analysis.

This ordinal data was analysed to attain the percentage of responses for each answer and in turn gain an understanding of the perceived efficacy of the support. Again, percentages were calculated separately for the group who had experienced successful outcomes on all five dimensions (N=5) and those who had not (N=19). This provided an indication of whether the 'most successful' students perceived the support to be more helpful compared with those who had reported experiencing a less successful transition.

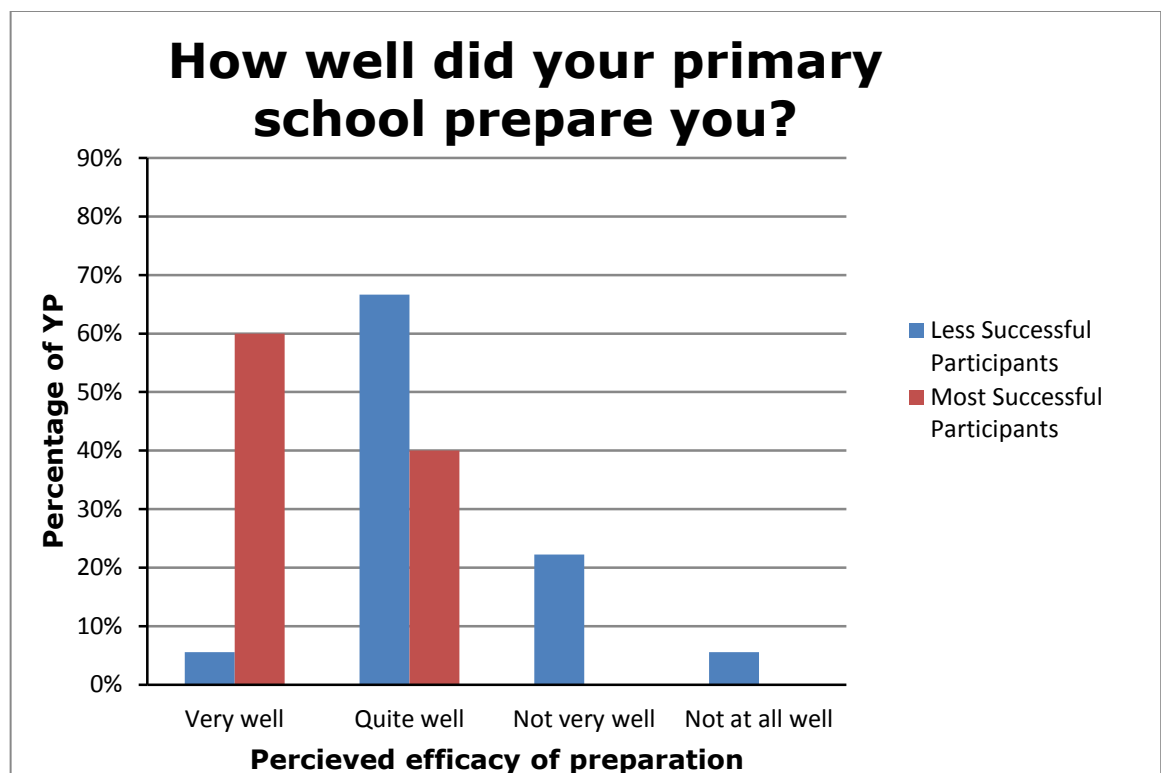


Figure 10. The perceived effectiveness of support provided by primary schools during transition.

As illustrated in Figure 3, those YP who experienced the most successful transitions rated the support they received from their primary schools more

highly than those who were less successful. The disparity between the ratings of support is evident between the two groups with 60% (N=3) of those most successful students considering they had been prepared 'very well' compared with 6% (N=1) of the less successful group.

Sixty-seven percent (N=13) of the less successful sample considered they had been prepared 'quite well'. This data suggests the majority of those students who were less successful and all of the most successful students, perceived the quality of their support to be at least adequate. However, a significant minority of five (27.8%) of the less successful students considered they had been poorly prepared.

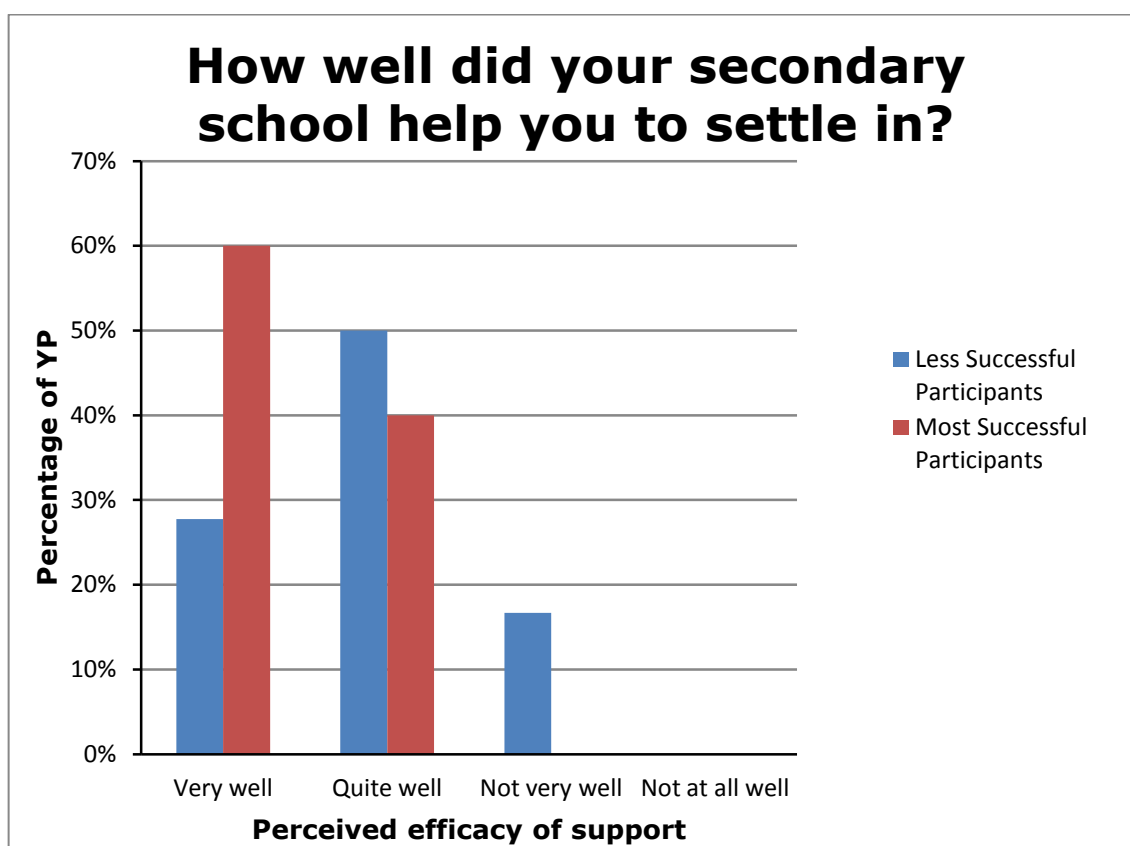


Figure 11. The perceived effectiveness of support offered by secondary schools to help students settle in.

Figure 11 illustrates that 60% (N=3) of those students who were most successful in their transition considered their secondary schools had supported them 'very well' to settle in. This compares with 28% (N=5) of the less successful participants. Half of the less successful students perceived their

secondary schools to have supported them to settle in 'quite well' and a further 16.67% (N=3) deemed the effectiveness of this support to be poor. However, none of the students considered that their secondary schools had been completely ineffective in helping them to settle.

4.3 Section 2: Qualitative Findings

The qualitative phase involved a detailed analysis of nine interview transcripts. The analysis of the qualitative data will be presented following an overview of the qualitative sample and an outline of the analytic process.

4.3.1 Qualitative Sample

The participants were selected according to their responses on the questionnaire. Those whose ratings met the parameters for 'successful transition' according to Evangelou et al (2008) were placed in the 'most successful group' (n=4). Those YP whose scores indicated they had experienced the poorest transitions comprised the 'least successful group' (n=5). The highest possible score upon the questionnaire was 66. Details of the qualitative sample are presented below.

4.3.1.1 Most Successful Group

4.3.1.1.1 Luke

Luke was in the Year 7 cohort of a large mainstream secondary school. He received support in primary and secondary school at SA+ for SEBD and in particular 'aggressive behaviour'. At secondary school the support he received included being placed on report, attending the behaviour support unit and participating in a small group intervention.

Luke's overall score on the questionnaire was 62. His scores suggest he experienced success in all areas of his transition to secondary school, indicating he experienced one of the least successful transitions to secondary school.

4.3.1.1.2 Jake

Jake was in the Year 7 cohort of a large mainstream secondary school. Jake received additional support in primary and secondary school and has a

Statement of SEN for a primary need of SEBD. Jake has a diagnosis of ADHD for which he takes medication. In addition he receives support in school for the difficulties he experiences in literacy and numeracy. Jake is also on the Child Protection Register given concerns regarding his care at home. Information acquired since completing the study states that having attended a residential centre for children with mental health problems a decision was made by social care to remove him from his family and place him in care. This was due to neglect and in particular the withholding of food from him. It is believed that these issues of neglect were present at the time of completing this research. Jake's overall score on the questionnaire was 61. His scores suggest he experienced success in all areas of his transition to secondary school, indicating he experienced one of the most successful transitions to secondary school

4.3.1.1.3 Will

Will was in the Year 7 cohort of a large mainstream secondary school. He received additional support in both primary and secondary school at SA+ for SEBD. Will has a diagnosis of ADHD and experiences some difficulties with his learning. Will is on the Child Protection Register given concerns regarding his care at home.

Will's overall score on the questionnaire was 61. His scores suggest he experienced success in all areas of his transition to secondary school, indicating he experienced one of the most successful transitions to secondary school.

4.3.1.1.4 Chris

Chris was in the Year 7 cohort of a large mainstream secondary school. Chris received additional support in both primary and secondary school at SA+ for SEBD. A central facet of this support was the counselling he received in primary school for the problems he experienced within his family.

Chris' overall score on the questionnaire was 65. His scores suggest he experienced success in all areas of his transition to secondary school, indicating he experienced one of the most successful transitions to secondary school.

4.3.1.2 Least Successful Group

4.3.1.2.1 Ben

Ben was in the Year 7 cohort of a large mainstream secondary school. Ben received support in primary and secondary school at SA+ for SEBD and Dyspraxia. Ben was receiving support from the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for attachment difficulties and anxiety at the time of data collection. A parental request for statutory assessment had recently been made and declined at the LA's SEN panel.

Ben's overall score on the questionnaire was 41, indicating he experienced one of the least successful transitions to secondary school. His scores suggest he experienced success in one area, reporting an increased interest in school and school work.

4.3.1.2.2 Lucy

Lucy was in the Year 7 cohort of a large mainstream secondary school. She received support in primary and secondary school at SA+ for SEBD. In secondary school Lucy attended a provision for vulnerable children who experienced difficulties with literacy and numeracy, for some of her lessons. Lucy was a young carer and received support from the Young Carers Group.

Lucy's overall score on the questionnaire was 49, indicating she experienced one of the least successful transitions to secondary school. Her scores suggest she experienced success in one area, reporting an increased interest in school and school work.

4.3.1.2.3 Alex

Alex was in the Year 7 cohort of a large mainstream secondary school. He received support in primary and secondary school at SA+ for SEBD and learning difficulties. Alex attended two different primary schools, moving to his second primary school to start Year 5. Alex was described as experiencing heightened levels of anxiety by his school SENCO.

Alex's overall score on the questionnaire was 38, indicating he experienced one of the least successful transitions to secondary school. His scores suggests he didn't experience success upon any of the five dimensions which comprise a successful transition.

4.3.1.2.4 Rob

Rob was in the Year 7 cohort of a large mainstream secondary school. Rob received additional support in both primary and secondary school and has a Statement of SEN for a primary need of SEBD. Rob displayed very challenging behaviour in primary school and his emotional stability was considered an area of concern. However, the SENCO at his secondary school considered that he had settled down and was doing well at secondary school. Rob was a looked after child and has now been adopted.

Rob's overall score on the questionnaire was 49, indicating he experienced one of the least successful transitions to secondary school. His scores suggest he experienced success in two areas, reporting an increased interest in school and school work and an increase in friendships and confidence.

4.3.1.2.5 Ross

Ross was in the Year 7 cohort of a large mainstream secondary school. Ross received additional support in both primary and secondary school at SA+ for SEBD and the difficulties he experiences with his hearing. Ross' Year Lead identified that Ross experienced heightened levels of anxiety.

Ross' overall score on the questionnaire was 36, indicating he experienced one of the least successful transitions to secondary school. His scores suggest he didn't experienced success upon any of the five dimensions which comprise a successful transition to secondary school.

4.3.2 Outline of Analytic Process

The framework outlined by Smith et al. (2009) (Appendix 17) guided the process of analysis, with each transcript analysed idiographically, followed by a cross-case analysis for each group. This was carried out separately in order that a comparison could be conducted between the experiential accounts of those who had the most and least successful transitions. The super-ordinate themes and their sub-themes derived from the cross-case analysis are presented sequentially, beginning with those of the most successful group. The analysis presented within this chapter reflects the researcher's interpretations of the YP's stories. Smith et al. (2009) highlight that the philosophy of hermeneutics informs

the interpretative elements of IPA. The ‘double hermeneutic’ refers to process whereby the researcher makes sense of the participant’s sense making (Smith et al., 2009). Transparency within this process has been promoted, with excerpts from participants evidencing the researcher’s interpretations.

The presentation of the qualitative findings aims to answer qualitative research question 1, ‘What are the similarities and difference between the experiences of those students who experienced the most and least successful transition?’ The analysis for the most and least successful group will be presented sequentially to allow the experiences of each group to be considered in detail. Following this the researcher will draw together the key experiential similarities and differences between the two groups.

4.3.3 The YP who experienced the most successful transitions: Presentation of themes

Analysis of the data for the most successful group resulted in the super-ordinate themes and sub-themes shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Overview of the super-ordinate themes and their sub-themes for those YP who experienced the most successful transitions.

| Super-ordinate Theme 1 | ‘Getting used to it’ |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Sub-themes | ‘It was scary at first’ ‘Cold’ to ‘hot snacks’ Grappling with behaviour management systems ‘My first term ... I think it went alright ... and then my second term went better’ |
| Super-ordinate Theme 2 | ‘Pen instead of pencil’ |
| Sub-themes | ‘They set me free’ Socialising Keeping out of trouble |
| Super-ordinate Theme 3 | ‘I got settled’ |
| Sub-themes | Feeling welcome ‘Helping you out’ |

4.3.3.1 Super-ordinate Theme 1: ‘Getting used to it’

4.3.3.1.1 Overview

Within their transition from primary to secondary school these students seemed to experience a process through which they adapted to their new surroundings. In making sense of the numerous environmental changes, the students described a process in which they adjusted how they interacted with their surroundings, shifted their expectations, and developed the skills and knowledge to navigate their new schools. ‘Getting used to it’ captures the students’ experiences of adapting to their changing environment. Prior to and upon starting their new schools the students recalled experiencing anxiety. ‘It was scary at first’ represents the initial nervousness expressed by the students.

All of the YP described the environmental and relational differences they experienced on beginning their new school, as captured in the sub-theme, ‘cold to hot snacks’. For the majority of students changes to the behaviour management systems were particularly pertinent. Efforts to make sense of these led to apparent feelings of confusion. Finally, the students discussed their experiences of adapting to their new environment, of overcoming these initial challenges. This is encapsulated by a quote from Luke ‘My first term ... I think it went alright ... and then my second term went better’.

4.3.3.1.2 ‘It was scary at first’

In describing the change process, most of the participants referred to feelings of apprehension and fear, prior to and on starting their new secondary schools. Initially this fear seemed to derive from the unknown or partially known entity that was secondary school. Each of the YP attributed their anxieties to different factors, although most related to the size or volume of people.

Chris, Will and Luke describe how their feelings of nervousness grew as the time to start their new schools approached. For Chris this mingled with excitement at starting a new chapter of his life. His account gives a sense of

nervous anticipation, characterised by him getting up as soon as he was told, on his first day.

'I ... well when we come in for the opening day and Mum was "are you scared?" and I was like "No, no, no" and then we got a look around it and I thought "Oh this is big" ... then when it was getting more closer and more closer I was getting a bit more nervous but excited. And when the day comes Mum said "X make sure you get up!" I was up as soon as she said get up' (Chris, 5/22-28).

Both Will and Luke describe their nervous anticipation in relation to the new people they would meet. Luke's narrative conveys his concerns around the possible difficulties he may experience in his peer relationships.

Interviewer: Why didn't you think it would go so well in your first term?

Luke: Cause I was moved school and I didn't know many people so like...so something might have happened between me and somebody else. Except when I got here I got to know a lot more people...erm...and it was fine (Luke, 15/25-28 and 16/1-2)

Jake describes how the first day at his new school was frightening.

Interviewer: ... what your first day was like?

Jake: I was frightened and...shy (Jake, 8/19-21)

His use of the word 'frightened' is emotive and evokes a sense that he felt vulnerable. Jake's acknowledgement of his feelings of shyness hints at the inter-subjective nature of transition and alludes to the possible difficulties he may have experienced in his interactions with others.

4.3.3.1.3 'Cold' to 'hot snacks'

All students referred to the numerous environmental and relational changes their transitions to secondary school entailed. As they made sense of their new surroundings a process of assimilation seemed to occur, whereby they began to understand the intricacies of this new system. As comparisons were drawn between primary and secondary school it seemed that some changes were experienced positively and some negatively.

When considering these changes, both Jake and Chris referred to the increased size and scale of secondary school. For Jake, the increase in size provided greater opportunity to explore and play.

Jake: It's a lot bigger.

Interviewer: Mm ... what's that like? ...

Jake: Fun ... there's more places to hide from my friends ... hiding places.

However, Chris' description evokes a sense of feeling overwhelmed by the scale of the building and the height of older students.

'Taller people ... like you'd have some Year 11s who are really, really small, like the size of us year 7s and then you'd have the ones who are really, really big and you'd have to look up at them ... and that's quite hard' (Chris, 15/25-28)

He appeared to grapple with the shift from being one of the oldest and tallest students in primary school, to being one of youngest and smallest in secondary school.

Will provided an enthusiastic description of the increased choice of food available in the canteen, which differed from the restricted selection of cold snacks available at primary school.

'Like you're allowed to go to canteen ... and like buy stuff but in the old school you was only allowed to buy snacks ... like cold stuff... and I didn't really like that much but now you're allowed to buy hot snacks and stuff' (Will, 11/16-19)

His repeated use of the word 'allowed' indicates a growing sense of freedom and autonomy in secondary school.

4.3.3.1.4 Grappling with behaviour management systems

With the discontinuities between the pastoral care systems of primary and secondary schools (Powell, Smith, Jones & Reakes, 2006) the majority of students experienced confusion in attempting to make sense of their new schools' approach to managing behaviour. For some, interactions with pastoral care systems seemed to be more regular than for others. In addition, the students' attitudes appeared to differ in response to these systems with some

perceiving them to have encroached on their freedom, while others highlighted the support they provided in keeping them out of trouble.

Chris described his experiences of being on various types of report throughout Year 7. He highlighted the confusion this system engendered while valuing the opportunity to have conversations about his behaviour.

Chris: But I've been put on report for my behaviour...because in some lessons I'm not very well behaved and I'm on head of year. And so that means instead of being on my form report, I'm on the one up after that and ... and that was red or green ... so one of the worst ones on that certain report...on behaviour...because I don't really behave well in lessons. Because I get...I don't know the word for it...I'll try and think of it now. It's where you can't concentrate...

Interviewer: Erm... distracted?

Chris: That's the one. I get really distracted and it's quite hard.

Interviewer:...What's it like being on report?

Chris: It's Ok ... it kind of makes you have to behave...because I've been on so many reports and so many bad reports and stuff...like I've been on the worst which is Deputy Head of year. No not ... Deputy Principal report.

Interviewer: OK.

Chris: So that's where you're not on [Head Teacher]'s report, cause [Head Teacher] doesn't have a report he has...it gets so confusing (Chris, 10/15-35)

Luke's experience of being on report was similar to that of Chris'. He seemed to consider it to be a helpful tool to ensure he behaved well.

'That's like well good cause when you're on report you've got to be good in every lesson ... perfect or you've got to go in the BSU (Behaviour Support Unit) and I don't want to go there like ... and the report helps to be good in your lesson and helps you to not be naughty ... and like get in trouble' (Luke, 22/21-26)

The YP's narratives around schools systems revealed an additional layer to the pastoral care systems at secondary school which seemed to involve being sent to 'Isolation' or the 'BSU'. Chris, Luke and Jake described the cramped conditions and the experience of being separated from their peers. For Jake this seemed to evoke feelings of imprisonment.

Jake: ...I already knew they had isolation and I didn't want to go isolation cause isolation was boring ... like hell. Cause all you do is just sit in there all day...till 5 past four...till after school. Would you like that...to sit after school? (Jake, 27/5-7)

In contrast Chris highlighted a helpful aspect of attending Inclusion.

'I don't mind it cause it's just quiet' (Chris, 12/3)

4.3.3.1.5 'My first term ... I think it went alright ... and then my second term went better'

The students' experiential accounts suggest they were able to overcome many of the initial challenges discussed above. Within this process, most acknowledged the role that time played. As time passed their experience of school evolved and a sense of belonging seemed to develop. This process of 'settling' was characterised by differing experiences for each participant.

Will described his experiences of overcoming the many fears he held on starting his new school. In facing the things he had been afraid of he noted that his fears were unfounded.

Will: I thought the work would be hard...but when I moved into it...erm...I started to like the work.

Interviewer:...so you thought it was going to be scary...what did you think would be scary?

Will: Like the work...the work if I didn't finish it all...but I always finish my work.

Interviewer: What did you think would happen if you didn't finish your work?

Will: Erm...that I'd get told off...but I didn't (Will, 3/23-31)

The experience of successfully overcoming his fears seemed to empower Will and he recommends that future secondary school students give things a go.

Jake's experience of adapting to his new school is exemplified by his newly acquired skills and attitude towards art.

Jake: I'm not sure. I didn't like art ... but now I do.

Interviewer: Ok ... so why didn't you like art in primary school?

Jake: I didn't know how to draw... but now I do (Jake, 4/11-13)

His repetition of 'but now I do' emphasises the progress he made and seems to imply a sense of accomplishment. The process of learning this skill and his changing opinion suggests he experienced an internal shift in response to his changing surroundings.

For Chris it seems that knowing his way around secondary school played an important part in enabling him to successfully adjust to this new environment. Chris notes the role of practice in getting to know his way around, comparing his use of a diary within his first few weeks, to his subsequent in-depth knowledge of the school layout. This seems to engender a sense of growing competence.

'Ok but...like the first few times you'd get lost and have to look in your diary and now you know one to three places to get to a certain place. Like three ways...'
(Chris, 7/2-7)

Luke's descriptions of how he coped with his changing environment can be seen in his attitude towards the changing structure and timings of his school day.

Interviewer: ...And what were those changes like?...(Pause)...How did you find them?

Luke: Well the day felt like it went quicker but...when you got to lunch time it...it was 20 past one...but that's an hour and twenty minutes later than we used to. So we had to get used to this lunch time, but I'm quite used to now. (Luke, 14/24-29 and 15/1)

Again Luke notes that although this was initially tricky to contend with, the passing of time and resultant repeated exposure enabled him to get used to this differing timetable.

4.3.3.2 Super-ordinate Theme 2: 'Pen instead of pencil'

4.3.3.2.1 Overview

'Pen instead of pencil' explores the participants' experiences of personal development and growth which emerged in response to their transitions. Transition seemed to signify a shift away from childhood and into adolescence, a poignant marker along the journey of 'growing up'. For the students this growing up seemed to involve a developing sense of independence and confidence, encouraged by key adults in and out of school who placed higher expectations upon the students, providing them a new found sense of freedom. In successfully navigating their transition and embracing their increased independence, the students' confidence seemed to have blossomed. Interwoven within this are positive experiences of making new friends. Social aspects of school seemed to be of critical importance to most students, with Luke highlighting the experience of 'becom(ing) more social'. In addition, two of the students noted the improvement in their emotional well-being and behaviour in secondary school. Keeping out of trouble appeared to represent a growing desire to take responsibility for their actions.

4.3.3.2.2 'They set me free'

In their move to secondary school some of students noticed a shift in the level of independence they experienced. This appeared to result from changing expectations, new opportunities, and a sense of knowing what to do. Increasing independence seemed to be associated with growing up and comprises part of the secondary student identity.

Having experienced a lack of autonomy and an overwhelming level of support at primary school, Luke described the transformative effect of becoming a secondary school student. He reveled in his new found independence and acknowledged that he himself has changed, 'they like change you'.

'When you're younger you get like more teacher help...like they help you more. Like when your here...like you learn to be independent and do it yourself' (Luke, 6/19-22)

The use of the word 'they' indicates the collaborative nature of this process, hinting at the role of adult support in enabling his independence.

For Will, a new found sense of independence resulted from shifting adult expectation and a growing understanding of how to complete his work independently. Will seemed to feel a sense of pride, which suggests he experienced a level of empowerment in being able to complete his work without adult support.

'I didn't used to the lessons...till I got settled in so now I can work ind...independently...cause I know what I'm doing' (Will, 11/33-35)

Jake and Chris' narratives provided a more mixed picture, with an apparent sense of entrapment and being monitored, merging with a sense of excitement over new found opportunities and choice. Jake's positive experiences of schooling all reflected an element of choice or freedom to do 'anything we want'. This was epitomised by his description of them 'set(ing) me free' when discussing the experience of school staff ceasing their escorting of him between lessons.

Jake: ...a couple of days ago...they.. a couple of days or week...they set me free.

Interviewer: what was that like?

Jake: Good (Jake, 16/10-20).

As with Luke, Jake alluded to role of adults in supporting his new found sense of freedom by stating '*they* set me free'.

4.3.3.2.3 Socialising

All students referred to peer relationships within their narratives of transition. Having the opportunity to make new friends seemed to be relished by the YP. Initial anxieties around whether friendships would be established seemed to

dissipate on arrival as they successfully navigated the process of getting to know new people.

For Chris meeting 'more and more' people seemed to instill feelings of confidence. In carving out his place within his social group, Chris described the process by which students learn where they fit within the social hierarchy.

'You have people who are either stronger or weaker than you. You kind of get in a few fights...and then that's kind of to work out who's the top person and who's the bottom person...that's it' (Chris, 18/22-25)

He was pleased with his position of 8th out of around 300 students, which derived from having popular friends.

Interviewer : ...how do you know if you're popular?

Chris: Cause you have more people round you at the one time.

Interviewer: Ok...so what's it like being number 8?

Chris: Ok...you're in the top 10...so it's ok (Chris, 19/17-20)

His ranking system seemed to provide a clear framework through which he perceived himself in relation to others and experienced his social encounters within secondary school. In judging others as weaker Chris seemed to experience a boost to his own self-esteem.

For Luke and Will getting to know people played an important role in helping them to feel settled, with Luke discussing the experience of 'becom(ing) more social'. Will described a process whereby he would say "hello" to people and they would say "hello" back, enabling him to get to know them.

'Cause ... I started to talk to them. Say "hello" and then they say "hello" back ... but now they talk to me and say "hello" and now I know them' (Will, 10/11-13).

In contrast, Jake rarely referred to his peers and when he did this was not in the context of friendship, but in terms of knowing them or being bullied by them.

Interviewer: Were they your friends or just people that you knew?

Jake: Just people I knew...and that knew me (Jake, 10/3-11)

Jake's experiential account of moving to secondary school seems to indicate that he feels a level of ambivalence towards his peers. They are not referred to as a source of support or happiness. This may reflect his experiences of being 'kicked around' the classroom.

Interviewer: What do they do that's horrible?

Jake: Kick me about in the classroom ... kick me around (Jake, 25/3-4)

4.3.3.2.4 Keeping out of trouble

For Chris and Luke trying to keep out of trouble comprised a large part of their transition experience. Both boys received support in primary school for the challenging behaviour they presented, yet seemed to be attempting to 'kind of really calm(ed) down' in secondary school. They appeared to be taking greater responsibility for their actions and keeping out of trouble, which seemed to have a positive impact upon their experience of schooling.

Luke discussed how initially he found himself 'in trouble' at his new secondary school, which was a scary experience.

Luke: ...I've been in trouble for fighting before...

...

Interviewer: And what was that like?

Luke: erm well the first time I was like quite scared...erm but the second time I knew what I'd done wrong so I didn't do it again (Luke, 21/1-8)

He made sense of these early 'scary' experiences by considering them a means of learning what was expected of him and who to stay away from, a way of testing the boundaries.

'Because erm...like we knew where we was going...like we knew the people that we didn't mix...like we didn't...that we weren't friends with. And they didn't get along with us and so we could stay away from them and not get in trouble' (Luke, 16/11-15)

In comparing this with primary school experiences, where he was forced to work with those he did not get on with, his narrative of secondary school peer conflicts suggested he felt he had the space and choice to 'stay away' from those he had difficulties with. This seemed to enable him to 'keep out of trouble'.

Chris described the difficulties he experienced in becoming distracted, causing him to get into trouble in class.

'Because I don't really behave well in lessons' (Chris, 10/20)

He felt fearful that he would 'turn out like my brother' who he described in terms of the angry behaviour he displayed. This suggests that Chris was concerned he too would become defined by his 'getting angry'. Instead he talked about taking things into his own hands in order to improve his behaviour.

Chris: I don't know...I just try not to get in as many fights. Cause in Year 6 I got into a lot, this year I've got into none. I had one right at the start of the year...well that...well I got into one. But that was right at the start of the year when this person was pushing me around, so I just kind of like threw him on the floor. But that's the only one I've had this year.

Interviewer: And what's it like not fighting as much?

Chris: It's good (Chris, 4/11-19)

Chris also highlighted that he felt calmer at secondary school as he was no longer bullied.

4.3.3.3 Theme 3: 'I got settled'

4.3.3.3.1 Overview

'I got settled' captures the role that others played in supporting the students to settle into their new schools. For the students, great value was placed upon the support they received during transition. For the majority of participants this support began in primary school, where they were prepared for what was to come. The students were also provided with opportunities to visit their secondary schools through open evenings, transition days, or individualised transition support. These visits were deemed helpful in supporting them to become familiar with their schools but also to feel excited about their future. On

arriving at their secondary schools the importance of 'feeling welcome' was highlighted. The continuation of this support throughout their first year was valued, where teachers were predominantly perceived as people who 'help you out'. Positive relationships with school staff seemed to be of great importance to students when considering how they settled into their new schools.

4.3.3.3.2 Feeling welcome

'Feeling welcome' refers to the importance the YP ascribed to being made to feel at home in their new schools. The support they received to settle in was greatly valued whether that be practical, in the form of being shown around, or emotional, in having someone to speak to. For most this support began in Year 6 in the form of visits. Both Will and Jake completed a number of individual visits to their secondary schools prior to starting. These were experienced as 'fun'.

Jake: We walked around the whole school and came here.

Interviewer: ...and what did you do in here (meeting room)?

Jake: Chat.

Interviewer: ...can you remember what you talked about?

Jake: It was ...like 'did you like walking around school?'

Interviewer: ...what did you think about that ... when you came to see him (Transition worker)?

Jake: Fun (Jake, 7/14-22)

Jake and Will also visited their new school with their prospective Year 7 cohorts. Completing transition visits was a shared experience across the group and was seen as an opportunity to engage in fun activities and meet their new teachers and peers.

Will: When I came for a visit our whole school came ... and we went to like to the DT block to build the biggest tower ... I can't remember who won it ... I know our tower was the biggest but ... I don't know if somebody else's was the biggest or ...

Interviewer: ...what was that like when you did that?

Will: Fun (Will, 5/5-9).

For Luke, a key factor in supporting him to feel 'comfortable' in his new school, as both a visitor and a Year 7 student, related to how welcoming the school staff and older students were.

Luke: It was good cause you had all the teachers stand at the door and you went into each classroom and they'd shake your hand and...like welcome you.

Interviewer: ...and what did that feel like?

Luke: felt like you could ... like you could go into the classroom like...if they didn't like say hi to you or welcome you in you'd think...they're not very nice (Luke, 10/20-26)

Another source of support for Luke, Chris and Will derived from the experience of starting secondary school with friends. They seemed to feel a sense of reassurance of being in it together.

'I didn't feel worried cause I had my friends with me...like cause if...if I'd come to this school on my own I probably would...would be a bit more worried...but I had my friends with me...and like if anything happened we was all together so I wasn't really worried about getting lost or anything like that' (Luke, 12/22-24).

For the students this support network seemed to be highly valuable, promoting a sense of a collective experience of moving to secondary school.

4.3.3.3 'Helping you out'

Supportive relationships with school staff were considered by the YP to be a helpful resource in their transition. It is clear that not all student-teacher relationships were positive, however in having just one member of staff to turn to the students seemed to experience a sense of comfort and of being a valued member of the community.

Chris' relationships with his teachers appeared to be mixed. He felt that some disliked him and 'look(ed) over your shoulder', while others 'help you out' by

taking the time to talk. It seemed that in perceiving some adults as trustworthy and available, Chris was happy to seek them out for emotional support.

'You can go talk to people. Like I talk to [Member of staff] about family problems a lot cause...yeah' (Chris, 10/2-3)

Jake highlights the value he placed upon 'strict' teachers who he considered to be a source of protection from peers who kicked him around in the classroom.

Jake: He's...erm...strict...[IT teacher].

Interviewer: is that a good thing that he's strict?

Jake: Yeah cause then people might stop being mean to me (Jake, 19/20-22)

Luke discussed how his secondary teachers facilitated a growth in his confidence. For Luke this seemed to be represented by his willingness to put his hand up in class to answer questions.

'Like they ... encourage you to do new things so you got more confident ... like to do new things' (Luke, 17/16-17)

Finally, Will credited the teaching staff at his new school with helping him to settle. He highlighted their role in supporting him to get used to the work, make friends, and find his way around.

'They helped me work and ... helped me get new friends' (Will, 12/16-17)

4.3.4 The YP who experienced the least successful transitions: Presentation of themes

Analysis of the data for the least successful group resulted in the super-ordinate themes and sub-themes shown in 4.2.

Table 4.2: Overview of the super-ordinate themes and their sub-themes for those YP who reported experiencing the least successful transitions

| Super-ordinate Theme 1 | Acclimatising |
|------------------------|---|
| Sub-themes | Feeling anxious 'It was a lot different' |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| | 'I managed to deal with it' |
| Super-ordinate Theme 2 | Craving Support |
| Sub-themes | Feeling unprepared Supported and less supported beginnings |
| Super-ordinate Theme 3 | Friends and Bullies |
| Sub-themes | Importance of Friendship From 'playing' to 'hanging out' – shifting friendships 'Problematic' Peers |

4.3.4.1 Super-ordinate Theme 1: Acclimatising

4.3.4.1.1 Overview

Within their primary to secondary transition all of the students experienced the change process as challenging, yet something which they moved through and managed. 'Acclimatising' captures the way in which the participants made sense of the changes imposed upon them and the emotional responses these induced. In discussing how they personally experienced the change process, stories of personal development and self-awareness emerged. 'Feeling anxious' describes the feelings of nervousness the students experienced during their transition and beyond. For some it seemed that anxiety was embedded within their educational and life experiences, as opposed to being a temporary emotional response to transition. The environmental changes were discussed and perceived in comparison to the YP's experiences of primary school, highlighting the apparent magnitude of change. 'I managed to deal with it' reflects the students' experiences of managing the transition, their emotions, and these environmental changes. This fine-grained analysis of their experiences of transition provides a nuanced account from which stories of success emerged.

4.3.4.1.2 Feeling anxious

All participants referred to feeling anxious or scared prior to and on starting their new school. For some these feelings of anxiety were transient, for others they persisted throughout their first year, and for a minority, anxiety seemed to colour their entire experience of education.

Rob and Lucy appeared to experience more fluctuating periods of anxiety in response to transition. Lucy described her experiences of 'really, really worry(ing)' prior to beginning secondary school.

'Cause I thought...when I first came here I thought it would be like really big and like...scary. And when I got here I thought it's actually not too bad. Cause I was really, really worrying about it and then when I actually got...when I actually got in the school...er I didn't...er I was like to myself "Why are you gonna be scared for?"' (Lucy, 6/5-12)

Despite her reassuring self-talk Lucy went on to note that her anxiety continued into her first term with her wondering what was going to happen 'every like...minute'.

Alex described a sense of surprise that he hadn't been feeling scared about his transition until a secondary school teacher, who appeared particularly strict visited his primary school.

'Well...I thought...I wasn't actually too scared about it...but then we had these people in from [SEC SCHOOL]...and and they were talking about it...and the thing that kind of really scared me, was the detentions' (Alex, 4/7-10)

Alex differentiated feeling scared from being 'nervous'. Feeling scared seemed to be a more transient experience whereas being nervous appeared to be internalised and considered part of his identity. He traced this back to experiences in his past, namely being bullied.

'I am pretty nervous' (Alex, 10/19)

Ben also highlighted the role anxiety played in his experience of transition but also of school more generally. Ben reflected upon his experience of being in crowds and the anxiety this evoked. In the lead up to and on joining his new

school the increase in the number of students was a particular cause for concern.

'I was a little bit worried about the people, because sometimes I get really anxious in lots of groups of people' (Ben, 5/18-20)

Like Alex, Ben's experience of anxiety seemed to exist as a more on-going presence in his life, rather than a transient feeling brought about by transition. Ross also experienced periods of sadness and worry throughout his education. In his first year of secondary school, fluctuating sadness seemed to be associated with feeling as though he didn't belong. He appeared to struggle to make sense of this, searching for reasons why this sadness had overwhelmed him.

Ross: It's better than when I was more sadder when I was more down here (pointing at 'unsettled' end of the scale)...when I was sad at Christmas. So it feels a lot better.

Interviewer: ...and how is school now?

Ross: Erm...erm...better I feel like I belong in it. Back then I didn't feel like I belonged in it (Ross, 14/30-36)

4.3.4.1.3 'It was a lot different'

The students referred to the numerous and sometimes overwhelming differences between their primary and secondary schools.

'It kind of felt like all of the rooms felt really ... they smelt really different ... and the whole feel of the school felt different ... completely different to our school' (Ross, 7/17-20).

Many of their descriptions suggest they were confronted with frightening crowds of people and extensive corridors which were nonsensical in their layout. Rob refers to his experience of being presented with numerous doors from which he must select the correct one. His descriptions engender a sense of disorientation and confusion.

Rob: ...it was like weird cause there was like loads of doors and stuff ... like numbers and letters on them and I just had to match the right one and walk into it.

Interviewer: ...how did you find those changes?

Rob: I found them a bit more difficult cause you've got to find the right door and like...and in my primary school there was only like 6 doors (Rob, 8/284-286 and 9/287-290)

Alex, along with others, stressed the challenge of attending such a big school with crowds of people who may 'knock you over'.

Interviewer: ...what's it like being at school with more people?

Alex: It was kind of of frustrating and scary...cause you've got like 18 year olds and 15 year olds and their all like packed tight in the hall way and we're in the middle ... and you're worried that someone's going to knock you over and you'd fall (Alex, 15/1-7)

Ben cited the increase in responsibility and choice as the most salient difference between primary and secondary school. For Ben, this increase in responsibility seemed to be an added and overwhelming pressure which he didn't always feel comfortable with.

'Well it's different...a lot different because its erm...its...there's more people erm...more choice and more responsibility...erm in your lessons to get the work done' Ben (15/27-29)

For Lucy, contending with the differing pastoral care system was the most problematic change. Lucy struggled to make sense of this complex system which she felt did not support her adequately.

'Because they get us down and like...talks to us...but it doesn't really help that much because...it make them say to you that it's worse. They say that you're a snitch...that "Oh you go and tell on me" and all that...and so I think why can't we just sort it out ourselves? It's not them who's getting bullied by them. It's us.'
(Lucy, 14/15-20)

In adopting a critical stance Lucy questions rather than simply accepts this incomprehensible system, yet seems to feel powerless to effect change.

4.3.4.1.4 *'I managed to deal with it'*

In completing their transition to secondary school all students were forced to face their fears around this change. Over time an acclimatisation seemed to have occurred whereby the students managed to over-come many of their fears and anxieties to eventually 'get used to it'. Ben highlighted the varied nature of this process.

Interviewer: ...how were those changes?

Ben: Erm...some of them were really hard and others were alright (Ben, 10/12-14)

For Rob, overcoming his fear of getting lost comprised a major part of his settling in. Rob developed strategies to ensure he could find his way around, choosing to rely on his friends rather than adults.

'Erm I...I was a bit scared and I thought I was going to get in trouble because I didn't really know...but I followed the other people that like knew where they were going and...I sort of got in a pattern...and I got used to it. I don't really know...I still don't really know where to go know but I just check with my friends and they'll like say "oh we have this"' (Rob, 7/221-227)

Ross reflected that his initial worries were unfounded as he had failed to take into account the fact that he himself would have changed also. In growing up he felt better equipped to deal with the heightened demands of secondary school.

'I thought it would be a lot more difficult...I didn't really realise that I would get older so it would be less difficult' (Ross, 5/9-11)

For Lucy, overcoming her worries was enabled by a gradual entry into secondary school which helped her to 'feel more better'. Within this process Lucy described how she used the opportunity of joining a large busy school to face her fears and overcome her claustrophobia.

Lucy: So then you get used to it. And because I don't like...don't like like big...like...erm...like if I was in this room I wouldn't like it if there was like loads of people in here. Claustrophobic. Yeah...and now...because they like put me in little classes and then they like gradually joined...so I erm got used to it now.

Interviewer: Mmm

Lucy: So I feel more better (Lucy, 8/27 and 9/1-4)

Despite the positive experiences discussed by Lucy, she seemed unclear as to whether she felt settled in her new secondary school, stating 'probably...I'm fine with it now'.

Alex also experienced some uncertainty. He provided vivid descriptions which conveyed how overwhelmed he felt during his transition, revealing an element of vulnerability and continued insecurity.

Alex: Erm its pretty good...it was pretty good... it is pretty good.

Interviewer: ...why was it good?

Alex: Well cause like...I haven't been bullied severely yet...and...and it's been kind of nice like that...yeah and the subjects haven't been too bad...the teachers haven't been too bad...except one and I don't go to his lesson now...German (Alex, 15/21-30)

Looking back Alex cited relief at not being bullied 'too severely yet' which not only suggested that this posed a risk but also that he was experiencing low level bullying.

4.3.4.2 Super-ordinate Theme 2: Craving Support

4.3.4.2.1 Overview

In discussing the support they received during their transition, these participants highlighted the differences in quality and quantity of support provided by their primary and secondary schools. In particular the students noted the absence of preparatory support in relation to the social and emotional aspects of transition. 'Feeling unprepared' reflects the students' frustrations at the unhelpful nature of the support provided by their primary schools in the build up to their transition.

A more mixed picture was presented of the support provided by their secondary schools to settle in. For most the identification of a key adult with whom they could share any worries provided great comfort. Where this was lacking, the distress it caused the student was evident. 'Supported and less supported beginnings' aims to capture the variation in YP's experiences of such support. Interwoven within the narratives of both positive and negative experiences of support was the value the students' ascribed to feeling supported. This conveyed a sense of 'craving' support which met their needs.

4.3.4.2.2 Feeling unprepared

The majority of participants appeared to be disappointed by the lack of preparation for their transition, attributing this failure to their primary schools. Rob felt his primary school didn't do anything helpful and instead he had to prepare himself.

Interviewer: ...what do you think the primary school could have done?

Rob: They could have like set us like activities...like more activities. I think they did prepare us...but not that good. I think they could have done better. Cause we should have done like...lessons on it. Like how to avoid being like...bullied and stuff...in case people got bullied at secondary school...luckily no one has (Rob, 5/147-154)

This description suggests Rob craved information about his new school, wanting to be taught how to cope with his transition.

Ross too felt let down by his primary school, who he felt could have done a better job at preparing him. Instead he had to take responsibility for his own preparation.

'I don't think they did prepare me very well...I think it was more me...and...erm...me and...more my brother cause he had to go up for various things around the school' (Ross, 6/19-22)

Ross described visiting secondary school throughout his time at primary, suggesting the missing support pertained to the emotional impact of transition. Both Ben and Alex concurred, highlighting the lack of reassurance they were

given. To counteract this Ben would have liked the teachers provide more individualised emotional support.

Interviewer: ...how could they prepare you better?

Ben: erm...if they gave erm...like not exactly speeches...like if they...if a student was worrying they could give them like a one to one talk or something and reach out more to the class (Ben, 6/28-34)

In contrast Lucy felt the support she received from her primary school helped her to settle. She noted the value of completing Year 7 work in Year 6 and having the differing expectations of her secondary school laid out by visiting secondary teachers.

Lucy: Well...it got settled in like...like I said when people came in here...and some went back to our other school. They like did stuff that we would do in this school. Like they got some work from here...and bought it over to there.. and this teacher...and then this teacher came to our school...

...

Interviewer: ...How was that helpful?

Lucy: Cause he'd tell you how to behave and if you didn't behave in that way then you'd get told off. And he basically explained that it's a lot stricter than what it is...at primary school. (Lucy, 12/17-27 and 13/1-5)

4.3.4.2.3 Supported and less supported beginnings

On arriving at their new secondary schools there seemed to be a shift in the participants' narratives regarding support. They all identified support that had been put in place to help them settle into their new schools, and the majority highlighted the benefits of this. Lucy discussed the value of the support she received which enabled her a gradual entry into secondary school, allowing her to 'feel more better'.

'They like put me in little classes and then they like gradually joined...so I erm got used to it now' (Lucy, 8/27 and 9/1)

Despite valuing this support Lucy discussed at length her experiences of dismissive secondary school staff who failed to provide any form of social or emotional support. For Lucy this seemed to be a distressing experience which left her feeling as though she had nowhere to turn.

'Cause when you go and tell them about something they go "(tut) this again"...like that. And then it feels to us like they don't really care...they just don't want anyone to come to them about their problems (Lucy, 16/18-22)

Conversely, Rob experienced kindness from his teachers when he first started and particularly valued this. He noted that as the students settled, the teachers readjusted their expectations and became 'stricter'.

'The teachers were being like kind and helping us...they did make it very much more relaxed so we settle in...they weren't strict like on the first week cause like they were just letting us settle...in. Then they got stricter...but they're fine' (Rob, 9/302-306)

For Ross the gradual nature of his transition, in which secondary school teachers built up their homework and expectations, ensured a more enjoyable experience. In comparison to primary school, Ross appeared to find his new lessons more engaging and noted the teachers' level of preparation. However, the most valuable support for Ross was that of being listened to by key members of staff, as this engendered a sense of belonging in his new school.

'She...if you tell her your problems she'll normally find some way to fix it or make it better. Or at least sometimes I haven't felt that what she's done has helped, but sometimes it just makes me feel more confident to tell...her' (Ross, 15/8-12).

Finally, although Alex seemed to be less enamored by the support he received, his narrative around the role of secondary teachers suggests he perceived them to be protectors of the Year 7 'flock'.

'Cause I...in my old school I had like a lot of emotional stuff...cause of being bullied and that...but now I can like tell people...and they can sort it out...like [SENCO]' (Alex, 19/27-30)

Alex felt comforted by the improvement in the emotional support offered to him, whereby he had members of staff he could speak to about his worries and knew issues would be addressed.

4.3.4.3 Super-ordinate Theme 3: Friends and Bullies

4.3.4.3.1 Overview

For all students, peer relationships seemed to be a major factor in their experience of moving to secondary school. From initial fears regarding the risk of social exclusion, to drawing support from longer term friendships, and feeling excited at building new relationships, the social element of transition appeared to be highly salient to the YP. 'Importance of friendships' aims to highlight the value the students placed upon developing and maintaining friendships and the comfort and support they derived from them. On moving to secondary school some students experienced shifts within old friendship groups and differences in the way they socialised, as discussed in 'From 'playing' to 'hanging out' - shifting friendships'. Finally, embedded within some of the students narratives are stories of being bullied. 'Problematic peers' captures the social difficulties experienced by these YP and the sense they have made of being victimised.

4.3.4.3.2 Importance of Friendships

The experience of making new friends appeared to be an empowering, liberating, and exciting one for Rob, Ben and Alex and was seemingly crucial to feeling settled. Rob noted that it felt 'really good' to meet new people and appeared to experience a sense of relief at having successfully developed new friendships.

Rob: ...and then I started to make new friends.

Interviewer: And how was that?

Rob: It was...it was...when I first made friends with my first friend...he...it was really...I felt a bit more relaxed (Rob, 7/237-241)

In advice to prospective secondary school students, Rob advocated taking the time to develop a 'good bond' with other students in order that they might make friends.

Ben described the meeting of new people and the making of new friends as 'the fun part' of his transition.

'And the fun parts was that I...I get to see a lot of...make a lot more friends and different people' (Ben, 16/20-21)

For Ben friendships appeared to be a vital source of support. Both he and Alex highlighted the importance of not only making new friends but moving to secondary school with old friends. They seemed to find reassurance in having others to share in this experience.

Interviewer: And what was it like having friends from your primary school come with you?

Alex: It was reassuring...it was pretty good (Alex, 14/3-5)

For Ben it ensured he would not have to spend initial break and lunch times alone. In addition where he experienced difficulties with other peers he was able to seek out his old friends for support.

'...some of the other boys didn't really like me that much and some of the other girls were giving me grief as well. But erm...I was still erm...sticking to some of my friends' (Ben, 9/10-14)

His use of the word 'sticking' seems to convey the attachment Ben feels towards his friends and the sense of security this engenders.

4.3.4.3.3 From 'playing' to 'hanging out' – shifting friendships

As well as treasuring old friendships, some participants grappled with shifting friendship groups. Prior to beginning secondary school some students experienced this as a source of concern, primarily that they would be left with no friends. For others the breaking apart of such groups became reality. This sub-theme aims to capture how the participants made sense of this as well as the

changing narrative around how they interacted with their peers as secondary school students.

For Ross, the breaking apart of his friendship group seemed to be an uncomfortable experience.

'This is something I thought was a bit bad...all my friends from primary school.. it's kind of felt a bit more split up cause one of my friends has gone to a completely different form...then it's me and two of my friends in the same form. And then me and my other friend haven't gotten on too well...lately. So it kind of feels like it's all breaking apart' (Ross, 15/24-30)

This reflects yet another change with which he must contend. Both Rob and Ben had initial concerns that they might experience a break up in their friendships; however for them this fear was unfounded.

'It was...I'm really glad I did move and I really was happy when I settled in...cause you know I was scared I might like get bullied or something...or have no friends and all my old friends would go off with new friends and the new friends would really annoy me which would be awkward. But everything turned out fine' (Rob, 12/417-422)

Instead Rob highlighted the differences in socialising, moving from descriptions of playing in primary school to 'hanging out' in secondary school. For Rob this move to 'hanging out' appeared to symbolise a change within the way he and his peers interacted but may have also signified a growing up.

'It's really nice cause we all hang out at break...and then I hang out with other people in the lesson and that...and I actually...that I'm also friends with and then on the playground I hang out with them all at once' (Rob, 8/255-258)

4.3.4.3.4 'Problematic' Peers

While great value is placed upon friendships as a source of support, there are a handful who also described problematic relationships. Lucy, Alex and Ben experienced bullying and victimisation at the hands of their peers both in

primary and secondary school. These incidents were particularly pertinent to students and seemed to colour their experiences of schooling. For some the longer lasting impact upon their emotional well-being could still be seen where, in making sense of any anxieties, they were able to trace these back to earlier experiences of bullying.

Ben experienced an extended period of bullying in primary school. He painted a vivid picture of one particularly traumatic incident which sprung to mind when recalling his experiences of primary school.

'It really upset me a lot and it made me...it was very stressful and I was at school in the last years of school, it just erm...there was one erm...very dangerous erm...bullying attempt...when were swimming someone pushed me under the water and erm...I managed to get out before, but erm...but he was really pushing my head down' (Ben, 4/17-19)

His narrative is emotive and conveys some of the panic he was feeling as he struggled to raise his head above water; literally feeling his grasp on life was threatened.

Both Lucy and Alex experienced bullying in both primary and secondary school, suffering verbal and physical abuse at the hands of their peers. Lucy felt that being bullied 'made my life worse' and struggled to find ways to cope with it effectively. Added frustrations around a lack of helpful pastoral support left her grappling to make sense of what was happening to her.

'Not them who's getting bullied over it...its me...and if they're doing it to me' (Lucy, 14/11-12)

Alex described how the humiliation he experienced at the hands of his bullies coloured his memories of primary school and the expectations he had of his secondary school. Alex continued to find some of his peers intimidating and seemed to experience frequent victimisation.

'...in maths because this boy called [BOY 1] and [BOY 2]...yeah...and [BOY 1] is probably the most problematic because he is nasty to me. He hit me with a pen

on there...twice...er...and he...he does different things each time. He calls me a retard' (Alex, 11/24-28)

In attempting to make sense of the bullying he has experienced Alex reflects upon the emotional damage it has caused him, attributing his nervousness to these experiences.

4.3.3 Similarities and Differences between the Groups

In carrying out an analysis of the qualitative data it has been possible to note the similarities and differences between those students who reported experiencing the most and least successful transitions. In conducting a fine grained analysis of the data, stories of success from participants in both groups have been drawn out. It has also been possible to identify differences between the two groups at a number of levels: within-child, within their peer and teacher relationships, and in their experiences of support. In conducting a comparison it was hoped that the mechanisms which either support or hinder the transition to secondary school for YP with SEBD would be elucidated. A summary of these key points of comparison are presented below:

- The narratives of those least successful students indicated they experienced heightened levels of anxiety which had an on-going presence in their lives (Alex - *'I am pretty nervous'*). Further, a larger number of participants in this group were also experiencing, or had experienced, bullying (Lucy - *'Not them who's getting bullied over it ... it's me and if they're doing it to me'*). This suggests that YP with SEBD who have experienced bullying and heightened levels of anxiety may be at greatest risk of negative transition experiences and outcomes.
- In considering the qualitative differences between the personal characteristics of the groups it was hypothesised that those YP who had identified themselves as most successful, were those who exhibited more externalising behavioural problems. It may be that the structure of secondary school better supported the YP with SEBD of this nature,

providing them with the space to stay away from ‘problematic peers’, the opportunity to change teacher regularly, the chance to have a short break as they walked between lessons, and the ability to shed any negative expectations.

- It seems that some differences between the groups can be attributed to a readiness to attend secondary school. Those in the most successful group talked about embracing the freedom, independence, and opportunities to socialise that secondary school offered (Luke - *‘And when you’re younger you get like more teacher help ... like they help you more. Like when your here ... like you learn to be independent and do it yourself’*). They seemed ready for transition and a fresh start. Those in the least successful group seemed to find secondary school more overwhelming and daunting, suggesting a lack of readiness for the additional responsibilities (Ben - *‘Well it’s different ... a lot different because its erm ... its ... there’s more people erm ... more choice and more responsibility ... erm in your lessons to get the work done’*).
- The majority of students in the least successful group noted that the support they received to prepare them for transition did not meet their needs (Ross - *‘I don’t think they did prepare me very well’*). They highlighted the desire for an opportunity to share their worries and receive reassurance (Ben – *‘If a student was worrying they could give them like a one to one talk or something and reach out more to the class.’*) This contrasted with those in the most successful group who seemed to hold positive experiences of support (Will - *‘they helped me work and ... helped me get new friends’*).

4.4 Summary

The research aimed to explore stories of successful and less successful transitions in order to develop understanding of how YP with SEBD make sense of this significant educational transition. Through the analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data it has been possible to elicit and explore these experiences, drawing out key themes to inform our understanding. The

quantitative data supported the identification of students for the qualitative sample and also provided a broader understanding of how this group of YP experienced key aspects of their transition. The qualitative data allowed a deeper exploration of the participants' experiences. These fine-grained analyses provided a nuanced account of how these students made sense of their experiences, building upon the quantitative findings. Having utilised the questionnaires to identify those most and least successful participants, the qualitative data indicates that these groups were identified appropriately. However, in drawing together the quantitative and qualitative findings it becomes clear that even for those whose experiences were not so positive, there are stories of success nestled within stories of challenge and difficulty.

The discussion will explore the findings within the context of the wider body of literature.

Discussion

5.1 Overview of Chapter

Following a brief outline of the key findings, the remaining research questions are addressed through the discussion of the quantitative and qualitative findings. Socio-cultural theories of transition (Beach, 1999; Wenger, 1998), the psychological theory of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and the ecological model of child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) are drawn upon to provide a framework for understanding the findings. Links are made with previous research to highlight where this study sits within the extant literature. The methodological and sampling limitations are discussed, followed by a brief outline of the dissemination of the current research. The implications for EP practice are considered, followed by considerations for future research. Finally, a personal reflection upon the research process precedes the concluding comments which draw together the key facets of this project.

5.2 Aims of research

This exploratory study aimed to develop understanding of the primary to secondary transition for YP with SEBD. In adopting a mixed methods approach to elicit the views and experiences of students in relation to their transition, it was hoped that stories of more and less successful transitions could be explored. In illuminating the process of primary to secondary transition for this group, it was hoped that policy and practice could be adapted to better support YP with SEBD in their transition to secondary school.

5.3 Summary of Key Findings

Within this study the exploration of YP's experiences of transition was carried out using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The findings from both phases complement each other, with the qualitative data building upon the quantitative, to elucidate the processes through which the students came to

perceive themselves as more or less successful. Comparisons can be drawn between the findings of this study and previous research. However, there are elements of the students' experiences which reflect their specific set of needs, pertaining to the identification of SEBD. The DfES (2001) stipulate that SEBD can be identified in YP who present as 'withdrawn or isolated, disruptive and disturbing, hyperactive and lacking concentration; those with immature social skills and those presenting challenging behaviours arising from other complex special needs' (DfES 2001: 87). The new SEND CoP (DfE, 2014) highlights the underpinning mental health, social or emotional difficulties. Although all participants were treated as individuals, their stories are viewed within the context of their identified SEBD.

The key findings from this study are summarised below:

- Stories of success emerged for both groups of YP. In overcoming their fears and adjusting to the numerous relational and environmental changes, the students adapted and settled within their new schools to varying degrees. The quantitative findings indicate that the majority of the participants reported experiencing success upon at least one of the five dimensions which comprise a successful transition (Appendix 5).
- Transition was experienced as a personal journey of development through which the students noted a shift in identity, reflecting a sense of growing up.
- Those who experienced the most successful transitions considered the support they received to have been more helpful in preparing them and helping them to settle, than the rest of the sample. This suggests that students' perceptions around the quality of support can influence their experience of transition. Conversely this finding may reflect a positive retrospective bias from a group of YP who experienced success in their transition.
- Those YP who experienced the least successful transitions highlighted a lack of preparedness. It was felt that additional reassurance, an opportunity to share their worries, and lessons around how to avoid bullying would have been helpful.

- For those students who experienced the most successful transitions there seemed to be an element of readiness to move to secondary school, with the students embracing the increased independence, freedom, and responsibility this offered.
- The YP placed great value upon receiving emotional support in their new secondary schools. Having an identified adult with whom they could speak was considered a source of comfort and support.

5.4 Section one - Quantitative Findings

A detailed discussion of the quantitative findings will be presented below in relation to psychological theory and previous research in order to address the quantitative research questions.

5.4.1 What proportion of the YP experienced a successful primary to secondary transition?

Twenty percent of the YP in this study considered they had experienced a successful transition to secondary school. In adopting Evangelou et al's (2008) definition of successful transition, this indicates they made new friends, noted an increase in confidence and self-esteem, felt well supported in their transition, experienced few worries, took greater interest in school and school work, settled into secondary school routines, and experienced continuity between their Year 6 and 7 work. YP with SEBD could be considered vulnerable to negative transition experiences given that positive transition is promoted by the resilience to cope with major stressors, high emotional intelligence, a secure attachment, and a sense of belonging (Stringer & Dunsmuir, 2012). Research cited by the DfE (2014) indicates that those YP with SEBD are more likely experience 'multiple risks such as social disadvantage, family adversity and cognitive or attention problems' (p.6). Given such social, familial, and cognitive adversity and resultant difficulties experienced by those with SEBD, it is unlikely that YP with SEBD have the resources described by Stringer and Dunsmuir (2012). Despite their vulnerability to negative transition outcomes, the majority of participants in this study reported experiencing success within at least one domain, with most students experiencing a growing interest in school and school work.

Evangelou et al. (2008) also noted the positivity of YP's responses in their study examining the transition experiences of a large sample of YP broadly representing the general population. In drawing tentative comparisons with their findings, it appears the proportion of YP with SEBD who experienced successful transitions is lower. Half of their sample reported experiencing successful transition to secondary school, as compared with twenty percent of the present sample. It should be noted that caution is required when making such comparisons given the use of an adapted data collection tool, differences in information sources, and the significantly smaller sample size of the present study. However, given the scale of the disparity it could be argued that work is required to narrow the gap between those YP with SEBD and those without such difficulties.

5.4.2 What are the social and emotional implications of transition?

Fifty percent of the YP met the criteria for having experienced success upon the social and emotional dimension of transition, with the majority reporting an increase in their number of friends. In carrying out a separate analysis for those students who were more and less successful in their transition it was possible to identify that overall, a more successful transition seemed to be associated with an increase in the number friends the YP had, as compared with primary school.

Other research has also noted YP's increasing interest in the social aspects of school, post-transition. For instance, Dann (2011) found that students with ASC showed an increasing interest in friendships, which translated to an increase in their number of friends on starting secondary school. Although YP diagnosed with ASC and those with SEBD are not analogous in terms of their developmental profiles, some comparisons can be drawn with regard to the additional social vulnerabilities both groups may experience in their transition. Research examining transition for groups without additional needs has also reported a post-transition increase in the quantity of friends and the attention given to the social aspects of school (e.g. Evangelou et al., 2008). Such findings could reflect the increasing significance placed upon friendships as YP move into adolescence (Berk, 2009). Alternatively, the structure of secondary schools may better enable some students to make friends (Sancho & Cline, 2012).

With regard to the emotional aspects of transition, all of the most successful students reported feeling more motivated in secondary school. The less successful students presented a more mixed picture, however only a small minority of the YP reported feeling less motivated in secondary school. These findings contradict previous studies which have attributed the post-transition attainment dip (Anderson et al., 2000), to a diminishing interest in academic activities (McGee et al., 2004). It may be that the structure of secondary school, including the variety of lessons, promoted the interest and motivation of the majority of these YP with SEBD.

Secondly, the data indicates that those students who experienced the most successful transitions to secondary school also reported feeling more confident and better about themselves in secondary school. This contrasts with the experiences of the majority of those less successful students, who reported that their emotional well-being was either the same or less than in primary. However, given the limited scope of these four questions, which were not an established measure of social and emotional well-being, only tentative conclusions can be drawn regarding the students' social and emotional well-being.

Within the context of the wider literature, there appears to be mixed findings regarding the impact of transition upon emotional wellbeing (West et al., 2010). Where a dip in self-esteem or increases in 'psychological symptoms' have been noted, evidence differs around whether this is gender specific, relating only to girls (e.g. Anderson et al., 2000). Evangelou et al. (2008) utilised parental reports to examine this social and emotional dimension of transition. In line with the most successful students in the present study, they reported a majority increase in students' emotional well-being and noted that most YP felt happy in their new schools. When seeking to understand the process underpinning a possible increase in emotional and social well-being, Sancho and Cline (2012) discussed students' positive experiences of leaving behind people with whom they did not have positive relationships in primary school. This suggests that for YP in the most successful group, a fresh start may have supported them to leave behind any negative relationships, promoting their well-being on this dimension.

Overall it seems that an increase in students' social and emotional-wellbeing post-transition, supports YP with SEBD to experience a more successful transition to secondary school. This has implications for the nature and focus of support provided by schools during the transition to secondary school for students with SEBD.

5.4.3 How helpful did the YP find any support they received in preparing them for transition and settling into secondary school?

In seeking to examine the role that support played within students' experiences of transition, the data was again analysed separately for those students who reported experiencing more and less successful transitions. Responses to the questionnaires revealed the most successful students rated the support more favourably than the remaining sample. This discrepancy was most evident when considering how well primary schools had prepared students for transition, whereby a third of the less successful sample considered their preparation to have been inadequate. Interestingly, West et al. (2010) identified that low 'preparedness' for transition was a significant predictor of students experiencing high levels of peer and school concerns on starting secondary school. The findings of this study contrast with those of Evangelou et al. (2008) who reported that the majority of students felt prepared for transition, having received adequate information around what to expect on starting secondary school and the opportunity to share their worries. Aside from methodological and sampling considerations, this discrepancy may reflect differing transition practices across the UK. Alternatively it may indicate that YP with SEBD require supplementary or alternative forms of preparation.

The support provided by secondary schools to settle in was rated more positively by all students, with the majority of most successful students perceiving this to be highly effective. It is possible this reflects the participants' desire to provide socially desirable answers, given that questionnaires were completed within their secondary schools. Overall, these findings indicate that those students who reported experiencing the most successful transitions, perceived their support to be more helpful. Evangelou et al. (2008) also noted the relationship between perceived efficacy of support and the success of

students' transitions. They concluded that the support provided during transition, particularly from secondary schools, had a significant impact upon the level of success the YP experienced in their transition. The findings from both studies highlight a key role for schools in providing appropriate support for all YP.

5.5 Section two - Qualitative Findings

Reid et al. (2005) posit that IPA research aims to 'capture and explore the meanings that participants ascribe to their experiences' (p.20). In adopting this approach to frame the principal qualitative phase of this study, the YP have been considered experiential experts within the primary to secondary transition. Critical realism was posited as the research paradigm within which this study was planned, conducted and written up. Critical realist research aims to understand the underlying causal mechanisms which underpin why 'a' causes 'b', rather than simply examining outcomes (Matthews, 2003). In eliciting the accounts of these YP with SEBD the mechanisms which facilitated more or less successful transition to secondary school for this group have been identified. A discussion of these findings within the context of the wider body of literature and psychological theory will draw out these mechanism and aim to answer the remaining qualitative research questions:

- RQ2. How did the YP make sense of the changes they experienced?
- RQ3. What does being a secondary school student mean to the YP?
- RQ4. How did the YP experience any support they received for their primary to secondary transition?

Two theoretical frameworks were drawn upon to frame and provide a psychological viewpoint upon the students' experiences of transition, as elicited in the qualitative findings. Given that the process of moving to secondary school involves change at multiple levels: contextual, relational, and personal, some researchers have conceptualised this utilising Bronfenbrenner's (1978) ecological model of child development. Bronfenbrenner (1994) posits that 'human development takes place through processes of progressively complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and ...its' immediate

environment' (p.38). His model conceptualises that human growth occurs within, and is impacted by, a series of nested systems including family, school and peer group. This conceptualisation of child development highlights not only the role of the child's context within their development but also the role of the child's characteristics, which determine how they interact with their context. In applying this model to conceptualise the primary to secondary transition, researchers are provided with a psychological framework to consider how the changes within the child's immediate environment impact upon their growth and development (e.g. Brewin & Statham, 2011). Tobbell (2003) employs this model to consider the changes experienced by the YP within their proximal and distal relationships, conveying the gravity of discontinuity that the children must deal with. When exploring the findings from the present study, Bronfenbrenner's (1978) ecological model of child development provided a useful lens through which the interactions between the YP and their shifting systems could be viewed.

To reflect the experiential focus of the present study, socio-cultural theories have also been drawn upon to provide a framework within which to consider the qualitative findings. Socio-cultural theories consider that 'transitions are about a change in self-identity born out of uncertainty in the social and cultural worlds of the individual' (Crafter & Maunder, 2012, p.1). Thus, they draw together the 'social and cultural situatedness' of transition (Zittoun, 2006) and the impact of moving through this process upon a person's understanding of themselves. Through this lens transition is defined not as a 'moment of change but as the experience of changing' (Gorgorio et al., 2002, p.24). In drawing upon ecological and socio-cultural theories it has been possible to not only recognise the changes to the numerous systems within which the YP exist but also to understand how the individual YP personally adapted to and made sense of these changes.

The qualitative findings will be discussed below within the superordinate themes that were developed through the process of analysis. In drawing together the findings for those students who experienced the most and least

successful transitions, similarities between the superordinate themes were identified. For both groups, narratives around their experiences of settling and the sense they made from the numerous changes they faced were pertinent. Both groups discussed the support they had or hadn't received during their transition and their stories revealed the impact of this upon their experiences. Finally, all students discussed the social and relational aspects of their transition, with particular reference to the impact of this upon their settling into secondary school and their personal adaptation. In light of this, and for the purposes of brevity, the superordinate themes for both groups have been amalgamated and the findings will be discussed under the headings of acclimatisation, relationships and support, in order to answer the remaining qualitative research questions.

5.5.1 Acclimatising

The process of acclimatising reflects the personal journeys the YP moved through during their transition to secondary school. In discussing their experiences of these social and cultural changes, stories of success in overcoming initial challenges and fears, emerged. Differing stages within the process of acclimatisation were identified in the students' narratives. These reflect the YP's experience of changing and will be explored below in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks.

5.5.1.1 Anticipating the transition to secondary school

The YP experienced conflicting emotions including fear, anxiety, and excitement prior to and on starting their new schools. This has been recognised in the wider literature, with Shaw (1995) describing transition as an 'anxiety ridden enterprise' and Giddens (1991) referring to an anxious readiness characterising the enjoyable anticipation of impending transition. For the YP in this study, these feelings seemed to derive from the anticipation of change and concerns around how they were going to cope in relation to the size, structure, and social elements of secondary school. Some students recollected feeling more anxious once they had been provided with information about their new secondary schools. In having a window into their future, they appeared to experience

increased uncertainty about what this would hold, given that for some it challenged their pre-existing beliefs. These experiences resonate with findings of other studies which explored the transition experiences of YP (e.g. Brewin & Statham, 2011). Tobbell (2003) notes that of particular salience to her participants, was getting lost. She argues that the fear this induced may have impaired the students' capacity for cognitive functioning and in turn their ability to learn.

Some of the least successful students described the presence of anxiety as a more stable feature in their lives, which appeared to be related to a sense of not belonging. Catalano et al. (2003) highlight the importance of students developing a sense of school belonging in promoting mental health. This has also been recognised by Sancho and Cline (2012) in underpinning students' experiences of settling into secondary school. Despite the on-going presence of anxious feelings, these students still identified challenges they had 'managed to deal with' which instilled a sense of pride.

5.5.1.2 Dealing with change

Tobbell (2003) notes that during transition YP are 'faced with a variety of changes to the systems which mediate their world' (p.9). Despite experiencing fear and anxiety prior to and on starting secondary school, most of the students seemed to move through a journey of discovery, with many of their preconceptions challenged. For one student, initial concerns around potential issues with his peers dissipated once he noted the opportunities offered by the size of secondary school, to avoid those he didn't get along with. The experience of facing fears and overcoming them appeared to be an empowering, positive learning experience.

Despite the positive experiences shared by all students in facing their fears, the two groups have differing narratives around their experiences of facing the numerous systemic and relational changes. For the most successful group

many of the changes were experienced positively, with the YP identifying increased choice, freedom, responsibility, and opportunities to socialise. For the least successful group the experience of dealing with these changes seemed to be variable, with some considered to be overwhelming and others manageable.

For the YP changes to their physical environment were pertinent, with the act of moving from one school building to another presenting a number of challenges to deal with. Ross described the pervasive environmental changes as an assault on his senses, 'they smelt really different ... (it) felt different'. As identified by other studies (e.g. Tobbell, 2003), the most notable change to the students' environment was the increased size of secondary school and the issues this posed in knowing where to go. A sense of feeling lost characterised many of the students' initial experiences, with one of the least successful students providing a vivid account of the nonsensical layout of his new school. Despite the risk of getting lost in such a big, unfamiliar environment, a number of the most successful students highlighted positive aspects of having more space. For some this represented more areas to play or hang out, allowing the YP to maintain distance from 'problematic' peers. This contrasts with descriptions of primary school, where the YP couldn't escape such conflicts. This may be particularly pertinent for YP with SEBD, who are likely to experience difficulties within their peer relationships. In addition, Lucey and Reay (2000) suggest that given the restrictions often experienced by YP due to parental concerns around 'stranger-danger', the wide open spaces and freedom, may hold particular appeal for students.

In addition to changes to their physical environment the YP also referred to the differences in the school systems, with particular reference to pastoral care. Such differences were attributed to a need for secondary schools to be stricter with their students, while these complex systems caused confusion for the new Year 7s. Those within the most successful group generally conceived these systems to be supportive and empowering, whereby they were encouraged to keep out of trouble and given opportunities to reflect. In contrast, Lucy

experienced the new system as inaccessible, unhelpful, and uncaring. It seems that those behaviour management systems which involve students as active participants in improving their behaviour were considered most helpful by these students with SEBD. In eliciting the narratives of secondary school students with SEBD, Cefai & Cooper (2009) also concluded that systems which ensured students felt 'listened to and understood and treated with respect' were more beneficial in garnering the support of the YP. For some of the YP in this study, dealing with changes to how their behaviour was managed appeared to be viewed as the most challenging but also transformative aspect of their transition.

Finally, the YP all referred to the changes they experienced with their peer and teacher relationships. The experience of shifting peer groups and developing relationships with new teachers is discussed in detail in the next section, however it should be noted here that this was highly salient to the participants within their experiences of dealing with change.

5.5.1.3 Adjusting and settling

In experiencing the process of facing their fears and dealing with change, the students adjusted and settled into their new schools to varying degrees. The most successful YP appeared to embrace the changes they experienced, perceiving the environment and structure as supportive of their social, emotional, and behavioural needs. In contrast, the least successful students shared mixed experiences, with fluctuating periods of feeling unsettled and for some an uncertainty around their sense of belonging. However, all acknowledged they had adjusted to their new schools, with previously alien environments and relationships now familiar to them. Wenger (1998) proposes that following a move to secondary school students could be considered to be on the periphery of a community, where cultural and social systems are experienced as confusing and at times overwhelming. New students gradually settle as they actively engage with these cultural practices, learning how to be a competent member of their school. This captures the experiences of the YP in the present study, who described a sense of acclimatising over a period of time

as they were 'getting used to' the social, cultural and environmental changes they were exposed to.

The YP recognised or alluded to differences in their perception of themselves as secondary school students. Beach (1999) argues that moving through the process of transition impacts upon the individual; it is not inconsequential. As the YP adjusted and settled they began to identify with their secondary school student identity. For some, being a secondary school student evoked feelings of pride and for others it went hand in hand with an increase in responsibility. Being a secondary school student seemed to be associated with 'going up' and a sense of 'more'; they experienced *more* enjoyment in school, engaged in *more* learning, had *more* friends. Growing independence, confidence and a developing sense of self-awareness were central to this new and developing identity.

5.5.1.3.1 Independence

The majority of YP discussed having more independence as secondary school students. 'Learning to do it yourself' was embraced by most, appearing to be experienced as both empowering and liberating. Previous research has also noted this, with Valentine (1997) describing transition to secondary school as a 'watershed in children's independence' (p. 74). Studies highlight the differing perceptions of this aspect of the experience. Tobbell's (2003) findings contrast with those experiences of the most successful students in this study, with participants identifying the difficulties they experienced in being treated like adults before they felt ready. In the present study it seemed that the most successful students embraced this independence, while the least successful group tended to find the added expectation more daunting. In exploring the experiences of secondary school students with SEBD, Cefai and Cooper (2009) noted students' feelings of powerlessness and oppression in school. Although independence was a salient theme for this sample, some students also

highlighted feelings of powerlessness and entrapment within their school pastoral systems. Where systems promoted students' autonomy they were perceived more positively, suggesting the importance of this for YP with SEBD.

Shifting expectations of school staff and parents, and secondary school systems were cited as the primary facilitating forces in promoting this independence and sense of freedom. Lucey & Reay (2000) note that this increase in independence and freedom comes at the cost of the security offered by the higher levels of support experienced in primary school. For those YP who experienced the least successful transitions, this cost may have been greater, with decreasing support representing a more difficult aspect of transition.

5.5.1.3.2 Confidence

A growing sense of independence and the experience of making new friends seemed to encourage an increase in students' confidence, particularly for those who experienced the most successful transitions. Evangelou et al. (2008) noted the transformative effect of transition, reporting that the majority of their sample experienced an increase in confidence and self-esteem. For Luke an increase in confidence was encapsulated by the act of raising his hand in class. Crafter and Maunder (2012) reflect upon the change in the student's sense of self during the primary to secondary transition, surmising that this seems to be reflected in an increasing sense of confidence. The YP in this study identified that a confident student equated to a settled student, suggesting the two are related. Those students in the least successful group were less inclined to report an increase in confidence. This discrepancy suggests that more work needs to be done to promote the confidence of those most vulnerable YP with SEBD.

5.5.1.3.3 Self Awareness

Growing self-awareness also appears to contribute to YP's experiences of being secondary school students. In overcoming the initial challenges posed by the transition, many of the students seemed to develop a deeper understanding of

themselves. Lucey and Reay (2000) agree that moving through the process of transition leads to an increase in self-awareness for students, while Beach (1999) considers that transition involves a process of personal development and progress through the reconstruction of what we do. For the students an increase in self-awareness manifested itself differently. For two of the most successful students being able to better regulate their behaviour in school seemed to reflect growing self-awareness. For some of those less successful students, recognising anxiety as a stable presence in their lives enabled them to employ strategies to manage this. Further, some students identified the impact of social context upon their behaviour. Developmental psychologists have explored the development of self-awareness in YP. Harter (2006) suggests that an awareness that personal traits and characteristics differ according to social context is characteristic of the level of self-awareness experienced by YP in early-adolescence. Therefore the students developing self-awareness may not only reflect their growth in response to transition but also their developmental stage.

Beach (1999) suggests that an increase in self-awareness and successful adaptation during transition can be facilitated through self-reflection (Beach, 1999). A capacity for self-reflection has also been identified as a protective factor for behavioural or mental health difficulties (DfE, 2014). The use of IPA revealed that some YP struggled to engage in a deeper level of self-reflection during interviews. These observations and the assertions of the DfE (2014) suggest that YP with SEBD may struggle to engage in self-reflection at the same level as their peers. Harper and Imel (2002) suggest that seeking the views of YP with SEBD promotes self-reflection, which in turn empowers and encourages them to take responsibility for improving their behaviour. This may have important implications for schools and EPs when considering how best to support this cohort.

Socio-cultural theories have acknowledged the impact that transition can have upon a person's identity, highlighting the interaction between individuals and their social and cultural context (e.g. Zittoun, 2006). Gorgorio et al. (2002) define

transition as 'the experience of changing, of living the discontinuities between the different contexts' (p.11), emphasising their conception of a personal journey. Changes in identity during transition have been considered to result from coping with the uncertainty evoked by such discontinuities (Crafter & Maunder, 2012). Given the shifts in identity which were captured within the student's experiential accounts, this conception of transition, as a journey of personal development, fits with the findings of this study. The students' narratives convey the gravity of this life event for them. Stringer and Dunsmuir (2012) highlight the importance of transition within the context of child development. In learning how to deal with change and the uncertainty this engenders, children learn an important life lesson in how to adapt and cope with contextual shifts.

5.5.2 Relationships

Both Tobbell (2003) and Sancho and Cline (2012) highlight that peer and teacher relationships play a central role within the transition to secondary school. The findings from the present study indicate that children with SEBD also experience their transition within the context of their relationships with others. Such relationships seemed to have a far-reaching impact upon the YP in supporting or hindering their ability to cope within the process of transition, in settling into their new school and in the formation of their identities as secondary school students. As highlighted previously, Tobbell (2003) employs Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of child development to understand the relational aspects of the transition to secondary school. In applying this model it is possible to acknowledge the importance of peer, teacher and familial relationships within the process of transition to secondary school.

In seeking to further understand the crucial role of the students' relationships within their experiences of settling into secondary school and to consider the possible mechanisms which facilitated this settling, socio-cultural theories were

explored. Communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) is a social theory of learning and has previously been cited as providing helpful insights when considering educational transitions (Crafter & Maunder, 2012). This framework posits that once a person has spent time with members of a new community, learning its social and cultural practices, a sense of being a competent member of the community develops, promoting feelings of belonging (Wenger, 1998). It locates learning 'in the relationship between the person and the world, which for human beings is a social person in a social world' (Wenger, 2014, p.1). Wenger (1998) highlights that a sense of belonging is unlikely to develop for those who are not able to become competent members of the community.

For the majority of these YP with SEBD, relationships with teachers and peers appeared to support their experience of becoming more competent members of their secondary school communities. In making sense of this process many of the students recognised a shift within themselves which was often conceptualised as a growing up, away from their primary school selves and into the role of secondary school students. Galton and Morrison (2000) also made reference to this, highlighting that during the transition to secondary school students regularly reinterpret and readjust their self-image during their interactions with teachers and peers. The role of peer and teacher relationships within this process will be further explored below.

5.5.2.1 Peers

As noted by a number of researchers (e.g. Tobbell, 2003), it could be argued that the social aspects of the primary to secondary transition are considered fundamental to the process of settling or acclimatising for the YP involved. The social aspects of transition were pertinent to all YP in the present study.

Many of the participants transitioned to secondary school with existing friends. For some this was experienced as supportive where a sense that they were all in it together pervaded. For others, anxieties around losing their friendships were experienced as they built up to their transition. Once the YP began to settle into their new schools, shifts within these friendship groups were experienced. For some this was a positive experience which reflected growing

friendship groups. For others, their anxieties were realised and they experienced a growing apart, evoking feelings of sadness and insecurity. Other research has explored the trajectories of YP's friendships, noting their evolving nature during the transition to secondary school (Weller, 2006). Weller (2006) highlights that these shifts occur as students' friendship networks take on new forms and identities following transition.

Of particular salience to the majority of YP in this study was the making of new friends when arriving at their new school. The pressure to develop such relationships seemed to evoke feeling of anxiety, however once this was achieved it was considered by students in both groups to be the 'fun' part of transition. Weller (2006) notes the central role of friendships in promoting students' sense of belonging and connectedness in school. In the present study, students' narratives indicate that making friends was intertwined with a sense of settling into their new schools.

Further to this, Pratt and George (2005) highlight that friendships play an important role in the development of students' own identities during the transition to secondary school. One participant described the experience of becoming 'more social' as a secondary school student which captured the experience of many of the YP. Developmental psychologists posit that during adolescence peer relationships accrue greater significance, with YP relying less on adults as their primary source of support as friends assume this role (Berk, 2009). Thus the timing of this transition within a child's development may account in some part for the particular salience of peer relationships. A further facet of this pertains to YP comparing themselves to other students. Research has demonstrated that during educational transitions students tend to carry out social comparisons, perceiving themselves in relation to their peers to establish whether they fit in (e.g. Holdsworth, 2006). In becoming 'more social', most of the YP made reference to themselves in relation to their peers. For some this pertained to friendship groups, for example Chris considered that fights were necessary to determine which students were the strongest and most popular. This concept of a social hierarchy filtered into the narratives of other YP whose social identities seemed to be informed by

experiences of being teased or bullied. Students' perceptions of their social identities differed between the groups, with the least successful group tending to identify their vulnerabilities within the wider peer group. Pratt and George (2005) note that students seem to become increasingly concerned about their status and image on starting secondary school, suggesting that Year 7 students may be more likely to conform in order to establish their place within the social group. Given that students with SEBD are more likely to experience social difficulties, they may be particularly vulnerable to conforming and engaging in behaviours they aren't comfortable with. Chris discussed how previously he had become friends with some students who had dealt drugs. He wasn't comfortable being part of this group, as their presence made it more difficult for him to stay out of trouble.

5.5.2.2 Teachers

With regard to relationships with teachers, the most salient theme for the YP related to the increase in teacher expectations. Students in the most successful group embraced these shifting expectations and the increasing sense of independence they engendered. However, for those in the least successful group, increased responsibility appeared to feel daunting. Tobbell (2003) noted a discrepancy between secondary teachers' expectations and the readiness of students to adopt increased responsibility, highlighting the discomfort this evoked. Within the present study, some of those YP who experienced the least successful transitions identified the value of teachers gradually increasing their expectations of Year 7 students. Therefore the ease with which students embraced these heightened expectations may have related to a difference in a readiness to transition to secondary school between the two groups. Readiness is defined by the Oxford Dictionary (Soanes & Stevenson, 2003) as a 'the state of being fully prepared for something'.

Communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) posits that participating in the social practices of a community 'shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do' (p.4). In applying Wenger's (1998) Communities of practice framework to understand educational transitions,

Crafter and Maunder (2012) suggest that teachers facilitate the development of competence in teaching students the skills and knowledge required to be an active member of the school community. When considering the factors that facilitated feelings of competence or adjustment in the present study, the YP highlighted the role of both adult and peer support. One example pertains to Rob drawing upon his peers' knowledge of the school building and where they should be. In drawing on peer support he was able to overcome his initial anxieties and make sense of his new environment. It could be argued that those students who experienced less successful transitions and who continue to struggle are those who have not yet become competent members of their school communities. This may reflect the quality of their relationships and their ability to utilise them as a source of support and learning.

5.5.3 Support

The communities of practice framework (Wenger, 1998) highlights the role for others in supporting new members of the community to adapt and become competent members. Much research has sought to examine what constitutes effective support during the transition to secondary school, highlighting the varied practices and approaches. Differing experiences of support characterise the participants' narratives. All students received support to facilitate their transition, although the perceived quality and appropriateness of this in meeting their needs varies. The most successful students highlight the role of school staff in supporting them to settle. For the least successful group, mixed experiences of support seemed to evoke a craving for transition support which would meet their needs. The YP's experiences of support will be discussed below, with regard to both preparation and settling in.

5.5.3.1 Preparatory support

As identified within the quantitative findings, there appears to be a discrepancy between perceived quality of preparatory support, with the least successful group highlighting their lack of preparedness for moving to secondary school. Previous research has also highlighted issues in this area, with Tobbell (2003)

noting the lack of preparation experienced in primary school by her participants. She hypothesises that the differences between primary and secondary schools are vast such that students are unlikely to feel fully prepared for transition. When discussing their experiences of support the YP in this study differentiated between practical support, which enabled them to learn about the structure, environment and expectations of their new secondary schools, and emotional support.

5.5.3.1.1 Practical support

All of the students visited their secondary schools prior to starting Year 7, although the number and nature of these visits varied according to whether students received additional support or accessed universal transition support. A graduated approach to preparation was highlighted as beneficial by YP in both the most and least successful groups. Research examining transition for other vulnerable groups also identified the importance of preparation. In exploring the primary to secondary transition for YP with ASC, Dann (2011) highlighted the value of a gradual transition involving additional preparation. Of particular importance were the opportunities to meet with key members of staff and access timetables. Although the developmental profiles of students with ASC are not analogous to those of YP with SEBD, these findings suggest there may be some overlap with regard to effective preparatory support for both groups.

Evangelou et al. (2008) identified that secondary schools who provided prospective Year 7 students with a variety of opportunities to get to know their new school, enabled more positive transition experiences. Some students in the present study discussed visits *from* secondary school teachers. The YP considered that this served to set out expectations of secondary school with regard to behaviour, positioning secondary school as 'stricter'. For some it was helpful to gain a clearer understanding of future behaviour management systems. For others, this induced feelings of anxiety in relation to transition.

Students also recognised a role for primary school teachers in preparing them for transition. Although their teachers spoke about moving to secondary school,

most reported they didn't find the content particularly helpful. Rob felt his primary school should have done 'proper lessons' on secondary school, including how to avoid being bullied. Being bullied was an issue that was particularly pertinent to the least successful group as well as some members of the most successful group. Evangelou et al. (2008) found that the YP with SEND were significantly more likely to report experiencing bullying post-transition, suggesting that YP with SEND are at greater risk of negative transition outcomes. Cefai and Cooper (2009) concur, identifying bullying as a pertinent issue for secondary school students with SEBD. These findings suggest that lessons specifically aimed at supporting the social aspects of transition, with particular reference to bullying, maybe helpful for YP with SEBD.

5.5.3.1.2 Emotional support

The majority of students in the least successful group identified a desire for emotional support in the build up to transition. A number of the YP felt their primary schools had not done enough, with Ben stating 'they never got round to it'. He would have liked his teacher to 'reach out' to the class, providing those who felt anxious with a chance to share their worries and receive reassurance. The importance of schools recognising the emotional impact of transition has been highlighted in other studies. YoungMinds (2008) carried out a consultation with 300 students which revealed the importance of schools being aware of students' anxiety and excitement in relation to transition. Where schools failed to recognise this, students felt that transition was happening to them, rather than with them. This would suggest that it is of upmost importance for primary schools to recognise the emotional impact of transition, particularly for YP with SEBD.

Within the present study it was noted that the need for emotional support prior to transition, was not a salient issue for those most successful students. This would suggest that either the emotional needs of the YP had been met or that they have a differing set of needs to those within the least successful group. Given the breadth of needs encompassed within the category of SEBD (DfES, 2001), it may be unhelpful to treat students as a homogenous group. The

difference between the two groups indicates that preparatory support should be individualised to suit the needs of each YP with SEBD. Similarly, Brewin and Statham (2011) highlight the importance of individualising transition support for LAC to meet the distinctive needs of each YP.

5.5.3.2 Support to settle in

Overall both groups spoke more positively about the practical and emotional support they received to settle into secondary school. The importance of such support has been recognised by other researchers, with Evangelou et al. (2008) identifying support provided by secondary schools as a key predictor of successful transition.

5.5.3.2.1 Practical support

Some of the YP who experienced the least successful transitions highlighted the importance of schools gradually supporting students to settle. A gradual increase in teacher expectation and work load were deemed helpful. In addition, one student attended small group lessons in the SEN unit before being gradually integrated into mainstream lessons, supporting her to feel 'more better'. Dann (2011) reports the value YP with ASC and their parents placed upon having access to an in-school SEN provision e.g. an SEN Base or ASC unit. They noted that where students attended a school with such a provision, they seemed to experience more positive transitions to secondary school. It may be that for vulnerable students, such as those with SEBD, access to an SEN base provides opportunities to access additional, individualised support to settle. YP from both groups in this study also recognised the value of such a provision in providing them with a safe space to go.

The YP generally perceived secondary school teachers as supportive with regard to making friends, staying out of trouble, and sorting out problems. Social, emotional and behavioural support may be crucial for YP with SEBD in promoting a sense of belonging in their new schools.

5.5.3.2.2 Emotional support

Participants from both groups referred to the benefits of having an adult to whom they could turn if they required additional support. Emotional support was described in terms of receiving reassurance, speaking about family or school problems, and having their worries acknowledged. Such support was perceived as a great comfort, making students feel more confident and instilling a trust that problems would be sorted out. For some of those in the least successful group, this contrasted with their experience of having no-one to talk to in primary school. Mowat (2012) identified similar findings for her sample of YP with SEBD, highlighting the importance of the quality of such relationships. Of particular importance to the students was that these members of staff see the good in them (Mowat, 2012). Where there was a noted absence of such support within the present study, it seemed to evoke feelings of distress.

The belongingness hypothesis can be drawn upon to understand why such relationships are important for the YP. This theory posits that in order to satisfy the need to feel a sense of belonging, people seek to develop 'lasting, positive, and significant' interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1998). Baumeister and Leary (1998) argue that such relationships should be stable over time and involve an affective concern for each other's well-being. This may be particularly pertinent for YP with SEBD who are more likely to have experienced attachment difficulties in infancy (Williams, Callaghan & Cowie, 1994). The links between attachment and emotional development has been established within the literature and researchers have suggested the importance of considering the attachment experience of a child in seeking to understand SEBD (e.g. Johnson, 1992). Stinger and Dunsmuir (2012) suggest that relationships with key adults in school take on added significance for YP who have experienced attachment difficulties. Therefore, it may be crucial for YP with SEBD to have access to an identified adult in secondary school who they can seek out for emotional support, in order that they develop a sense of belonging and settle into their new school.

Within the Communities of practice framework (Wenger, 1998), transition is conceived as a two way process. The person moving through the process of transition adapts and changes as they become a competent member of a

community, while the community also undergoes a process of refinement as it welcomes new members. Given the current agenda for inclusion within the UK education system, this could be considered pertinent when considering the adaptations that schools would be expected to make to accommodate and effectively support YP with SEND. When considering the support provided to the YP in this study, it is possible to note where support has been tailored to the students' individual needs. In seeking the views of the YP, a process of feedback has been established in which the students have been able to report on the perceived efficacy of the support they received from both primary and secondary schools. In turn these communities may be enabled to engage in a process of refinement to ensure they are able to better support YP with SEBD during future transition periods.

5.5.4 Conclusion of qualitative findings

Smith et al. (2009) argue that it is 'in the nature of IPA that the interviews and analysis will have taken you into new and unanticipated territory' (p.36).

Within the present study, which sought to elucidate those factors which support more or less successful transition to secondary school, the new and unanticipated territory pertained to personal process through which the YP moved in response to their transitions. Socio-cultural theories highlight that transitions 'involve a search for meaning and a reconstruction of the sense of self' (Crafter & Maunder, 2012). In adopting an approach to qualitative research which is informed by phenomenological, hermeneutic and idiographic principles, experiential accounts which illuminate how the YP made sense of the numerous changes they encountered and the impact upon their own self image were drawn out. This provides a rich account and one that elucidates the process and mechanisms by which these YP experienced more or less successful transitions to secondary school.

5.6 Limitations of the research

The quality of the present research was discussed in Chapter 3. Issues pertaining to both the quantitative and qualitative phases and the way in which these were addressed by the researcher, were considered. Despite efforts to

promote the quality of the research there are considered to be limitations which will be discussed below.

5.6.1 Sampling

Within the process of recruiting participants it became clear that the SENCOs were gate keepers to the students. It was made explicit that all YP who met the criteria for participation should be invited to take part to promote the representativeness of the sample and equality of opportunity. However, it became clear that this advice was not always heeded and therefore decisions taken by the SENCOs impacted upon the sampling.

A further issue in the recruitment process pertained to gaining parental consent. Information sheets and consent forms were distributed by schools; however there was a low response rate, with a quarter of parents not returning the forms. Reay (2005) suggests that poor rates of parental consent for YP with SEBD may reflect parental disengagement from education systems. Alternatively, parents may have made the active decision not to consent. Regardless, this facet of the recruitment process impacted upon the sampling.

The final sample size and the purposive sampling of YP with SEBD attending schools in one LA impacted upon the transferability and generalisability of the findings. Large samples are valued within quantitative research as they diffuse the impact of individual differences, enabling generalisability (Robson, 2002). Conducting the research with students from one LA means their educational experiences may differ from those of YP in another LA further limiting generalisability/transferability.

5.6.2 Methodological Considerations

5.6.2.1 Quantitative

The quantitative research technique employed within this study was a questionnaire. It has been noted that completing the questionnaires in groups within the students' secondary schools may have prompted the students to provide socially desirable answers. Within the groups some students appeared aware of their peers and the answers they were providing and may have

adjusted their answers accordingly. However, the decision was taken that completing the questionnaires in groups would promote feelings of comfort and safety for the participants, which was considered to outweigh the risk of the YP providing socially desirable answers.

It was also noted that the positive bias towards support provided by secondary schools may have been influenced by concerns that schools would see their answers. These issues were minimised as far as possible by reiterating the confidentiality of their answers, encouraging them to give their honest opinion, highlighting that their participation would have no bearing on their schooling and maintaining the status of the researcher as being separate from the school.

The analysis of the questionnaire data aimed to identify those students who had experienced the most successful transitions. The questionnaire was useful in identifying such students; however it was not so effective in identifying those who experienced the least successful transitions. The analysis of median scores, as advocated by Evangelou et al. (2008), was not fine-grained enough when using the questionnaire for this purpose. Therefore a more nuanced approach was needed to identify those least successful students, as described in Chapter 3.

Despite concerns relating to the reliability and validity of the quantitative data the qualitative accounts of transition suggest the questionnaire did enable an accurate identification of the most and least successful students.

5.6.2.2 Qualitative

In utilising IPA as the qualitative methodology it was hoped that in-depth, experiential accounts of the YP's transition would be elicited. Great importance is placed upon the depth and richness of the data when considering the quality of IPA studies (Smith, 2011). As identified by Brown et al. (2012), YP with SEBD are more likely to have cognitive or attention difficulties which was true of this sample. In carrying out the semi-structured interviews it became clear that the open questions were not accessible to all students. To overcome the difficulties

this posed to some participants, prompting questions were used to provide more structure and clarity. However, in utilising such techniques it is possible the data reflects the researcher's own agenda as opposed to issues that were salient to the YP. In an effort to maintain openness, the prompting questions were carefully worded so as to minimise the researchers influence upon the data.

As discussed previously, some YP found the reflexivity required within IPA research difficult to achieve at an in-depth level. Where this occurred, a more abstract level of interpretation was required during analysis in order that the essence of the participants' narratives could be more clearly and analytically presented. In maintaining personal reflexivity within this process and drawing on the words of the participants it is hoped that the quality and trustworthiness of these interpretations was maintained.

Again the influence of social desirability was an issue. It was noted that during the initial interviews the YP had been given affirming responses when they had shared positive experiences. In hearing such remarks they may have been encouraged to share successes and discouraged from sharing negative experiences. In reflecting upon this the researcher was able to ensure that neutral responses were given to all answers in future interviews.

Many of these limitations were identified prior to or during the data collection. Therefore the researcher was able to counteract or minimise the impact of these upon the quality of the research

5.7 Dissemination of Findings

To ensure the voices of these YP were truly able to influence policy and practice, dissemination of the findings was considered crucial. Participating schools and YP were provided with written feedback which detailed the findings of the study. Additionally at the request of the PEP, a leaflet was prepared to share with all schools within the participating LA, detailing the key findings and recommendations to improve transition processes and support for YP with SEBD.

In addition, a presentation was delivered to both the EPS and at a TEP conference at UEL, outlining the key findings and implications for EP practice in schools. The PEP has requested that written feedback be provided to those within the LA who are developing the SEND pathways, in order that this research may contribute to the development of the transition policy. Looking to the future it is hoped that this research may be published and thus presented to wider audiences.

5.8 Implications for EP practice

In carrying out research as a TEP, consideration of implications for EPs formed an important part of the research process. EPs aim 'to promote child development and learning through the application of psychology' (DfEE, 2002, p.5) To fulfil this role they work flexibly, within varied and complex contexts, and with a range of clients (Farrell et al., 2006). The implications of this study for EP practice will be presented below within the differing levels at which EPs work: the individual child, the school, and the community.

5.8.1 Supporting the individual child

- EPs could employ their skills in therapeutic intervention, providing individual support for students with SEBD who experience heightened levels of anxiety and/or have been the victim of bullying. This study indicates that these YP are particularly vulnerable during transition to secondary school.
- During the process of transition it may be helpful for EPs to support groups of students in developing their skills in self-reflection. Beach (1999) highlights the role of reflection and sense making in enabling personal change during the process of transition. It would be important for schools to provide students with the time and space to reflect upon their personal journeys.
- To support secondary schools to identify those students who have experienced the least successful transitions, EPs could facilitate the completion of the questionnaire utilised in this study or carry out individual

interviews with students to gain a more in-depth account of their transition experiences. In carrying out such an assessment, support could be targeted to ensure that students' difficulties do not continue or escalate.

5.8.2 Working with schools

- In supporting schools to provide optimal support for YP with SEBD during their transition to secondary school, EPs could work with primary and secondary school staff to highlight the importance of acknowledging and being sensitive to students' personal journeys of transition and the anxiety, uncertainty, and discomfort this can evoke. In being better attuned to students' emotional well-being, school staff may encourage students' self-awareness.
- EP's could work with primary school teachers to highlight the importance of providing emotional support when preparing students for transition. This is particularly pertinent for those students with SEBD who experience heightened anxiety and/or have been victims of bullying. EPs could play a role in developing a model for such support, delivering training, or supervising school staff in their delivery.
- EPs could highlight to secondary schools the importance of having a key member of staff with whom YP with SEBD can share any concerns, problems, or worries. Again the content of this emotional support could be developed by EPs in conjunction with their schools.
- In considering ways to further support secondary schools to promote a sense of belonging in Year 7 students, EPs could work with managerial staff to develop their systems and structures to facilitate social interactions and the development of friendships. For YP with SEBD this may involve providing additional support to make friends or providing them with the opportunity to attend lunchtime clubs, both of which were valued by the YP in this study.
- It may be beneficial for EPs to support schools to develop systems through which students can feed back their experiences of support. This would enable clarity around whether the support being delivered is meeting the

needs of the students. The new SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2014) highlights the importance of schools involving YP with SEND within the setting of targets and provision of support.

5.8.3 Working in the Community

- Given the variety of need and experience captured in this study, the importance of considering each YP with SEBD as an individual has been highlighted. EPs may have an important role in promoting the awareness of this amongst other professionals who support this group of YP. Individual profiles would enable transition support to be targeted to meet the needs of each YP.
- It will be important for EP's to attend multi-agency meetings for YP with SEBD prior to transition. Such meetings would provide a good forum for EPs to share their knowledge of transition with other agencies, ensuring the best support is put in place for each individual with SEBD.
- EPs could deliver training to other teams, such as the Specialist Teaching Teams, to raise awareness around the significance of transition to secondary school and to share ideas around how to support successful transition for YP with SEBD.

In considering the implications for our practice it is hoped that the views of these YP will influence the support that is put in place for future groups of transitioning YP with SEBD.

5.9 Implications for future research

In light of the dearth of research examining the primary to secondary transition for YP with SEBD, the present study sought to explore the transition experiences of this group. Exploratory research seeks to provide an insight into a little researched phenomenon, upon which future research can build (Robson, 2002). It is hoped that studies will be conducted to further understanding of this significant educational transition for some of our most vulnerable YP, those with SEBD.

Building upon the present study, future research could triangulate the views of YP with those of other key stakeholders, such as parents/carers and school staff. In seeking the views of both teachers and YP, Bailey and Baines (2012) differentiated between 'teacher perceived adjustment' and 'student perceived adjustment'. This illustrates perceptual differences around what constitutes settling into secondary school. In gathering the views of different stakeholders, Brewin and Statham (2011) were able to provide a comprehensive picture of the support which enables positive transition outcomes for LAC. Future research could seek to do the same for YP with SEBD.

Research which further seeks to examine the primary to secondary transition for YP with SEBD and those without additional needs, could take an in-depth look at the journey of personal development experienced by YP during transition. In seeking to gain an insight into the factors that support successful transition for YP with SEBD, a deeper layer of narrative emerged in which students identified the shifts this experience had caused in personal and social identities. Lucey and Reay (2000) conducted research which examined the role of pre-transition anxiety upon students' identities; future research could seek to explore this post-transition.

Finally, given the value ascribed by the participants to the emotional support they received on joining secondary school, future research could take a closer look at this to determine exactly what students find helpful. Evaluative studies could seek to determine the impact of specific forms of emotional support upon the psychological well-being and attainment of YP with SEBD. In doing so an evidence base for such transition support could be developed.

5.10 Reflection

This research has enabled me to explore two areas of personal interest: seeking the voice of the child and developing understanding of YP with SEBD. I set out on this journey hoping to elicit the stories of a group of children whose voices, in

my experience, are often side-lined and deemed unimportant. I wanted to provide them with the opportunity to influence the practice and policy put in place to support them. Children with SEBD are some of the most vulnerable in our society, therefore, I feel passionately that change is required in order that we do not fail these children but provide support which enables them to fulfill their potential.

As stated previously a number of process were adopted to promote reflexivity within the research process, including keeping a research journal (Appendix 21). This enabled me to reflect upon my role as researcher and the set of beliefs that would inevitably influence my interpretation. My background experience of working with children with SEBD was one such factor to consider. This experience was helpful in developing my skills in working with students with SEBD, which supported me to elicit their rich accounts of transition. However, such prior experience meant that I had some expectations around what the YP would discuss. To ensure this did not influence the data collection and analysis, I tried to bracket any preconceptions, considering each YP as an individual and maintaining openness to their stories.

When carrying out my data analysis I was aware of the preconceptions I had of the two groups and the possible influence of this upon my interpretation. In an attempt to negate the impact of any potential bias, I analysed the YP's transcripts in the order which I interviewed them, as opposed to carrying out the idiographic analysis for the most successful group, followed by the least successful. In utilising their words and scrutinising their language carefully I consider that I was able to achieve this.

Entering into the research project I was aware of my dual role as a TEP/Researcher. Given that I carried out my research in the LA within which I work, I was aware that schools, parents, and possibly students would still position me as a TEP. My concerns were verified when some parents requested to speak me as they were concerned that a 'psychologist' was asking to see their child. Having already set out my role within the information sheets, I spoke

with parents to explain more clearly my role as a researcher. Despite the issues that arose from these initial misconceptions, I was also aware of the benefits of having the TEP title in that it granted me easier access to schools and in turn students.

Overall I greatly enjoyed engaging in this research process and have felt privileged to hear the stories of these YP. I have been inspired to draw upon the knowledge I have acquired of IPA and utilising semi-structured interviews, within my practice as a TEP. Having elicited such in-depth information through asking children carefully worded open questions with the addition of prompts, I have applied this approach when gathering YP's views in my work.

5.11 Conclusions

This research set out to explore the factors which support a successful transition to secondary school for YP with SEBD. In eliciting the YP's experiences, the process by which they experienced more or less successful transitions was elucidated and the support which enables this success has been highlighted. This exploratory study has contributed to the primary to secondary transition research base, while providing unique insights into transition for YP with SEBD. In exploring their experiences, the significance of this event for the YP has been identified and the impact upon their personal development noted. Eliciting the VoC for a group whose voices are often sidelined was of central importance to this study. It is considered that the views and narratives of these YP have informed our understanding of transition to secondary school and this understanding can therefore be captured in their words:

'Once you settle in it's really just ... easy getting around ... get up to school and you just walk about with your friends and ... and erm ... do the lesson ... have a talk, chat and then do our work. And then we just go home' (Rob, 12/411-415)

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Details of Systematic Literature Search**Systematic search June 2013****Systematic search 1:**

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Search date | 21/06/13 |
| Data base searched | EBSCO Host – Academic Complete |
| Search terms | Primary to secondary transition |
| Advanced search inclusion criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only papers between 2003-2013 • Only 'Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals' • Language: English |
| Papers | 128 |

Systematic search 2:

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Search date | 21/06/13 |
| Data base searched | EBSCO Host – Academic Complete |
| Key words used | Primary to secondary transition AND impact |
| Advanced search inclusion criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only papers between 2003-2013 • Only 'Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals' • Language: English |
| Papers | 20 |

Systematic search 3:

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Search date | 21/06/13 |
| Data base searched | EBSCO Host – Academic Complete |
| Key words used | Primary to secondary transition AND Special Educational Needs |
| Advanced search inclusion criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only papers between 2003-2013 • Only 'Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals' • Language: English |
| Papers | 4 |

Systematic search 4:

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Search date | 21/06/13 |
| Data base searched | EBSCO Host – Academic Complete |
| Key words used | Primary to secondary transition AND pupil's experience |
| Advanced search inclusion criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only papers between 2003-2013 • Only 'Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals' • Language: English |
| Papers | 5 |

Systematic search 6:

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|-------------|----------|
| Search Date | 21/06/13 |
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|------------------------------------|---|
| Data base searched | EBSCO Host – Academic Complete |
| Search terms | Primary to secondary transition AND ‘Social, emotional and Behavioural Difficulties’, ‘Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties’ and ‘Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties’ |
| Advanced search inclusion criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only papers between 2003-2013 • Only ‘Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals’ • Language: English |
| Papers | 0 |

Systematic search 5:

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Search Date | 21/06/13 |
| Data base searched | EBSCO Host – Academic Complete |
| Search terms | Primary to secondary transition AND support |
| Advanced search inclusion criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only papers between 2003-2013 • Only ‘Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals’ • Language: English |
| Papers | 40 |

Systematic search June 2014

Systematic search 1:

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|------------------------------------|---|
| Search date | 20/06/14 |
| Data base searched | EBSCO Host – Academic Complete |
| Search terms | Primary to secondary transition |
| Advanced search inclusion criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only papers between 2003-2013 • Only ‘Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals’ • Language: English |
| Papers | 141 |

Systematic search 2:

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Search date | 20/06/14 |
| Data base searched | EBSCO Host – Academic Complete |
| Key words used | Primary to secondary transition AND impact |
| Advanced search inclusion criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only papers between 2003-2013 • Only ‘Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals’ • Language: English |
| Papers | 19 |

Systematic search 3:

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Search date | 20/06/14 |
| Data base searched | EBSCO Host – Academic Complete |
| Key words used | Primary to secondary transition AND Special Educational Needs |
| Advanced search inclusion criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only papers between 2003-2013 • Only ‘Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals’ |

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|--------|---------------------|
| | Journals' |
| | • Language: English |
| Papers | 4 |

Systematic search 4:

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Search date | 20/06/14 |
| Data base searched | EBSCO Host – Academic Complete |
| Key words used | Primary to secondary transition AND pupil's experience |
| Advanced search inclusion criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only papers between 2003-2013 • Only 'Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals' • Language: English |
| Papers | 5 |

Systematic search 6:

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Search Date | 20/06/14 |
| Data base searched | EBSCO Host – Academic Complete |
| Search terms | Primary to secondary transition AND 'Social, emotional and Behavioural Difficulties', 'Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties' and 'Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties' |
| Advanced search inclusion criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only papers between 2003-2013 • Only 'Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals' • Language: English |
| Papers | 0 |

Systematic search 5:

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Search Date | 20/06/14 |
| Data base searched | EBSCO Host – Academic Complete |
| Search terms | Primary to secondary transition AND support |
| Advanced search inclusion criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only papers between 2003-2013 • Only 'Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals' • Language: English |
| Papers | 44 |

Appendix 2

Overview of articles selected for literature review

| Strand | Author/Year | Title | Location of research | Participant information | Methodology | Aims of research | Findings |
|--|--------------------|--|----------------------|--|---|--|---|
| Strand 1 : Influences on Transition outcomes | West et al. (2010) | Transition matters: pupils' experiences of the primary-secondary school transition in the West of Scotland and consequences for well-being and attainment. | UK | 135 primary schools and 43 secondary schools participated. 2586 children, 2401 parents and 2581 class teachers completed questionnaires at first phase of data collection. The children were invited to participate on 3 more occasions (at 13years, 15 years and on leaving school at 18/19 years) but due to subject attrition only 1258 completed the last phase. | Quantitative longitudinal design: Self-complete questionnaires completed at four points in time over a 9 year period. | To examine whether the transition experiences of the YP involved has an impact upon long term attainment and psychological well-being and to identify what personal, school and parental characteristics predict a better or worse transition. | Children's transition experiences can have a long term impact upon their educational attainment and psychological well-being. |

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|--|--------------------------|--|----|--|---|---|---|
| Strand 1 : Influences on Transition outcomes | Bailey and Baines (2012) | The impact of risk and resiliency factors on the adjustment of children after the transition from primary to secondary school. | UK | 133 students, their parents and a key member of school staff. In Year 6 they represented 4 mainstream primary schools and in Year 7 they represented two mainstream secondary schools. | Quantitative longitudinal design: Self-complete questionnaires completed pre and post transition. | To better understand the characteristics of the children most vulnerable to negative outcomes in the process of primary to secondary transition. | Findings suggest that certain risk and resilience factors predict school adjustment e.g. Emotional regulation and high self efficacy. In addition those students with SEN who report higher levels of resiliency in primary school are more likely to report poorer school adjustment at secondary. |
| Strand 1 : Influences on Transition outcomes | Gillison et al. (2008) | Changes in quality of life and psychological need satisfaction following the transition to secondary school. | UK | 76 Year 7 students from one mainstream secondary school completed the baseline measures. 63 students participated in 3 phases of data collection. | Quantitative design: self complete questionnaires. | To investigate changes in Quality of Life immediately following the transition to secondary school using Self Determination Theory as a conceptual framework. | The findings suggest that support for the needs for autonomy and relatedness promote the enhancement of student Quality of Life during the transition to secondary school. |

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|--|-------------|--|----|--|---|---|--|
| Strand 2: Transition and vulnerable groups | Dann (2011) | Secondary transition experiences for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) | UK | 6 pupils with a diagnosis of ASC and a statement of SEN, their parents and key members of school staff. The students attend different secondary schools some of which have specialist ASC units, some have SEN bases and one provides no additional support. | Qualitative design: semi-structured interviews with parents and children, and focus group interviews with school staff. | To explore the experiences of transition to secondary school for pupils with ASC. | The findings suggest that specialist SEN bases/units support the transition for YP with ASC. In addition preparation around the organisation and structure of their new school and opportunities to build relationships with key school staff prior to moving was identified as helpful. Overall the participants reported positive experiences of the primary to secondary transition. |
|--|-------------|--|----|--|---|---|--|

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|--|----------------------------|---|----|---|---|---|---|
| Strand 2: Transition and vulnerable groups | Brewin and Stratham (2011) | Supporting the transition from primary to secondary school for children who are Looked After. | UK | A purposive sample of 14 Looked After Year 6 and Year 7 children, their carers and a key member of school staff. | Qualitative design: semi-structured interviews were carried out with all participants | To examine key factors that support Looked After Children (LAC) through their primary to secondary transition. | The findings suggest that the following principles should guide those support LAC during their transition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An emphasis on planning on information sharing by key stakeholders. - Support should be holistic. - Children's differences should be minimised. - Support should be individualised. |
| Strand 2: Transition and vulnerable groups | Maras and Aveling (2006) | Students with special educational needs: transitions from primary to secondary school. | UK | A purposive sample of 4 boys and 2 girls all of whom have a statement of SEN, their parent/carers and teachers. The students had varying needs including ASC, EBD and Downs Syndrome. | Qualitative design: interviews with the students (some pre and post transition, others just post transition). Parent/carers and teachers were offered the opportunity to contribute relevant information. | To explore the primary to secondary transition experiences of YP with a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN). | The findings are similar to those presented in previous research examining students experiences of transition. They conclude that the issues arising are not related to inclusion but instead highlight the importance of continuity of support during the transition process. |

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|--|-----------------------------|--|----|---|--|---|---|
| Strand 3: Children's experiences of transition | Tobbell (2003) | Students' experiences of the transition from primary to secondary school. | UK | 30 female students were interviewed. | Qualitative design: Focus groups. | To explore the students experiences of their primary to secondary transition. | The findings illustrate the importance of relationships in educational achievement following transition. |
| Strand 3: Children's experiences of transition | Sancho and Cline (2012) | Fostering a sense of belonging and community as children start a new school. | UK | 5 focus groups of up to 6 primary school students and semi-structured interviews with 10 of those students once they had joined secondary school. | Qualitative design: Focus groups and semi-structured interviews. IPA was the chosen qualitative methodology. | To explore the views and experiences of children as they transition to secondary school using 'belongingness' as a framework. | Peer acceptance emerged as particularly important in developing a sense of belonging in his new school. |
| Strand 4: Supporting the primary to secondary transition | Humphrey and Ainscow (2006) | Transition club: facilitating learning participation and psychological adjustment during the transition to secondary school. | UK | 38 Year 6 students from feeder primary schools, who had been identified by primary school teachers as under-achieving in numeracy and literacy. | Qualitative design: YP that participated in the intervention completed questionnaires and participated in focus group interviews. In addition researcher observations were analysed. | To carry out an exploratory evaluation of a programme developed to enhance prospective Year 7 students' learning, school participation and psychological adjustment in order to promote successful transitions. | The exploratory evaluation indicated positive outcomes for those students although quantitative data is necessary to determine whether the intervention was effective in achieving it's aims. |

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|---|--------------------------------------|--|----|--|---|--|---|
| Strand 4: Supporting the primary to secondary transition | Bloyce and Frederickson (2012) | Intervening to improve the transfer to secondary school. | UK | The intervention was delivered to a 351 students who had been identified as vulnerable to experiencing a negative transition by members of school staff. All of these children in addition non- equivalent comparison group of 106 students participated in the research. | Quantitative design: self complete questionnaires (SDQ's and SCQ's) pre-intervention, post-intervention and at follow up. | To establish the effectiveness of an intervention developed to minimise anxieties and adjustment problems during the transition to secondary school. | School concerns, emotional symptoms and peer relationship problems all reduced for the experimental sample post intervention and at follow up. |
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|---|-------------------------|---|----|---|--|---|---|
| Strand 4: Supporting the primary to secondary transition | Qualter et al. (2007) | Supporting the development of emotional intelligence competencies to ease the transition from primary to high school. | UK | One cohort of Year 7 students received no intervention and a subsequent cohort of year 7's in the same school participated in the intervention. | Quantitative design: | To find out whether students with higher emotional intelligence cope better with the primary to secondary transition and to determine the efficacy of an intervention designed to promote emotional intelligence and self worth amongst students. | |
| Strand 5: Successful transition | Evangelou et al. (2008) | What makes a successful transition from primary to secondary school? | UK | 550 children and 569 parents completed questionnaires. 12 case study children and their primary and secondary teacher responsible for transition and 6 LA workers were interviewed. | Mixed methods design: Questionnaires and Semi-structured interviews | To explore what makes a successful transition but eliciting key stakeholders experiences of the primary to secondary transition. | Most children reported successful transitions which comprised 5 aspects including a growing interest in school work. There were a range of effective transition practices identified. |

Table of Weight of Evidence Ratings

| Author/Year | Soundness of Study | Review-specific Appropriateness of design | Review-specific Appropriateness of focus/ approach | Overall weight of evidence |
|---|--------------------|---|--|----------------------------|
| Strand 1 : Influences on Transition outcomes | | | | |
| West et al. (2010) | High | High | High | High |
| Gillison et al. (2008) | Medium | Medium/low | Medium | Medium |
| Bailey and Baines (2012) | High | High | High | High |
| Strand 2: Transition and vulnerable groups | | | | |
| Dann (2011) | Medium | High | High | High |
| Brewin and Stratham (2011) | Medium | Medium | High | Medium |
| Strand 3: Children's experiences of transition | | | | |
| Sancho and Cline (2012) | Low | Medium | High | Medium |
| Tobbell (2003) | High | Medium | High | High |
| Strand 4: Supporting the primary to secondary transition | | | | |
| Humphrey and Ainscow (2006) | Medium | Medium | Medium | Medium |
| Bloyce and Frederickson (2012) | High | High | High | High |
| Qualter et al. (2007) | Medium | Medium | Medium | Medium |
| Strand 5: Successful transition | | | | |
| Evangelou et al. (2008) | High | High | High | High |

Detailed Weight of Evidence Judgements

| Strand 1: Influences on Transition Outcomes | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| Study | WoE A: Generic on quality of execution of study. | WoE B: Review specific on appropriateness of method. | WoE C: Review specific on focus/approach of study to review question. |
| West et al. (2010) | Transparency: Transparency around sampling and analyses. | Purposivity: Longitudinal Large, representative sample. Contextualised information rather than just within-child supports the values underpinning the current research. | Utility: High relevance to this review question as aimed to answer both strands of the question. |
| | Accuracy: Valid and reliable measures. Thorough analyses enabled researchers to identify factors that predict transition experiences and long term well-being. | | |
| | Accessibility: The paper was accessible although given the volume of data the results section took some time to decipher. | | Propriety: Received ethical approval. |
| | Specificity: Longitudinal – 10 year period allowed for extensive follow up. Large, representative sample. Some participant attrition | | |
| Bailey and Baines (2012) | Transparency: Clear theoretical perspective. Transparency around methodology. | Purposivity: The design allows the researchers to consider process rather than just outcomes. The longitudinal quantitative design allowed the researchers to examine risk and resilience factors both pre and post transition. | Utility: High relevance to the review question as examines the effect of different risk and resilience factors upon school adjustment and also looks at how protective factors may act as a 'buffer'. |
| | Accuracy: Reliable measure of resilience and school adjustment. | | |
| | Accessibility: The paper was understandable. | | Propriety: Received ethical approval. |
| | Specificity: Longitudinal | | |

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| | Triangulation between children and teachers data. | | |
| Gillison et al. (2008) | Transparency: Transparency around procedures. Thorough analyses, transparency around these. | Purposivity: Research design enabled the researchers to examine whether there was a change in QoL over the first term but also whether this was mediated by a change in need satisfaction. Measure of need satisfaction lacked some internal reliability and therefore it is unclear whether the data provides valid information regarding the students' need satisfaction. Limited generalisability given the small sample size. | Utility: Medium relevance as QoL is an internationally recognised, holistic measure of how well life is going. Of interest to see whether transition impacts upon this and whether this is mediated by needs satisfaction. However it is very specific in its focus and therefore will only provide us with one small window of information. |
| | Accuracy: Reliable measure of QoL Reliability of measure for 'needs satisfaction'- not such good internal reliability of factors until some removed. (Questionnaire adapted from adult version). | | |
| | Accessibility: The paper was understandable. | | |
| | Specificity: Sample is unrepresentative (one year 7 group). Thorough analyses. | | |

| Strand 2: Transition and vulnerable groups | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| Study | WoE A: Generic on quality of execution of study. | WoE B: Review specific on appropriateness of method. | WoE C: Review specific on focus/approach of study to review question. |
| Dann (2011) | Transparency: Clarity around sampling and procedures. Some confusion around method of data analysis and epistemological position. Several different approaches are referred to. | Purposivity: Pre and post transition data. Triangulation of information. Qualitative design allowed factors that are important to the participants, to emerge. | Utility: High relevance to this review question as it aims to explore how children with ASC experience their transition and examine those support structures that facilitate positive outcomes. |
| | Accuracy: Triangulation of data from different sources including the YP, parents/carers and school staff. | | |

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|----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| | <p>Talking Mats was used to support the student's interviews enabling them to participate fully. Themes evidenced with quotes from the participants.</p> <p>Accessibility: The paper is accessible read.</p> <p>Specificity: Pre and post transition data. Thoughtful data collection procedures. Some difficulty synthesising data from all sources yet provides more holistic view of the process. Lack of reflexivity.</p> | | <p>Propriety: Received ethical approval. Sought the views of a vulnerable group of students.</p> |
| Brewin and Statham (2011) | <p>Transparency: Clear theoretical framework. The procedures and analyses lacked some transparency in how they were carried out. Lack of clarity on epistemological position.</p> | <p>Purposivity: Triangulation of data from different sources provides more holistic picture. Qualitative methodology allows for depth of data and for ideas to emerge from the participants rather than being imposed by the researcher. Pre and post transition data.</p> | <p>Utility: High relevance to the review question as it explores how YP who are looked after experience the process of transition while examining the tailored support that influences the outcomes of their transition.</p> |
| | <p>Accuracy: Triangulation of data with children, carers and teachers. In addition different perspectives were gained from social work managers and LAC education workers.</p> | | |
| | <p>Accessibility: The paper was accessible although the findings section was vast and it wasn't always clear which source they had come from.</p> | | |
| | <p>Specificity: Pre and post transition data. Large sample enabled triangulation of data. All LAC in Year 6 within</p> | | <p>Propriety: Received ethical approval. Sought the views of a vulnerable group of students.</p> |

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|--|---|--|--|
| | one county were contacted, sample should be representative of LAC population in this area. Need clarity around process of analysis. No evidence of reflexivity. | | |
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| Strand 3: Young People's experiences of transition | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| Study | WoE A: Generic on quality of execution of study. | WoE B: Review specific on appropriateness of method. | WoE C: Review specific on focus/approach of study to review question. |
| Tobbell (2003) | Transparency: Clarity about choice of methodological design. Some lack of clarity around selection of participants. Clarity on analytical process. Transparency around theoretical framework. | Purposivity: Research design promotes the richness and depth of the data collection. It also promotes the elicitation of information that is salient to participants as opposed to the researcher restricting the findings to measures of their choice. | Utility: High relevance to this review question it aimed to explore the students experiences of transition. In doing so factors that influenced their experiences and the overall outcomes of their transition were discussed. Theoretical frameworks were used to explain the findings. |
| | Accuracy: The interview schedule is presented in the paper. Quotes to evidence themes. | | |
| | Accessibility: The paper was accessible. | | |
| | Specificity: Large sample for a qualitative project. Use of only girls may have impacted upon the themes that emerged. Reflexivity – the author gives some context to her knowledge of child development. | | |
| Sancho and Cline (2012) | Transparency: Clarity about choosing qualitative research design. Some lack of clarity regarding sampling techniques and total | Purposivity: Sought the views of children. Qualitative methodology promoted richness of data and allowed participants to explore | Utility: High relevance to the review questions as the research involved an exploration of children's |

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| | number. Some confusion around method of analysis adopted – thematic or IPA? | their experiences of belonging. The themes map closely onto the interview schedule – not participant led and limited level of interpretation/analysis. | experiences of transition and belonging in their new secondary school and identified factors which promote a sense of belonging. |
| | Accuracy: Themes evidenced with quotes from the participants. | | |
| | Accessibility: The paper was understandable except for the confusion regarding the process of analysis. | | |
| | Specificity: Pre and post transition data collection. The semi-structured interview schedule was based around the themes which emerged from the focus groups. | | Propriety: Received ethical approval. |

| Strand 4: Supporting the primary to secondary transition | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| Study | WoE A: Generic on quality of execution of study. | WoE B: Review specific on appropriateness of method. | WoE C: Review specific on focus/approach of study to review question. |
| Bloyce and Frederickson (2012) | Transparency: Clarity around ontological positioning. Transparency around procedure and sampling technique. | Purposivity: Measures assessed those areas that were targeted by the intervention. Pre-post-follow up data. Clear about potential limitations of using a non-equivalent comparison group. | Utility: High relevance to this review question as it involved the development and evaluation of a programme aimed at promoting positive transition outcomes for vulnerable students. |
| | Accuracy: Valid and reliable measures (SDQ and SCQ). | | |
| | Accessibility: The paper was accessible. | | |
| | Specificity: Sample was representative of vulnerable students in this area – clear criteria for vulnerability provided. Non-equivalent comparison group. | | Propriety: Received ethical approval. Clear around ethical considerations e.g. allowing all vulnerable students to participate in the intervention rather than having a matched control group. |

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| | Pre-post-follow up design. | | |
| Qualter et al. (2007) | Transparency: Clear theoretical perspective. Some lack of clarity around context of procedure e.g. location, facilitator. Transparency around quantitative analysis. | Purposivity: Statistical analysis revealed no difference between the comparison and experimental groups regarding baseline cognitive ability, gender and behaviour. This promoted the ability of the researchers to attribute differences to the intervention. However given the time lapse between the data collection for the control and intervention group it is possible that any differences could be attributed to variations in contextual factors including the curriculum. Teachers were involved in the delivery of the intervention and therefore the data they provided around how the students coped with transition may be biased. | Utility: The study provides evidence that higher levels of EI are associated with being able to better cope with the transition to secondary school. In addition it illustrates that an intervention programme to increase EI is effective for those with lower baselines. However it does not provide an explanation of the mechanics of how this relationship works – of why higher EI supports students to cope with transition. |
| | Accuracy: Measure of self concept reliable and valid. The measure for emotional intelligence accounts for a positive response bias. No information regarding validity or reliability. Measure of 'coping' may be biased by teachers involvement in the intervention. | | |
| | Accessibility: The paper was understandable. | | Propriety: Received ethical approval. |
| | Specificity: Control and intervention group. Sample drawn from the same school, minimising impact of differing school contexts. But may limit generalisability. There was some participant attrition. | | |
| Humphrey and Ainscow (2006) | Transparency: Clarity around sampling. Justification of methodology and analytical process. Clear theoretical framework. | Purposivity: Children's views central to the research. Qualitative methodology allowed researchers to examine the process by which the intervention was successful rather than simply looking at | Utility: Medium relevance as the research examines a unique approach to supporting the transition for a vulnerable group of students. The exploratory design allows an in-depth understanding of how and why the intervention is effective. |
| | Accuracy: Thorough analyses. Used quotations to | | |

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| | provide evidence for qualitative analysis. | outcomes. Quantitative data to measure attainment (a key focus for the intervention) should have been gathered and analysed. | |
| | Accessibility: The paper was accessible. | | |
| | Specificity: Clear justification for qualitative design. Children's views were gathered through focus groups and semi-structured interviews. These were triangulated with researcher observations. Homogeneity of the sample. | | |
| | | | Propriety: Received ethical approval. |

| Strand 5: Successful transition | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Study | WoE A: Generic on quality of execution of study. | WoE B: Review specific on appropriateness of method. | WoE C: Review specific on focus/approach of study to review question. |
| Evangelou et al. (2008) | Transparency: Transparency around sampling and methodology. All data collection tools were appended. Lack of clarity around qualitative analysis. | Purposivity: Large, representative sample. | Utility: High relevance to this review question as aimed to answer both strands of the question. |
| | Accuracy: Questionnaires developed specifically for the research. They are very lengthy and may not be easily accessible all parents and YP. Thorough analyses enabled researchers to identify factors that predict transition experiences and long term well-being. | | |
| | Accessibility: The paper an easily accessible DCSF paper. The many appendices were particularly useful. | | |
| | Specificity: Large, representative sample Harder to reach groups were contacted by phone | | Propriety: Received ethical approval. |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| | <p>promoting the inclusivity of the project.</p> <p>Mixed methods – allowed for wide data collection but also an in depth look at 12 ‘case studies’.</p> <p>Data triangulated: YP, parents/carers and Educational Professionals.</p> <p>Some participant attrition.</p> | | |
|--|---|--|--|

The Five Factors which Comprise a Successful Transition to Secondary School

Evangelou et al. (2008) consider that successful transition is 'a composite concept consisting of five underlying dimensions':

1. Developing friendships and confidence.
2. Settling into school life
3. Growing interest in school and school work
4. Getting used to new routines
5. Experiencing curriculum continuity.

Discussion of alternative research paradigms

Post-positivism

Post-positivism maintains that there is a single reality which can be understood through research (Robson, 2002). Post-positivists acknowledge that the values, knowledge and prior experience of the observer can influence what is observed, meaning that reality is only partially and imperfectly known (Reichardt & Rallis, 1994). Researchers working within the post-positivist paradigm view the attainment of objectivity to be the ultimate goal and consider science to generate knowledge that is more valid than personal opinion. It considers control and measurement to be fundamental in developing legitimate knowledge and promotes the use of quantitative methodologies (Robson, 2002).

Social Constructionism

Conversely, social constructionism posits that knowledge is not a static truth but instead is culturally and historically located, shaped through language and interactions with others (Bruner, 1990). Willig (2008) suggests that 'what we perceive and experience is never a direct reflection of environmental conditions but must be understood as a specific reading of these conditions' (p.7). Within this paradigm, research aims to understand the multiple constructions of knowledge (Robson, 2002). Researchers working within a social constructionist paradigm place value on first person accounts which support them in their exploration of multiple realities. They consider that the researcher and participants co-construct reality and therefore the researcher influences what data is collected and the outcomes of analysis (Willig, 2008). This epistemological positioning advocates the use of qualitative research methods to support the gathering of multiple perspectives (Robson, 2002).

Pragmatism

A pragmatic approach to conducting research postulates that the researcher should apply the ontological and methodological approach that will be most effective for any given research area (Robson, 2002). Reichardt and Rallis (1994) argue that quantitative and qualitative research methods are compatible as they share many of the same beliefs. Therefore, researchers can use

whatever works best for their particular research question. This paradigm lends itself to a mixed methods design. It is particularly popular in applied psychology, where researchers focus on producing something that is effective and useful (Robson, 2002).

Information Letter for the Young People

What do you think about moving to Secondary School?

Dear

My name is Lauren and I am training to become an Educational and Child Psychologist (somebody who helps schools so that all children and young people to can do their best and really enjoy going to school). I am doing a project to find out what it is like for young people moving from primary to secondary school and what they think about any help they had.

Here is my photo:



I hope that this project will help people who are in charge of schools to know what it is like for young people when they move from primary to secondary school and what kinds of help they should give them.

With your help I want to find out about:

1. What it was like to start secondary school (the good and the bad bits).
2. Who helped you and what did they do.

3. How you think they could make starting at secondary school even better for young people in the future.

Who is taking part?

- 30 young people in Year 7 who have been given help in school for behaviour, feelings or friendships.

If you take part in this project you will:

- Fill out a questionnaire. This will ask you for your point of view on lots of things about school. It will only take about 15 minutes to do.
- Some of the young people will be asked to have a chat with me so I can find out about moving from primary to secondary school. This chat will be recorded using a tape recorder so that I can remember what they say.

The information that you share with me (in the questionnaires or the chat) will be kept between us. The only time I might have to speak to another adult is if you tell me something that means either you or someone else is in danger.

What will happen afterwards?

- When the questionnaires are filled in and I have talked to the young people I will write about what I have found. When I am writing I won't use your real name and will make sure that nobody can work out what you said.
- If you would like I will send you a letter to tell you what I have found.
- If you decide that you don't want to take part any more then that is OK, but once I have finished all my writing I won't be able to take out the information you have given me.

What to do next:

1. If you are interested in taking part then fill in the consent form
2. If you want to know any more information before making a choice then you can write them down and give them to your teacher.
3. **REMEMBER** if you don't want to take part in this project you don't have too.

Thank you for reading my letter.

I look forward to meeting you,

Lauren Thackeray

Information Letter for Parents

‘An Exploration of the Factors that Support a Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School for Young People with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties: The Young Person’s Perspective’

My name is Lauren Thackeray and I am a student at the University of East London, training to become an Educational Psychologist. I currently work as a Trainee Educational Psychologist for XXX Community and Educational Psychology Service. This research project is being carried out as part of my training but also to inform the development of XXX’s Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy.

The research aims to develop understanding of young people’s experiences of transition from primary to secondary school and their views of any support they received. I am particularly interested in the views of those young people who have received support in school for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The findings of this research will support young people in the future to experience successful transition to secondary school. Your child is being invited to participate in this research.

It is important for you to understand why this research is being carried out and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish.

Why is this research being done?

- XXX County Council are currently developing their Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Strategy, which aims to ensure successful transitions for all children with SEND. This research aims to provide the child’s perspective on what supports a successful transition.

Why has my child been invited to participate?

Your child has been asked to participate because:

- They are currently in Year 7, having started secondary school in September 2012.
- They have been placed on the Special Educational Needs register in order that they can receive support in school for social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. According to the amount of support they are being given, your child will either have been placed at School Action Plus or have a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

Your child will only participate in this research with signed consent from you, their Head Teacher and the child themselves.

What does the study involve?

The study will involve two phases:

Phase 1 (April - May 2013) - Questionnaires

- I will arrange to come to your child's school to meet the young people in small groups of 2 or 3. It is hoped that a member of school staff will also be there to support the young people and make them feel at ease. Following a short discussion about the research the young people will be asked to complete a questionnaire which will collect their views of primary school, secondary school and the transition. It will also ask them questions regarding any support they have received. The questionnaires will take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

Phase 2 (June - July 2013) - Interviews

- A small number of children will be invited to interview. The interview will aim to explore in more detail, their experiences of transition and any support they received. I will carry out the interviews on a one-to-one basis and they will last for approximately 30 minutes. The interview will be recorded using a tape recorder.

Your child will have the right to withdraw from the study at any point, until data analysis is underway.

Confidentiality

- The information that your child shares with me (in the questionnaires and the interviews) will be kept between myself and your child.
- The only time I will share information is if they say something that causes me concern about the safety of them or someone else.
- In writing all identifying features (including the name of the school) will be anonymised or removed.
- The data will be stored securely and only myself and my research supervisor will have access to the raw data.

If you have any further questions please don't hesitate to contact me at:

U1131182@uel.ac.uk

If you would like I can arrange a time for the parents whose children have been asked to participate in the study, to meet with me and ask any questions. Please let someone at your child's school know if you would like for me to do this.

Thank you for taking the time to consider allowing your child to participate in this research.

Parent Consent Forms

Dear Parent,

Informed consent form – please complete if you are happy for your child to take part in this research project.

Title: ‘An Exploration of the Factors that Support a Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School for Young People with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties: The Young Person’s Perspective’

Name of Researcher: Lauren Thackeray(Trainee Educational Psychologist), University of East London

Please tick the box

- | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|
| 1. | I confirm that I have read and understand the research information sheet for the above study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. | I understand that my participation is voluntary and that my child is free to withdraw at any time, until data analysis is underway. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. | I understand that any data or information used in any written or verbal feedback will be anonymised. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. | I understand that all data will be stored securely and destroyed one year after the study is complete. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. | I agree to my child taking part in both the questionnaire and interview phases of the above study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of Parent

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Letter to Invite the Young People to Interview

05/07/2013

Dear XXX,

I hope you are enjoying you last bit of the school year. You have almost made it to the end of Year 7 ☺.

Last half term you filled in a questionnaire with me about what it was like to start secondary school.

I would like to invite you to meet with me next Tuesday afternoon, during lesson time. In this time we will have a chat so I can find out a bit more about what it was like for you to start secondary school.

I will bring drinks and biscuits and we will probably chat for about 45 minutes.

If you are happy to meet with me please let the SENCO know.

Best Wishes,

Lauren

P.s. if you have any questions about our chat or my project you can send me an email. My email address is:

u1131182@uel.ac.uk

Evangelou et al's (2008) Underlying dimensions of a successful transition using factor analysis (N=550 children)

| Underlying dimensions of a successful transition | |
|---|--------------|
| | Loading |
| Developing friendships and confidence (1=less, 2=same, 3=more) | |
| 1. Compared with Y6, child's school friends (source: parents) | 0.403 |
| 2. Compared with Y6, child's self-esteem (source: parents) | 0.868 |
| 3. Compared with Y6, child's confidence (source: parents) | 0.881 |
| 4. Compared with Y6, child's motivation (source: parents) | 0.564 |
| <i>Cronbach's alpha= 0.839; Median= 2.5, SD= 0.52, N= 506</i> <i>1-2.5 = "0" (n = 266) versus 2.75-3 = "1" (n = 240)</i> | |
| Settling in school life (1=not at all to 4= very well/much) | |
| 1. Child settling in (source: parents) | 0.643 |
| 2. Satisfaction with the process of transition (source: parents) | 0.475 |
| 3. Not having felt concerned about child when first moved on (source: parents) | 0.471 |
| 4. Not feeling concerned about child now (source: parents) | 0.774 |
| 5. Child settling in (source: children) | 0.365 |
| <i>Cronbach's alpha= 0.747; Median= 3.6, SD= 0.49, N= 485</i> <i>1.2-3.4 = "0" (n= 239) versus 3.6-4 = "1" (n = 246)</i> | |
| Showing a growing interest in school and work (1=less, 2=same, 3=more) | |
| 1. Compared with Y6, child's interest in school (source: parents) | 0.797 |
| 2. Compared with Y6, child's interest in school work (source: parents) | 0.772 |
| <i>Cronbach's alpha= 0.824; Median= 2.5, SD=0.56, N= 504</i> <i>1-2.5 = "0" (n = 295) versus 3 = "1" (n = 209)</i> | |
| Getting used to new routines (1=very difficult to 4= very easy) | |
| 1. Having many different teachers (source: children) | 0.740 |
| 2. Changing classrooms between lessons (source: children) | 0.665 |
| 3. Behaviour and discipline (source: children) | 0.472 |
| 4. Not being with same pupils in all lessons (source: children) | 0.507 |
| <i>Cronbach's alpha= 0.700; Median= 3.00, SD= 0.54, N= 490</i> <i>1-3="0" (n = 271) versus 3.25-4 = "1" (n = 219)</i> | |
| Experiencing curriculum continuity (1=not at all to 4 = very) | |
| 1. English in Y6 helped cope with Y7 work (source: children) | 0.762 |
| 2. Maths in Y6 helped cope with Y7 work (source: children) | 0.580 |
| 3. Sciences in Y6 helped cope with Y7 work (source: children) | 0.663 |
| <i>Cronbach's alpha= 0.702; Median= 3.00, SD= 0.59, N=516</i> <i>1-3="0" (n = 276) versus 3.3-4 = "1" (n= 240)</i> | |

Questionnaire

Questionnaire: Transition to Secondary School

Name:

Date of Birth:

...../...../.....

Age:

School:

Boy/Girl

Settling in to Secondary School



Please put a  in a box for each question


| | Very worried | Quite worried | Not very worried | Not at all worried |
|---|--------------|---------------|------------------|--------------------|
| How did you feel when you first started secondary school? | | | | |
| How do you feel now? | | | | |

Please put a  in a box for each question

| | Very well | Quite well | Not very well | Not at all well |
|--|-----------|------------|---------------|-----------------|
| How are you settling in? | | | | |
| How well did your primary school prepare you for secondary school? | | | | |
| How well did your secondary school help you to settle in? | | | | |

Friends and confidence


Take a minute to think back to when you were at primary school . . .

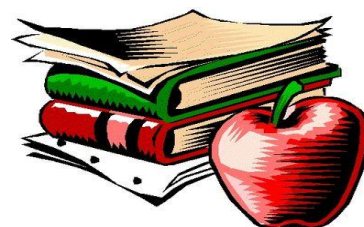
(please put a  in a box for each question)



| | More | Same | Less |
|--|------|------|------|
| Compared with primary school how many friends do you have at secondary school? | | | |
| Compared with primary school, how confident do you feel at secondary school? | | | |
| Compared with primary school, how good do you feel about yourself at secondary school? | | | |
| Compared with primary school, how motivated do you feel at secondary school? | | | |

School and School Work

Take a minute to think back to when you were at primary school . . . (please put a  in a box for each question)



| | More | Same | Less |
|---|------|------|------|
| Compared with primary school how interesting is secondary school? | | | |
| Compared with primary school, how interesting is the school work at secondary school? | | | |

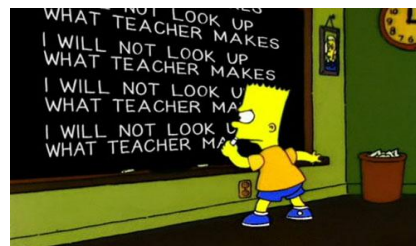
How much do you think the work you did in these subjects in Year 6, helped you to cope with the work you are doing in Year 7?


(please put a  in a box for each of the subjects)

| | Very Helpful | Quite Helpful | Not very helpful | Not at all helpful |
|---------|--------------|---------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Maths | | | | |
| Science | | | | |
| English | | | | |

New Routines

How did you find



(please put a  in a box for each statement)

| | Very Easy | Quite Easy | Quite Difficult | Very Difficult |
|---|-----------|------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Having lots of different teachers | | | | |
| Changing classrooms for each lesson | | | | |
| School rules and rewards | | | | |
| Not being with the same students in all lessons | | | | |

Thank you for taking the time to complete



Questionnaire: Transition to Secondary School

Name

Date of Birth

.../.../.....

Age.....

Boy/Girl

Primary School



Which primary school did you go to?.....

Take a minute to think back to when you were at primary school . . .

Please tick



a box for each question.



1. At primary school did you look forward to going to secondary school?

Yes

☐

No

☐

Both

☐

2. Did your Year 6 teacher talk to you about going to secondary school?

A lot ☐

A little ☐

No ☐

3. Did anyone else in your primary school talk to you or give you any help for going to secondary school?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If 'Yes' . . . Who talked to you? (you can ✓ as many boxes as you want)

Teaching Assistant ☐

Mentor ☐

Head Teacher ☐

Key worker ☐

Deputy Head ☐

Counsellor ☐

Educational Psychologist ☐

Other ☐

4. Was it helpful to talk about going to secondary school?

Very helpful ☐

Quite helpful ☐

Unhelpful ☐

5. How well did your primary school prepare you for secondary school?

Very well ☐

Quite well ☐

Not well ☐

Visits to Secondary school



a. Did you visit your secondary school before you started?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If you put a  in the 'Yes' box

a. How many times did you visit?


1 ☐

2 ☐

3 ☐

4 ☐


5+ ☐

b. Which type of visit did you do (you can  as many boxes as you want)

Open day/evening ☐

Visit with your class ☐

Visit by myself ☐

c. What did you do on your visit/visits? (you can  as many boxes as you want)

Went to a lesson ☐

Went on a tour ☐

Went to an after-school club ☐

Met teachers ☐

Listened to a talk or the Head Teacher ☐

Met students ☐

Had lunch ☐

d. Was your visit/visits helpful?

Very helpful ☐

Quite helpful ☐

Not helpful ☐

e. Did you enjoy your visit/visits?

Very much ☐

A little ☐

Not really ☐

Not at all ☐

Starting Secondary School



Which secondary school do you go to?.....

Take a minute to think back to when you started secondary school . . .



1. How did you find the first few weeks of secondary school?

Very Easy ☐ Quite Easy ☐ Quite Hard ☐ Very Hard ☐

2. How did you cope with the size of the school?

Very Easy ☐ Quite Easy ☐ Quite Hard ☐ Very Hard ☐

3. Were you given any help to find your way around (e.g. a map)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

4. How did you find the new timetable?

Very Easy ☐ Quite Easy ☐ Quite Hard ☐ Very Hard ☐

5. Were you given any help to understand your timetable?

Yes ☐

No ☐

6. How did you cope with the amount of work (both in school and home work)?

Very Easy ☐

Quite Easy ☐

Quite Hard ☐

Very Hard ☐

7. Were you given any help with your school work?

Yes ☐

No ☐

8. What was it like having lots of different teachers?

Very Easy ☐

Quite Easy ☐

Quite Hard ☐

Very Hard ☐

9. Were the teachers friendly?

Yes ☐

No ☐

10. What was it like to meet and get to know lots of different children?

Very Easy ☐

Quite Easy ☐

Quite Hard ☐

Very Hard ☐

11. How was it to make new friends?

Very Easy ☐

Quite Easy ☐

Quite Hard ☐

Very Hard ☐

12. Were you given any help to get to other people (e.g. by playing games or being invited to clubs)?

Yes ☐

No ☐

13. How was it being around lots of older teenagers?

Very Easy ☐ Quite Easy ☐ Quite Hard ☐ Very Hard ☐

14. Did you have any help to get to know students in the other years?

Yes ☐ No ☐

15. Did you have enough help when you started secondary school?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Now

Take a minute to think about how things are now . . .




16. How do you feel now you have spent nearly 2 terms at your secondary school?

| | | |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Excited <input type="checkbox"/> | Happy <input type="checkbox"/> | Nervous <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Both excited and nervous <input type="checkbox"/> | Worried <input type="checkbox"/> | Unhappy <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | Other <input type="checkbox"/> |

17. How are you settling in?

Very well ☐ Quite well ☐ Not very well ☐ Not at all ☐

Do you feel safe when ...? (You can  as many boxes as you like)

Travelling between home and school ☐

☐

In school ☐
In the playground ☐

18. Have you made new friends in your secondary school?

Lots ☐ Some ☐ A few ☐ Not really ☐

19. How many of your friends moved to the same school as you from your primary school?

None ☐ Only a couple ☐ Most of them ☐

20. What parts of school do you enjoy?
as you like)



(You can as many boxes

Lessons ☐ Playtime ☐ Lunch time ☐ After-school clubs ☐

Assemblies ☐ Form Time ☐ Being with friends ☐ None ☐

21. Now that you have been in school for 2 terms please the routines you know really well. (You can as many boxes as you like)



Registration ☐ Clubs ☐ Lunches ☐

Using school equipment ☐ Getting to lessons on time ☐

School uniform ☐ PE kit ☐ Who to ask for advice ☐

22. Overall how do you feel about your first 2 terms at secondary school?

Brilliant ☐ Good ☐ A little tricky ☐ Very difficult ☐

Feedback from the Pilot of the Questionnaire

The draft questionnaires were piloted in March 2013 with two Year 7 students who had been identified by their secondary school SENCO as having behaviour difficulties. Their needs were considered similar to those of the sample. Their feedback was as follows:

- There were mixed views around the length with one student stating it was 'alright but too long' whereas the other considered it to be an 'OK length'.
- In addition one student considered it 'very easy to fill in' whereas another student thought it 'could be a bit clearer'.
- It was considered helpful to have the researcher present.
- They thought it would be good to have a question about how interesting they find their work.

Learning Points:

- Be clear with schools on exclusion/inclusion criteria for participants.
- Have a scripted introduction briefly outlining the research and their role as participants.

Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Welcome

- Introduce myself
- Explain purpose of the interview – quick reminder of research project
- Assure confidentiality
- Ask permission to tape the interview
- Tell them they can leave at any time
- ‘Any questions?’

Overview of interview process

- I am interested in your experiences of moving to secondary school and any support you were given.
- There are no right or wrong answers.
- It may seem like an odd conversation, because you probably will be doing most of the talking – but that’s OK
- Take your time with thinking about what you want to say and take your time with speaking, there is no rush
- You can say as much as you can if you would like to

Discussion

Section 1: Experiences prior to beginning Secondary School.

(The young people will be given the opportunity to draw a picture of them in their primary school, this will be used to prompt their thinking about primary school and as a tool to begin the discussion)

- **Can you tell me a little bit about your time at primary school?** (Possible prompts: what did you like? what did you dislike? Best? Worst?).
- **How did you feel about leaving primary school to start secondary school?**
(Possible prompts: what were your thoughts about going to secondary school? What did you think secondary school would be like?)
- **Can you tell me about any help your primary school gave you to prepare for secondary school?** (Possible prompts: What did they do? Did you talk about it with your teacher? What was it like? Was it helpful? Anything they could have done better?)

- **Can you tell me about your visits to secondary school?** (Possible prompts: who did you go with? What did you do there? Who did you meet?)

Section 2: Experiences of beginning Secondary School:

(The young people will be given the opportunity to draw a picture of them on their first day of secondary school, this will be used to prompt their thinking about starting secondary school and as a tool to begin the discussion)

- **Can you tell me about your first day at secondary school?** (Possible prompts: What did you do? How did you feel? What was the best part of the day? What was the trickiest?)
- **What was it different to primary school?** (Possible prompts: Anything else?)
- **How did you find those changes?** (Possible prompts: How did you feel? Did you get used to them? How did you manage?)
- **How was your first term of secondary school?**
- **Can you tell me about any help you had from your secondary school to settle in or make friends?** (Possible prompts: Who helped? What did they do? Refer to their answers on the questionnaire)
- **What do you think are the most important things in helping someone to settle in/enjoy school?** Possible prompts: What would help? How did it help? What exactly did they do? When did they do it? Anyone else? Anything else?)
- **Is there anything else your secondary school could have done to help you settle in or make you feel welcome?** (Possible prompts: anything else? Why would that have helped?)

Section 3: Experiences of School Now:

(The young people will be given the opportunity to draw a picture of their experience of school now, this will be used to prompt their thinking about starting secondary school and as a tool to begin the discussion)

- **Can you tell me what school is like for you now?** (Possible prompts: what is going well? What do you enjoy? Is there anything that is still tricky? Are there people you can ask for help?)
- **What is a good/bad day at secondary school like?** (Possible prompts: what happens on good/bad days at school? What are your lessons/play times like?)

- Can tell me what it's like to be a secondary school student?
- How can you tell if someone has settled into secondary school?
- What would it be like if a students hadn't settled into their secondary school?

Section 4: Concluding questions:

- So overall how was moving to secondary? (how did you manage?)
- What was important about moving to secondary school?
- If you could talk to children who are about to move to secondary school, what advice would you give them?
- If you could speak with the head teacher of your primary school what advice would you give them to help prepare their Year 6 students for secondary school?
- If you could speak with the head teacher of your secondary school what advice would you give them to help their new Year 7 students settle in?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about moving to secondary school?

Closure

- Explain what will happen next.
- Thank them.
- Remind of their right to withdraw and issues relating to confidentiality.
- Tell them I will write a letter to tell them about the findings of the research.
- Take them back to their classroom

Additional Prompts:

- What was that like?
- How did that make you feel?
- What do you mean by ...?
- Was that important for you?
- Can you tell me more?
- What was it about that you liked/disliked?

Young People's Consent Form

This is a CONSENT FORM that you need to fill in if you want to take part.
If you want to take part then please complete this form.

Please choose  a box to ☐ for each question.

1. I have looked at the information about the project and I understand what it is about.

Yes ☐  No – I want to chat more ☐ 


2. I understand that I can stop talking about something if I want to.


Yes ☐  No ☐ 

3. I understand that I do not have to answer any question that I don't want to.


Yes ☐  No ☐ 


3. I understand that my answers to the questions will be recorded on audio tape.

Yes ☐ 


N
o ☐ 


4. I understand that I what I say will be kept private and only shared after my name and any other details that could identify me will be taken out. The only time that Lauren can tell anybody else my name or any details, is if I say something which means that me or someone else is not safe.

Yes ☐ 

N
o ☐ 

5. I understand that I can change my mind about taking part at any time.

Yes ☐ 

N
o ☐ 

I agree to take part in the questionnaire study for 'Transition to Secondary School' research project.

Signature

Date

**If invited, I agree to take part in the interview study for
'Transition to Secondary School' research project.**

Signature

Date

Thank you!

The IPA Guidelines for Data Analysis

While acknowledging that in IPA data analysis demands flexible thinking and creativity, Smith et al (2009) offer guidance to the researcher. They advocate the following steps;

Step 1: Reading and re-reading. At this stage the researcher immerses him/herself in the data by listening to the recorded interview and reading and re-reading the transcript. This facilitates engagement with the text and ensures that the participant is the focus of the analytic process.

Step 2: Initial noting. This involves detailed analysis whereby the researcher annotates the transcript making descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments. Descriptive commenting involves accepting what individuals say at face value while thinking about how participants experience significant aspects of their world. Linguistic commenting involves looking at the way in which language and content are related. Features to consider include pronoun use, pauses, emphasis, laughter and the use of metaphor. Conceptual coding is more interpretative and demands a shift in focus. At this stage the analyst needs to interrogate the claims of the participant in order to glean their overarching understanding of the topic of discussion; looking beyond specific incidents in an attempt to understand the meaning/s underpinning related issues.

Step 3: Developing emergent themes. Initial exploratory notes are used to create concise statements capturing the important elements of the text. Smith et al. (2009) refer to 'a synergistic process of description and interpretation'. Emergent themes capture and reflect a level of understanding but remain open to further interrogation.

Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes. At this stage the analyst, with their research question in mind, organises the themes looking to identify patterns and relationships. This phase necessitates an open and flexible approach and various ways of looking for patterns are suggested. Having organised the data into themes it is typically presented in a table.

Step 5: Moving to the next case. Commitment to idiography means the each transcript is analysed individually. The researcher tries to 'bracket' emergent themes and be open to the next participant's account. She/he repeats the aforementioned steps.

Step 6: Looking for patterns across cases. Having analysed each transcript idiographically the resultant themes are considered together. The researcher then looks for connections and similarities. This is an iterative and potentially creative process, one that allows analysis to move to a theoretical level. The resultant themes should capture the idiosyncratic at the same time as illuminating shared qualities of a given experience. The results are typically

presented in a table with an extract from the transcript of each participant to illustrate the theme.

ETHICAL PRACTICE CHECKLIST (Professional Doctorates)

SUPERVISOR: Laura Cockburn

ASSESSOR: Tina Rae

STUDENT: Lauren Thackeray

DATE (sent to assessor): 11/02/2013

Proposed research topic: An Exploration of the Factors that Support a Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School for Young People with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties: The Young Person's Perspective

Course: Prof Doc Applied Education and Child Psychology

1. Will free and informed consent of participants be obtained? **YES** / NO
2. If there is any deception is it justified? YES / **NO** / N/A
3. Will information obtained remain confidential? **YES** / NO
4. Will participants be made aware of their right to withdraw at any time? **YES** / NO
5. Will participants be adequately debriefed? **YES** / NO
6. If this study involves observation does it respect participants' privacy? YES / NO / **NA**
6. If the proposal involves participants whose free and informed consent may be in question (e.g. for reasons of age, mental or emotional incapacity), are they treated ethically? YES / NO / **NA**
8. Is procedure that might cause distress to participants ethical? YES / NO / **NA**
9. If there are inducements to take part in the project is this ethical? YES / NO / **NA**
10. If there are any other ethical issues involved, are they a problem? YES / NO / **NA**

APPROVED

| | | |
|------------|-------------------------------|----|
| YES | YES, PENDING MINOR CONDITIONS | NO |
|------------|-------------------------------|----|

MINOR CONDITIONS:
None

REASONS FOR NON APPROVAL:

Assessor initials: T Rae

Date: 11.2.13.

| |
|--|
| RESEARCHER RISK ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST (BSc/MSc/MA) |
|--|

SUPERVISOR: Laura Cockburn

ASSESSOR: Tina Rae

STUDENT: Lauren Thackeray

DATE (sent to assessor): 11/02/2013

Proposed research topic: An Exploration of the Factors that Support a Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School for Young People with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties: The Young Person's Perspective

Course: Prof Doc Applied Education and Child Psychology

Would the proposed project expose the researcher to any of the following kinds of hazard?

- | | | |
|----|--|-----------------|
| 1 | Emotional | YES / NO |
| 2. | Physical | YES / NO |
| 3. | Other (e.g. health & safety issues) | YES / NO |

If you've answered YES to any of the above please estimate the chance of the researcher being harmed as: HIGH / MED / LOW

APPROVED

| | | |
|------------|-------------------------------------|----|
| YES | YES, PENDING MINOR CONDITIONS | NO |
|------------|-------------------------------------|----|

MINOR CONDITIONS:

none

REASONS FOR NON APPROVAL:

Assessor initials:
Tina Rae

Date: 11.2.13.

Information Sheet for Schools

‘An Exploration of the Factors that Support a Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School for Young People with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties: The Young Person’s Perspective’

My name is Lauren Thackeray and I am a student at the University of East London, training to become an Educational Psychologist. I currently work as a Trainee Educational Psychologist for XXX’s Community Educational Psychology Service. This research project is being carried out as part of my doctoral training but also to inform the development of the Local Authority’s Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy.

Those student’s currently in Year 7 who have been placed on the SEN Register primarily for Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) are being invited to take part in this research. I will be undertaking an exploration of their experiences of transition from primary to secondary school to gain an understanding of what supported some young people to have a successful transition.

It is important for these young people to participate in this research as it will give them the opportunity to put forward their views in order that support for primary to secondary transition will improve for young people identified with SEBD in XXX. In addition their views will go towards increasing the knowledge base around transition for young people with SEBD.

It is important for you to understand why this research is being carried out and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish.

Why is this research being done?

- There is a large body of research which examines primary to secondary transition however there is a lack of studies looking specifically at how to improve transition for young people identified with SEBD. Therefore this research will attempt to increase the knowledge base around how these young people experience transition in order to improve the support available to them.
- The findings of this research will feed into XXX’s SEND Strategy, which aims to ensure successful transitions for all young people with SEND. It will provide the child’s perspective on what supports a successful transition.
- The findings will also be fed back to the participating schools.

Why are these particular young people being asked to participate?

As stated above, there is a limited evidence base around supporting young people identified with SEBD in their transition to secondary school. The young people who will be asked to participate in your school will meet the following criteria:

- Currently be in Year 7, having joined the school in September 2012.
- Have been placed on the Special Educational Needs Register (at School Action Plus or with a Statement of SEN) for a primary need of SEBD.

Informed consent will be sought from each young person and their parent/carer.

What does the study involve?

The study will involve two phases:

Phase 1 (April/May 2013) - Questionnaires

- I will arrange to come to your school to meet the young people in small groups of 2 or 3. It is hoped that a member of school staff will also be there to support the young people and make them feel at ease. Following a short discussion about the research the young people will be asked to complete a questionnaire which will collect their views of primary school, secondary school and the transition. It will also ask them questions regarding any support they have received. The questionnaires will take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

Phase 2 (June/July 2013) - Interviews

- A small number of young people will be invited to interview. The interview will aim to explore in more detail their experiences of transition and any support they received. I will carry out the interviews on a one-to-one basis and they will last for approximately 30 minutes. The interview will be recorded using a tape recorder.

The young people will have the right to withdraw at any point, until data analysis begins.

Confidentiality

- The information that the students share with me (in the questionnaires and the interviews) will be kept between myself and the student. The only time I will break confidentiality is to adhere to child protection procedures.
- When I am transcribing the interviews and writing up my findings, all identifying features (including the name of the school) will be anonymised or removed. The school will know who has participated but they will not know who has said what.
- The data will be stored securely and only myself and my research supervisor will have access to the raw data.

If you have any further questions please don't hesitate to contact me at:

U1131182@uel.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this research.

School Consent Form

Dear Head Teacher,

Informed consent form – please complete if you are happy for the research to take place in your school.

Title: ‘An Exploration of the Factors that Support a Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School for Young people with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties: The Young Person’s Perspective

Name of Researcher: Lauren Thackeray (Trainee Educational Psychologist), University of East London

Please tick the box

-
- | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|
| 1. | I confirm that I have read and understand the research information sheet for the above study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. | I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my school at any time, until data analysis is underway. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. | I understand that any data or information used in any written or verbal feedback will be anonymised. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. | I understand that all data will be stored securely and destroyed one year after the study is complete. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. | I agree to students in my school taking part in both the questionnaire and interview phases of the above study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of Head Teacher

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Research Journal Extracts

20/6/2013

On reflection I keep coming back to the idea that a comparison of those YP who reported the most successful transitions and those that reported the least successful transitions would yield interesting findings. Having met with all participants I often feel that those who don't score as successfully have interesting stories to tell. It could be good to unpick their sense making.

9/6/13

I decided to try and let the participants lead the interviews a little more today, following their trail of thought. For my first two interviews I stuck more rigidly to the schedule. The students tend to compare the past to the now when asked about primary school or their first day. This inevitably lead them to talking about the present. Today I followed through discussions about things the students brought up. It was difficult to judge how relevant it was but I tried to be as open as possible, adopting the position that they will discuss what is salient to them. This often lead to a more natural feeling within the interviews. However, I had two issues; firstly, I found it hard to simply be a researcher and not a TEP when they told things that weren't going so well for them. Secondly, The interviews felt less structured so I wasn't sure whether I had covered everything in my interview schedule. I will be interested to transcribe them to see how they compare to the previous two.

15/6/13

Adopting a phenomenological attitude involves and requires a reflexive move according to Smith et al. (2009). From some participants, and Jake in particular, this was difficult. These students could just answer the descriptive questions but anything that required him to be reflexive or analytic was too tricky and required further structuring and prompting on my part. Can we expect these students to be reflexive? Is this skill we should be aiming to develop in this group of students?

