

What meaning do children with
special educational needs assign to
academic progress and what do they
think makes them get better? An
Interpretative Phenomenological
Analysis.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
University of East London for the Degree of Professional Doctorate
in Educational and Child Psychology

Abstract

This research is a qualitative study which presents the experiences of six children with special educational needs (SEN). Specifically, it explored the concept of academic progress from the viewpoint of the participants, with the aim of gaining an understanding of how children with additional needs understand this concept. Furthermore, it aimed to ascertain what these children find helpful in school.

A systematic literature search sought to explore and present key research relevant to this study. It concluded that there is very little research in the current literature exploring this topic. Furthermore, the population used in this study is underrepresented in research available.

In this study, six children from a mainstream primary school were recruited. They were all receiving SEN Support in school but did not have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The participants were interviewed using semi-structured interviews and transcripts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Four master themes emerged from the analysis: A process for future gains, (Defined by) outside checks, Various influences and Associated feelings. Each theme is discussed and exemplified by quotes from the participants.

Findings are discussed in relation to relevant psychological theory and research. The study is considered as relevant for Educational Psychologists, and to those working in wider educational contexts. Suggestions for future research are made in order that the findings can be extended further.

Student Declaration
University of East London
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Declaration

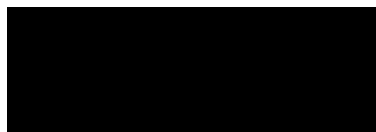
I declare that while registered as a research degree student at UEL, I have not been a registered or enrolled student for another award of this university or of any other academic or professional institution.

I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

I declare that my research required ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee (UREC) and confirmation of approval is embedded within the thesis.

Kirsty Wagner

Signature:

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Kirsty Wagner.

Date: 28.02.18

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List of Abbreviations

BESD	Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties
BPS	British Psychological Society
CLD	Cognition and Learning Difficulties
CoP	Code of Practice
DfE	Department for Education
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
ELMS	Early Literacy Motivation Survey
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
HCPC	Health & Care Professionals Council
ID	Intellectual Disabilities
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
NHS	National Health Service
NLSCY	National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth
PAL	Positive Approach to Learning
PEP	Principal Educational Psychologist
SAT	Statutory Assessment Test
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities
TA	Teaching Assistant
TA	Thematic Analysis
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
UEL	University of East London
UNCRC	United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Overview of Chapter One

This research aimed to explore the concept of academic progress from the viewpoint of children who are identified as having a special educational need and receiving additional support in school.

This chapter starts by introducing the notion of special educational needs from a legislative point of view (1.2). An overview of the national and local context (1.3 & 1.4) is provided, followed by a discussion on the importance of inclusion of the voice of the child (1.5). The rationale, aims and research questions of the study is next detailed (1.6). Finally, I outline my position as the researcher (1.7) and discuss the unique contribution that this research aims to make to the field of Educational Psychology (1.8). An overview concludes this introductory chapter (1.9).

1.2. What are Special Educational Needs/Disabilities?

Before introducing the national and local contexts of this piece of research, it is pertinent to explain exactly what is meant by the term ‘special educational needs or disabilities’ (SEND), as defined by legislation. The SEND Code of Practice (CoP, DfE, 2015), provides statutory guidance for all organisations working with children and young people who have SEND, covering the age range 0-25 years. According to the CoP, a child or young person has SEN if they have “a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her” (CoP, pg. 15). Special educational provision means support that is additional to or different from that provided for children or young people of the same age who do not have an identified SEND. The CoP also states that children with a

mental or physical disability are also covered by the SEN definition if they require special educational provision.

The CoP has identified four areas of need which schools can use to help identify, assess, manage and review SEND and provision required. These are not designed to categorise children and young people but instead to help a school plan what action to take for individuals, and to ensure that they have a good understanding across the four areas. The CoP also acknowledges that a child's needs can often fall into one or more of the areas, hence why the groups are not intended to be used as isolated categories. These areas are:

1. Communication and interaction
2. Cognition and learning
3. Social, emotional and mental health difficulties
4. Sensory and/or physical needs

1.3 National Context

In September 2014, the law relating to children and young people with SEND changed and an updated SEND Code of Practice (CoP, DfE, 2015) was also introduced. This makes the responsibilities of schools for those pupils with SEND clear and provides a new legislative context for all involved in education. The new CoP stipulates that schools must accurately identify pupils who have additional needs and it provides guidance to help schools ensure that this takes place. The Code also states that schools must provide the support necessary for these pupils to make progress and achieve good outcomes. These students will either have a Statement or Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), or be in receipt of provision which is additional to that provided for most pupils (SEN Support). When the current CoP was published, SEN Support replaced the previous categories of School Action and School

Action Plus when outlining how schools should support those with additional needs. The amalgamation of these two categories into one is a relatively new prospect for schools. However, having a list of those with additional needs in school is not a new phenomenon.

SEN Support is defined in the new CoP as a graduated approach. Schools have a responsibility to remove any barriers to learning and put support into place that helps children with SEND to make progress. SEN Support is viewed as a cyclical process containing four steps, continually repeated, to ensure that there is a good understanding of a child's needs and appropriate planning takes place. Furthermore, what has proven to be most successful at supporting a child or young person to make progress and achieve good outcomes must be known and monitored. The four stages of the cycle (Assess, Plan, Do, Review) also ensure that the needs and required provision for a child or young person are reviewed frequently by all involved. It is the school's responsibility to ensure that this cycle occurs.

Statistics published by the Government in January 2017 indicate that there are currently 1,002,070 pupils receiving SEN Support (DfE, 2017). This is a significant proportion of all children in education in England (11.6%). The CoP stipulates that "...quality of teaching for pupils with SEN, and the progress made by pupils, should be a core part of the school's performance management arrangements" (CoP, pg. 93). It is therefore important for schools to keep the progress of pupils with additional needs as priority, in line with key legislation. Data exploring implementation of the SEND reforms suggests that overall, arrangements in terms of identifying, assessing and supporting the needs of those children and young people with Statements or EHCPs is well established. However, concerning the

data for those receiving SEN Support suggests that less routine gathering of information regarding the progress of these pupils and how successful provision is, takes place within schools. Data that has been gathered indicates that the progress of these pupils is significantly behind peers, and that nationally there is considerable variation in progress. For example, only 54% of children receiving SEN Support make expected progress in English between key stages 2 and 4, compared with 69% of all pupils nationally. Furthermore, across local authority areas, the proportion of SEN Support students who make expected progress levels varies between 37% and 74%, (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2016). In addition, The Rochford Review (2016) suggests that the assessment of pupils with SEN and demonstration of progress is a current national issue. This research added to the understanding of how children with SEND can be best supported to demonstrate progress, from the point of view of the children themselves.

1.4 Local Context

Whilst undertaking this research, I was on placement as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) in a large Local Authority in the East of England. In this Authority, there are currently 21,796 pupils receiving SEN Support, representing 10% of the total pupil population. There are 7,164 pupils with a current Statement or EHCP, accounting for 3.3% of the total pupil population, higher than the 2.8% national percentage (DfE, 2017). Similar to the national picture, data in this Authority suggests that those who have Statements or EHCPs generally achieve good outcomes. In contrast, the data for those receiving SEN Support is not as positive, and compared to statistical neighbours, the Local Authority does not seem to be supporting these students as well as they should to make progress and achieve outcomes.

Within the Educational Psychology Service (EPS), this issue is a high priority, which the Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP) raises frequently on whole service days. There is a drive within the EPS to improve this situation and to date the way in which this improvement will be achieved is two-fold: to explore ways in which impact of Educational Psychologists (EPs) can be demonstrated with this group; furthermore, there is a drive to consider how both as a Service and as a Local Authority in general, these pupils can be better understood and supported to make progress and achieve positive outcomes. This research gained an insight into the perceptions of those receiving SEN Support, exploring their understanding of academic progress and ways in which their progress can be supported. It is hoped that this insight will also provide the local EPS with a starting point to address their concerns regarding this group of students.

1.5 The Voice of the Child

Since the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child, Articles 12 & 13, (UNCRC, 1989), came into existence, listening to and including children's views has been part of legislation. A child's right to express an opinion is specifically highlighted and it is stated that adults who are involved in making decisions which influence the life of a child or young person must have regard to their views.

The new SEND CoP (2015) emphasises the importance of Local Authorities having regard to the views of children and young people, stating that "Local authorities must ensure that children, young people and parents are provided with the information, advice and support necessary to enable them to participate in discussions and decisions about their support" (CoP, pg. 21).

Alongside legislation, listening to the views of children and young people has also become a significant part of the role of an Educational Psychologist, and the validity of doing so has been discussed in the literature (Harding & Atkinson, 2009). One such benefit is that listening to children minimises any potential for misunderstanding or misrepresenting young people (Gersch, 1996). This research therefore gave an opportunity for those with additional needs to express their voice regarding academic progress and what they find helpful in school. It is a stipulation in legislation that those in education take note of what children and young people say regarding important issues; “children have a right to receive and impart information, to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account in any matters affecting them from the early years” (CoP, pg. 20). The intent is that this study provides an example of how the views of children can be interpreted to create a summary of children’s perspectives, which may in turn create something meaningful and usable in education.

1.6 Rationale and Aims of the Research

The aim of this exploratory research was to gain an understanding of how children with additional needs understand the concept of academic progress. Furthermore, the purpose was to explore what these children find helpful in school. This research gave those with additional needs and receiving SEN Support an opportunity to express their views regarding academic progress with a neutral, non-judgemental listener. It is hoped that I created an environment where pupils felt at ease and able to share their views with honesty. The study therefore had the purpose of providing this SEN population with a voice.

The rationale for this research stems from the lack of literature exploring children's views on progress, explained fully in Chapter 2. Further rationale comes from the local context as explained in section 1.3; it is hoped that this research begins to help the local authority in which I am working to address their concerns regarding the population of pupils receiving SEN Support in the area. The research aimed to provide topics for conversation within the Authority and beyond, in order to change practice to benefit the population involved.

The research focused on one main question:

What meaning do children with SEND assign to academic progress and what do they think makes them improve?

The research also aimed to answer the following sub-research questions:

What does getting better at school mean for children identified as needing SEN Support?

What do these children think helps them to get better in school?

1.7 Researcher's Position

I am a 29-year-old white British woman with no children. As previously stated, I am currently a TEP on placement in a large East of England Local Authority. In previous roles I have always felt a keen interest in listening to what children and young people have to say and when planning my research, I knew I was passionate about completing a piece of work which involved listening to the views of children and young people. Although this is certainly not the case in every circumstance, I have noticed throughout my career that often children, particularly those with additional needs, have little or no say in decisions about themselves. I feel strongly that this should not be the case. In the National Health Service (NHS) the

phrase “no decision about me, without me” is often used to stress the importance of a patient’s voice in their care. I feel that the same philosophy should be used in education. I firmly believe that children with additional needs should be involved in discussions regarding the support that they find most helpful. The new CoP reflects a shift in thinking regarding the way in which children and young people are to be included. One of the key principles of the CoP comes from the 2014 Children and Families Act, which states that in relation to those with SEND, local authorities must have regard to “the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person” (CoP, pg. 19). I feel that this principle is yet to be completely embedded into practice but am hopeful that this shift represents a start in raising the profile of the voice of children and young people, both those with and without SEND.

As EPs, we are well placed to act as advocates for the children we work with and have the skills to elicit children’s voices so that they are as fully involved as possible. I feel that we should place children’s views at the centre of our work at all times. In my current role as an Educational Psychologist in training I am in a privileged position that allows me to elicit children’s views in a variety of creative ways. Within all pieces of casework on placement, I try to ensure that a child’s point of view is represented in my practice reports.

As well as contributing to the body of knowledge regarding children with SEND, I hope that this research can and will be used to advocate for and to empower the children involved. I hoped that the use of interview would allow the participants to share their views in a non-judgemental and relaxing space. When interviewing the children that took part I had no agenda or assumptions regarding what my research would find. I embraced the opportunity

to hear what a small group of children with additional needs say about the concept of progress and I have used my passion for hearing the voices of children and young people to plan this piece of research.

1.8 Unique Contribution

As mentioned above, and explored more fully in Chapter 2, there is a dearth of studies exploring academic progress from the direct input and point of view of any children, either with or without SEND. This research therefore provides a unique insight into academic progress from the perspectives of a group of children. Further uniqueness is gained from the fact that the research specifically explores the subject of academic progress with a group of children who have been identified as having additional needs and are receiving SEN Support in school.

Given the local context, this research is important as it provides information regarding what motivates and engages children with SEND to make progress in school. It is anticipated that this insight will provide knowledge to the Local Authority, to promote discussion regarding how children receiving SEN Support can be better supported. At present this research is contextual, but as described in section 1.2 the issue is a national one and so it is hoped that findings could be of some relevance to other areas with similar features.

The new CoP amalgamates the categories of School Action and School Action Plus into SEN Support, as explained above. As this is a relatively new concept, it is thought that this study was one of the first to be conducted with children from this newly defined group. As this change is part of National legislation, all schools will have changed the way in which children

with SEND are identified and supported, making relevant findings from this study applicable on a broader scale, beyond just the local context.

This exploration may also contribute to Educational Psychology practice, giving EPs added insight and knowledge that can be disseminated to schools regarding how children and young people receiving SEN Support can be supported, from the point of view of the children themselves. This is in line with current legislation stating that children's and young people's voices should be paramount.

1.9 Summary of Chapter One

This chapter has provided an introduction to this research. The national and local contexts in which this research is framed have been discussed, including legislation relevant to this area.

Factors such as a dearth of research exploring children's views on progress, alongside the local context provide the rationale for this study. The influence of my passions as a researcher have also been detailed. Research questions and aims of the research have been outlined and the chapter concludes with the unique contribution that this study brings to the area.

The next chapter will provide an extensive review of the literature on perceptions regarding academic progress.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Chapter Two

This chapter provides an extensive review of the literature relevant to the area of academic progress. This review served a dual purpose: to offer an overview of the subject area in general, and to identify any gaps in the literature to date. I structure the chapter using the following framework: I first introduce the notion of systematic literature reviews (2.2), next detailing the general process I undertook when conducting the search (2.3). I then explain each search I completed, starting with factors affecting academic progress for all children (2.4), followed by factors affecting academic progress for children with SEND (2.5). I finally describe literature exploring the perceptions of progress and SEND (2.6) for parents (2.6.1), teachers (2.6.2) and children (2.6.3). I lastly draw conclusions from the review in relation to the current research (2.7) and provide a summary to end the chapter (2.8).

2.2 Introduction to Systematic Literature Reviews

A literature review can be defined as “a systematic, explicit and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating and interpreting the existing body of recorded work produced by researchers, scholars, and practitioners” (Fink, 2005, p.3). The purpose of a systematic literature search is to identify, evaluate and integrate the findings of all relevant studies in an area. When undertaking a review, Baumeister (2013) recommends adopting the mindset of a judge and jury rather than that of a lawyer, i.e. evaluate the evidence objectively, rather than make the case for one side of an argument. Criteria for inclusion and exclusion of studies must be explicit and objective. The approach must be made clear in order that the

process can be replicated, and the review added to in the future, if desired. These suggestions limit bias and improve reliability of conclusions drawn from the review.

2.3 Systematic Literature Search Process

This research focused on one main research question:

What meaning do children with SEND assign to academic progress and what do they think makes them improve?

The research also aimed to answer the following sub-research questions:

What does getting better at school mean for children identified as needing SEN Support?

What do these children think helps them to get better in school?

The aim of the systematic literature search was to explore the existing research relevant to these research questions. Using the research questions as a basis for the systematic literature search allowed for a comprehensive exploration of existing studies relating to the area of this research. This approach also helped with decisions regarding the literature search such as how broad the systematic search should be, and what inclusion criteria would be best to apply.

All searches were carried out using the advanced search facility, accessed through the University of East London (UEL) library online. The following databases were searched: Academic Search Complete, ERIC, Education Research Complete, PsycINFO and PsycARTICLES. All searches took place in August 2017.

In order to ensure that a comprehensive search of the literature was undertaken, I used a funnel approach to my searches. Figure 1 depicts this process, alongside the number of

papers that met the criteria for further exploration for each search. Each section below constitutes a separate search. Rather than running one search aiming to cover all areas and then clustering papers into themes, I decided that using different combinations of key words in separate searches would be the most efficient way to ensure that I identified all papers relevant to that area. I felt that one search would not cover all the areas indicated in Figure 1.

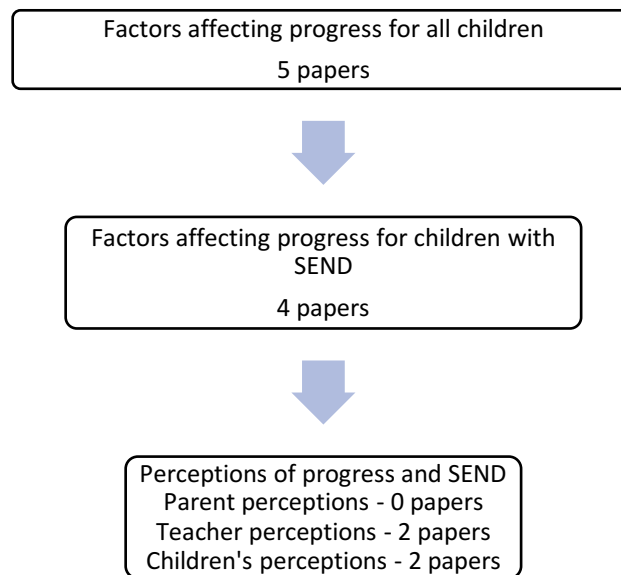


Figure 1: Funnel process of current literature search

Some inclusion criteria remained stable across all searches. Papers had to be written in the English language, from peer reviewed journals and full text had to be accessible. Studies were also only included for more detailed review if the population involved were school aged (6-12) to concur with the age of participants in this research. Without this criterion, searches produced too many results for further exploration. Tables to show inclusion criteria for each search are located within each section below. The abstracts of papers found in each search were screened for relevance, and those that were pertinent to the current

research were included for review. Details of all papers included can be found in Appendix 1.

2.4 Factors Affecting Academic Progress for all Children

The first and broadest level of search aimed to explore the factors affecting academic progress for all pupils. I considered this a helpful starting point to introduce the area, provide examples of methodology used in studies and discuss findings emerging from papers. This search therefore provided a framework for the rest of the literature review. As can be seen in Table 1 below, I chose to use the search term “factors affect*” to find relevant papers. Initially, “factors*” alone was used as a keyword. However, using this term produced over 12,000 results, deemed not a manageable number for further screening. As indicated in Table 1 below, after inclusion criteria were applied, 151 papers remained for further screening.

Search Engine	Search Terms	Inclusion Criteria	Number of papers found with inclusion criteria applied	Number of papers included in review after screening
EBSCO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Search Complete ERIC Education Research Complete PsycINFO PsycARTICLES 	"learn*" OR "achiev*" OR "attain*" OR "progres*" OR “academic” OR “performance” OR “outcome*” OR “school*” AND "factors affect*"	Peer reviewed journal Full text available School age (6-12 years) English language	151 Screening criteria & number removed: Focus on outcome of intervention or model, n= 25 Ineligible population, n= 30	2 (5)* *A further three papers have been included in this section that were found during other searches but deemed most relevant to this area of the literature.

			Focus not on academic outcomes, n= 94	
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Table 1: Search process for area 2.4

The 151 papers found were screened for relevance. As the purpose of this search was to provide a broad overview, papers were removed if they were too specific. For example, if they focused on particular groups of students or the impact of a particular programme or intervention on academic progress. Papers had to focus on academic progress as at least one of the outcomes explored and the population had to be relevant, for example papers were removed if the population was adolescents/adults or children under school age. Once articles found in this search were screened, two studies remained that were relevant for inclusion in the review. Both papers used quantitative methodology and structural equation modelling to explore factors affecting academic progress.

King et al., (2005) explored the impact of various factors upon Canadian children's academic performance and prosocial behaviour. Due to my specific research focus, only findings related to academic performance will be discussed in this review. Factors explored were health status, environmental, child and family related factors. The study placed these factors within a conceptual and theoretical model, named the competence development model. Academic performance and prosocial behaviour were combined and labelled as developmental competence. The authors posit that three types of processes within the above factors lead to developmental competence: opportunity, support and skill development. Evidence for these suggested associations came from already existing literature. With a particular focus on health status, the objective of the study was to determine the way in which the identified factors within the model impacted upon

academic performance and prosocial behaviour of 9714 6-11-year-olds. Cross-sectional data from parents only were used (large amounts of data was missing from questionnaires completed by teachers and children). Data was in the form of answers provided for the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY). Authors acknowledge the limitations of cross-sectional data from one view point only. Academic performance was measured by four questions reflecting parents' views of their child's academic achievements. The major factors associated with academic performance were found to be cognitive functioning and hyperactivity/inattention difficulties, each accounting for 10% of the variance in academic performance. These child level factors were more important predictors of academic performance than environmental, family or health status factors, this was as the authors foretold. Although this study provides an example of a model which indicates pathways leading to academic performance, longitudinal data would be required to bear confidence regarding causality and direction of pathways. The study was only able to use data from parents, and as admitted by the researchers, this raised the issue of bias resulting from the inclusion of one perspective only. Data may only reflect parent perceptions of reality and arguably when it comes to academic performance, teachers or the children themselves may be better placed to provide data.

Wilson & Trainin (2007) explored the impact of motivation upon 5-7-year-old children's achievement in reading, writing and spelling. The Early Literacy Motivation Survey (ELMS) was used as a measure of motivation for 198 students across four schools in California. Literacy achievement was determined by three scores. These were all district specific measures i.e. measurements that schools within the area have developed for reading, writing and spelling. Alongside the ELMS, authors also measured children's perceived

competence, self-efficacy and attributions. The authors proposed that attributions, competence, self-efficacy and literacy achievement can be integrated in a variable model (Figure 2). The model is a combination of two existing psychological models: one providing the macrostructure and one providing the microstructure. Schunk's (1999) model provides the macrostructure, explaining the relationship between self-influences and achievement. Weiner's (1985) attribution model provides the microstructure, explaining the relationships between attribution, self-efficacy, and perceptions of competence.

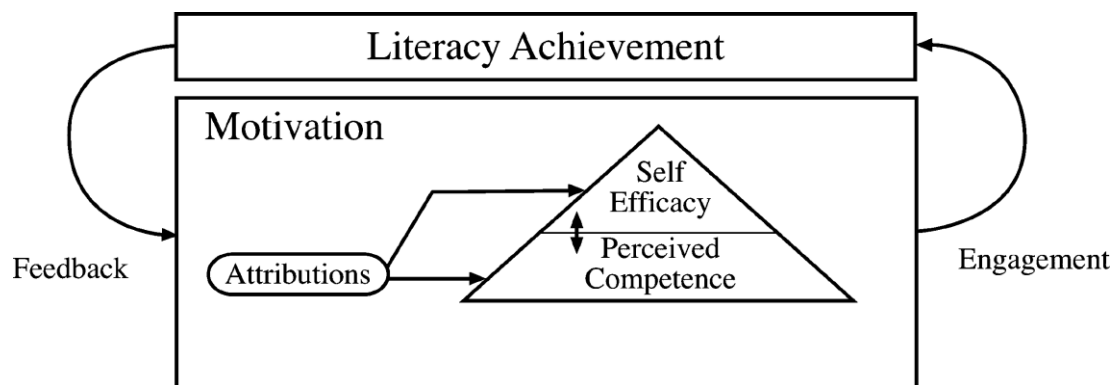


Figure 2: A model of early literacy motivation (Wilson & Trainin, 2007, pg. 258)

The most relevant research question from this paper asked how well data validated the model. Results indicated a strong link between literacy achievement and attributions, supporting the study's predictions regarding the model. Students with higher achievement tended to articulate more internal attributions focused on efforts, whereas students with lower achievement attributed performance to external factors. These findings make sense given all that is known regarding attribution theory and locus of control (Weiner, 1985). Another purpose of the study was to evaluate the ELMS, and findings suggested it is a reliable measure of children's motivation. The study provides a way of measuring children's motivation for literacy at an early stage of education; offering teachers a window of

opportunity to increase literacy skills by promoting internal attributions. However, this assumes a direction of causality; that those with internal attributions will have higher achievement. The study did not explore causation, so it is not known whether internal attributions lead to higher achievement or whether the converse is more likely. Measures of achievement used in the study were very location specific, i.e. only used in the district in which the research took place, making it difficult to apply the model to scenarios using different measures of achievement. It is also not clear exactly how the model was devised. Aside from combining two existing models, the rationale for the model is not defined.

As indicated in Table 1 above, a further three papers were identified that were relevant to this area of the literature. These papers were found when conducting searches later in the literature review funnel process but were deemed to have most relevance to this area of the review and thus have been included in this section. Firstly, Blatchford et al., (2011) who explored the impact of support staff on 8000 students' academic progress and positive approach to learning (PAL). Using a longitudinal design, this study investigated the relationship between amount of support provided and PAL/academic progress. Academic progress across multiple age groups was measured by end of year attainment, controlling for start of year scores. Overall, a negative relationship was found between amount of Teaching Assistant (TA) support and academic progress of pupils. For some age groups, a consistent negative relationship was found between amount of support and progress (even when other factors were controlled for). This relationship was replicated across two waves of the study and across seven different year groups. The fact that the study was longitudinal rather than cross-sectional means that progress over time could be measured rather than just end of year attainment. It is likely that those with more TA support were those that

were more likely to be poorer attainers anyway, due to the nature in which TAs are deployed in schools. To account for this, the study included variables likely to impact whether or not a child received support into their analysis, controlling for SEN status, English as an additional language, family income etc. This means the authors can be more certain of the relationship between TA support and achievement. However, the nature of this relationship was not explored further; it is not known what factors related to amount of support had an impact on progress.

Strand & Demie (2006) explored the impact of pupil mobility on attainment in primary school. In this study pupil mobility referred to movement between schools, at times other than normally expected. In this research, attainment was measured by results in national key stage 2 tests at the end of primary school. These were compared with results of the same tests at the end of key stage 1. Data came from 2279 pupils across 59 primary schools in one inner London Local Authority. Mean key stage 2 tests for pupils considered mobile were significantly lower than mean scores for 'stable' students across reading, writing and maths. However, the association between mobility and end of key stage 2 attainment was reduced by half when other factors were considered such as SEN, ethnicity, gender. The result remained significant. When the pupils' previous Key Stage 1 results were considered, the association was no longer significant. For example, pupils who performed poorly at key stage 2 also had lower attainment at key stage 1, preceding any school move. It is likely that disadvantaging factors in mobile pupils' backgrounds were more likely to be having an impact rather than the fact that they had moved schools. The data in this study was correlational, thus making causation difficult to determine. Although the data was only

taken from one London Local Authority meaning generalisation of results to other areas may not be possible, a positive of the study is that such a large sample size were recruited. Finally, Mavroveli & Sanchez-Ruiz (2011) explored the influence of trait emotional intelligence on academic achievement and school behaviour for 565 children in years 3-6 of primary school. The sample was split into a control group (395 children), 94 children with cognition and learning difficulties (CLD) and 36 children with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). Trait emotional intelligence (emotion-related self-perceptions) was measured using the trait emotional intelligence questionnaire-child form. Academic achievement was defined by Statutory Assessment Test (SAT) results in maths, reading and writing. Three schools within the Greater London area participated in the study. The only significant result was found to be between SAT maths scores and trait emotional intelligence for year 3 pupils. No other significant results were found for any age groups or subject. A small significant difference was found between the groups. The control group had higher trait emotional intelligence than children with CLD and BESD. Like other studies, causation of the relationships explored in the study, significant or otherwise, cannot be determined. Furthermore, the study only recruited pupils from one area of the country so further research would need to be undertaken before any findings could be generalised.

2.4.1 Conclusions

The above papers explored factors which have an impact upon children's academic attainments in school. These papers all employed quantitative methodology and in all cases academic progress was deemed to be a quantifiable entity, measured using summative rather than formative assessment. There seems to be a lack of research exploring factors

which affect progress measured by formative assessment, or as a concept which is more than end of year attainment scores, and something that can be explored qualitatively.

Whilst exploring a range of different factors affecting progress and undertaken in a variety of countries, the papers included in this section all employ quantitative methodology to investigate the relationships between a number of variables and children's progress. When findings from all five studies are considered, links between factors at individual child (e.g. perceptions and attributions), environmental (e.g. level of TA support) and circumstantial (e.g. change of school) levels have been demonstrated to exist.

As alluded to in some of the critique within each study's summary, many of the papers in this area were cross-sectional. This means causation cannot be determined; leaving the relationship between factors such as self-perceptions, emotional intelligence and presence of support staff and academic progress non-directional. Though these factors are linked to academic attainments, it is not possible to ascertain whether any of them promote academic progress or are promoted by academic progress. Whilst I appreciate that determining causation is difficult in research, longitudinal studies are more likely to indicate the direction of a relationship compared to data collected at one point in time.

2.5 Factors Affecting Academic Progress for Children with SEND

In this search, I explored the available research which investigates factors affecting progress for those with SEND. As seen in Table 2 this search produced 521 papers for screening.

Search Engine	Search Terms	Inclusion Criteria	Number of papers found with inclusion criteria applied	Number of papers included in review after screening
EBSCO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Search Complete • ERIC • Education Research Complete • PsycINFO • PsycARTICLES 	"learn*" OR "achiev*" OR "attain*" OR "progres*" OR "academic" OR "performance" OR "outcome*" OR "school*" AND "special educational need*" OR "additional need*" OR "learning need*" OR "special need*" OR "disability*" OR "late learning*" OR "behind learning*"	Peer reviewed journal Full text available School age (6-12 years) English language	521 Screening criteria & number removed: Focus on outcome of intervention or model, n= 218 Ineligible population, n= 98 Focus not on academic outcomes, n= 201	4

Table 2: Search process for area 2.5

When screening the 521 articles found, I removed studies which explored the impact of specific intervention programmes aimed at improving progress. Instead I only included papers which looked at general impact factors for the SEND population. Papers were also removed if the focus was on a population of children with one specific difficulty or diagnosis such as Autism Spectrum Disorders, or if the population was not school aged. This decision was taken based on the population recruited in the current study. As seen in Table 2, after screening, four papers remained for in-depth exploration. The four studies included in this section were all undertaken outside of the UK. They all employed quantitative methodology

with varying sample sizes and explored the impact of different types of education on the academic progress of children with SEND.

Dessementet et al. (2012) explored the impact of inclusion on the academic achievement of children with 'intellectual disabilities' (ID) in Switzerland. Progress accomplished in academic achievement, amongst other factors, was compared between two groups (34 children with ID in a mainstream classroom and 34 children in a special school), over two academic years. Academic achievement was measured by a standardised test. The authors found a significant difference in literacy scores between the two groups, but with a small effect size. Those in a mainstream classroom made slightly more progress in literacy. No differences were found in maths. Researchers concluded that inclusion in mainstream education is an appropriate option for those children with ID. Arguably, this is a significant conclusion to make based on these results alone. There is no reference to other factors related to mainstream education that could be impacting, such as language or social models, or a broader range of expectations.

Ruijs et al. (2010) sought to focus on specific factors that could influence the outcomes of inclusive education, aiming to address an issue within research whereby too many factors to draw equivocal conclusions are present. This study explored whether differences were found between students with SEN who were the only child in a class with additional needs, and children with SEN in a class with others with additional needs. A sample of 1839 children with SEN was included in the study, with data being provided by the PRIMA-cohort study, a biennial study of 55,000 students in Dutch primary education. Academic achievement was measured by standardised language and arithmetic tests. No differences were found for

academic achievement, between SEN students included alone, those included with a few students with SEN and those included with more students with SEN. These results indicate that for academic achievement, whether children are the only student in their class with SEN or whether they have classmates with SEN is irrelevant in a Dutch community. Across the study, the authors found unequivocal results and so suggested that the study be replicated to ascertain which of their results were consistent.

Szumski & Karwowski (2014) assessed the effectiveness of integrative and inclusive education in Poland. Amongst other aims the authors sought to establish whether pupils with intellectual disabilities attending mainstream, integrative and special schools differed in terms of their achievements in school. 859 participants were recruited from elementary schools in Poland. Independent committees assessed the pupils' intellectual disabilities using the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10). School achievement was measured by the Skumski School Achievement Test, a standardised test indicated to have high reliability. The test measures achievement in mathematics and reading and is a test for children with "mild disability". Results indicated that children in inclusive forms of education (integrative and mainstream) had a significantly better level of school achievement than those in special schools. The researchers tried to ensure that the groups were comparable in terms of learning potential. Thus, they were more confident that results were due to the different forms of education as opposed to students in the mainstream setting having better cognitive functioning.

Finally, Tremblay (2013) compared two Belgian models of teaching for students with learning disabilities in terms of their effect on academic achievement and class attendance.

Twelve inclusive classes and thirteen special education classes took part in the study (228 students overall). Achievement was measured by test results in reading, writing and mathematics in October and June of each school year. In October, there were no significant differences between the two groups. In June, students in inclusive classes scored significantly better in reading and writing but not in maths, thus suggesting that an inclusive model of teaching is more effective than a special education model for some subjects. However, this study only sampled children from the first two years of primary school and so longitudinal data is needed before any conclusions regarding long term effects of the models can be made.

2.5.1 Conclusions

Interestingly all the papers in this search focused on inclusion as a factor for exploration, attempting to ascertain what kind of learning and teaching environment produces the best academic outcomes for those with SEND. The longest time period covered in these studies was two years, making it impossible to consider long term outcomes for this population. Furthermore, the papers tend to draw conclusions regarding the best form of education for pupils with SEND without exploring the related factors that could be making the difference. As mentioned in the critique for Dessemontet et al.'s paper, there is no attempt to investigate what it is about inclusive or special education that has an impact on level of achievement or outcomes reached for SEND pupils, across any of the studies. However, what is of worth noting is the trend from all four papers suggesting that inclusive education tends to lead to better outcomes for children with SEND than special education. Arguably

future research needs to explore what aspects of inclusive education seem to make this difference, as well as investigating whether this effect is longitudinal.

2.6 Perceptions of Progress and SEND

The aim of these searches was to explore perceptions regarding the academic progress of children with SEND. I attempted to find papers considering perceptions of parents, teachers, and of children themselves. The searches and number of papers found for each of these areas is indicated in Table 3 below.

2.6.1 Parent Perceptions of Progress and SEND

This search revealed very few papers regarding parents' perceptions of progress for children with SEND. Interestingly if keywords related to SEND were removed there were nearly 4,000 papers regarding parent perceptions of progress generally. With the SEND keywords added, 62 papers were found but none were relevant for review (see Table 3).

Search Engine	Search Terms	Inclusion Criteria	Number of papers found with inclusion criteria applied	Number of papers included in review after screening
EBSCO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Search Complete • ERIC • Education Research Complete • PsycINFO • PsycARTICLES 	"learn*" OR "achiev*" OR "attain*" OR "progres*" OR "academic" OR "performance" OR "outcome*" OR "school*" AND "special educational need*" OR "additional	Peer reviewed journal Full text available School age (6-12 years) English language	62 Screening criteria & number removed: Focus on parental factors affecting progress, n= 11	0

	need*" OR "learning need*" OR "special need*" OR "disability*" OR "late learning*" OR "behind learning*"		Parental perceptions not related to progress, n= 17 Not related to parents, n= 34	
	AND "percept*" OR "view*" OR "experience*"			
	AND "parent*"			

Table 3: Search process for area 2.6.1

This search failed to reveal any papers which have specifically investigated parental perceptions of progress for parents of children with SEND and there appears to be a lack of research exploring parental views in this area. The 62 papers found tended to focus more on the impact on academic progress of parent related outcomes, such as maternal depression, or were focused on parental perceptions but not in relation to the progress of their children. For example, there were several papers exploring parental experiences of having a child with a special need, but these did not explore parental experience in relation to their child's progress.

When writing about parents' expectations of having a disabled child, Russell (2003) stated that little is known regarding parental expectations and views. She argued that an investigation into parents' expectations would lead to greater understanding of parental response to having a child with additional needs. Despite Russell discussing this topic and making these recommendations fourteen years ago, there is seemingly still a lack of

research exploring parental views regarding having a child with additional needs, particularly focusing on academic progress.

2.6.2 Teacher Perceptions of Progress and SEND

As can be seen in Table 4, this search produced 70 papers of which two were included for review. Papers were removed if they did not explore solely teacher perceptions, related to children with SEND. When undertaking this search, I again noticed a dearth of studies specifically exploring progress from the point of view of teachers. The two papers included for review are loosely linked to progress but are included because as was found in the searches in section 2.5, they explore teacher views on inclusive education. More specifically, the impact of these views on children with SEND.

Search Engine	Search Terms	Inclusion Criteria	Number of papers found with inclusion criteria applied	Number of papers included in review after screening
EBSCO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Search Complete • ERIC • Education Research Complete • PsycINFO • PsycARTICLES 	"learn*" OR "achiev*" OR "attain*" OR "progres*" OR "academic" OR "performance" OR "outcome*" OR "school*" AND "special educational need*" OR "additional need*" OR "learning need*" OR "special need*" OR "disability*" OR "late learning*"	Peer reviewed journal Full text available School age (6-12 years) English language	70 Screening criteria & number removed: Teacher perceptions not related to progress, n= 10 Not related to teachers, n= 60	2

	OR "behind learning*"			
	AND			
	"percept*" OR "view*" OR "experience*"			
	AND			
	"teacher*"			

Table 4: Search process for area 2.6.2

The two studies included in the review for this area were undertaken outside of the UK and use quantitative methodology to explore teacher perceptions. These perceptions are explored further in both papers, in terms of their impact upon the progress of children with SEND. The two papers vary in the sample sizes recruited.

Brady & Woolfson (2008) conducted their study with the aim of identifying factors which influence teacher beliefs regarding teaching children with learning difficulties. They felt this was important for the success of inclusive education (i.e. that children with additional needs make progress in mainstream schooling). The study explored what teacher factors affected attributions towards children's learning difficulties, namely role, self-efficacy, attitudes towards disability and teacher experience and training. 118 primary school teachers in Scotland participated in the study, 44 general mainstream teachers, 33 mainstream learning support teachers and 41 special education teachers. Measures used were the Teachers Sense of Efficacy Scale, the Interaction with Disabled Persons Scale and a revised edition of the Teacher Attribution Scale. Quantitative data from these questionnaires was analysed using multiple regression. Results indicated that teachers with more than 15 years of experience attributed children's difficulties as more internal than teachers with less than 15

years of experience. Regarding self-efficacy, teachers with higher self-efficacy scores were more likely to attribute difficulties externally than those with low self-efficacy scores. The authors suggested this could be because teachers who feel more confident in their abilities are more comfortable with accepting a level of responsibility for children's additional needs in school. Importantly for the present research, the authors consider what impact these attributions could have for the progress and achievement of children with SEND. For example, teachers who internally attribute difficulties to the child may be less likely to monitor and adapt their own practice to support those with additional difficulties. Similarly, if teachers view a child's difficulties as stable, they may be less likely to set expectations, which could influence a child's progress. It is important that these considerations are investigated further in future research so that the influence of teacher perception on the progress of children with SEND is understood more fully. Related to the current research, the way in which teacher's attribute learning difficulties could have an impact on the way in which children understand and construct their difficulties and potentially therefore, the way in which they construct progress or achievement.

Monsen & Frederickson (2004) explored teacher attitudes towards inclusion (mainstreaming) and related this to children's perceptions of the learning environment. 63 primary school teachers in New Zealand completed the Opinions Relative to Mainstreaming, a 30-item questionnaire providing a high, medium or low score relating to their opinions on mainstreaming policies and practises. 1729 pupils completed the My Class Inventory to provide data on how they felt about their learning environment. Results indicated that pupil perceptions were affected by the attitudes of teachers. In classrooms with teachers who had strong, positive attitudes towards inclusion, children tended to have

higher satisfaction. Importantly for progress, the characteristics in the classrooms of teachers with positive views towards inclusion have been shown in research to link with positive academic outcomes. However, what is not clear from this study is what specifically about teacher attitude to inclusion has an impact on children's level of satisfaction with the teaching environment. As the authors state, it is unlikely that teacher attitude is the only determinant of the environment thus is unlikely to be the only thing impacting upon satisfaction.

Whilst not addressing the perception of progress directly, both studies described in this section give an indication of the impact of teacher perception towards inclusive education and children with SEND could have on progress. Findings suggest that placing pupils with SEND with teachers who include them fully in the class, and who externally attribute difficulties and believe that ability can be improved could have a positive impact on children with SEND in terms of progress.

2.6.3 Children's Perceptions of Progress and SEND

The final search in the literature review aimed to explore any research considering children's perceptions of progress and SEND. As with other searches, I failed to find any papers focusing on progress specifically. As can be seen in Table 5, 190 papers remained after inclusion criteria were applied.

Search Engine	Search Terms	Inclusion Criteria	Number of papers found with inclusion criteria applied	Number of papers included in review after screening
EBSCO: • Academic Search Complete	"learn*" OR "achiev*" OR "attain*" OR	Peer reviewed journal	190	2

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ERIC • Education Research Complete • PsycINFO • PsycARTICLES 	<p>"progres*" OR "academic" OR "performance" OR "outcome*" OR "school*"</p> <p>AND</p> <p>"special educational need*" OR "additional need*" OR "learning need*" OR "special need*" OR "disability* OR "late learning*" OR "behind learning*"</p> <p>AND</p> <p>"percept*" OR "view*" OR "experience*"</p> <p>AND</p> <p>"child*" OR "self*" OR "pupil*" OR "student*"</p>	<p>Full text available</p> <p>School age (6-12 years)</p> <p>English language</p>	<p>Screening criteria & number removed:</p> <p>Child perceptions not related to progress or inclusion, n= 33</p> <p>Ineligible population, n= 5</p> <p>Not related to child perceptions, n= 150</p>	
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Table 5: Search process for section 2.6.3

During screening of the 190 papers found, papers were excluded if they did not only explore the perceptions of children with SEND (ineligible population). Papers exploring children's perceptions of a specific programme or intervention were also removed. Following screening, two papers remained for in depth review. I included these two papers because although not focussing specifically on progress, they did explore the perceptions of those with additional needs regarding educational experiences in general. I therefore felt they

were still pertinent to include as any studies eliciting the views of those with SEND are relevant to this piece of research. Both papers were based in the UK and used qualitative methodology to explore the views of a smaller number of participants. They both explore perceptions related to mainstream and special education provisions, aiming to ascertain whether children with SEND have a preference regarding type of schooling.

Prunty et al., (2012) explored the views of children with SEND regarding school. This paper formed part of a National review of the role of both special classes and special schools in Ireland. Data from six focus groups and four individual children (38 pupils in total) provided the basis for analysis in this study. Some students had experienced both mainstream and special settings so could compare the two. Findings suggested a greater emphasis on support for learning and social issues in special rather than mainstream settings. Students in focus groups alluded to the feeling that they did not receive a sufficient level of support in mainstream settings. The reasons students gave for this feeling included smaller classes, expertise of adults and increased adult support. The researchers found friendship was a strong mediating factor on views of schooling, with some pupils basing their school preference more on the levels of friendship in that setting rather than support related to learning. Most children did not support the idea of dual placement. This study provides an example of exploring the views of children with SEND. It also demonstrates the ability of children with SEND to be reflective about school and provide valuable insights into schooling from their perspective.

Curtin and Clarke (2005) explored experiences of education with children with physical difficulties, in England. The study recruited nine young people who used a manual or electric

wheelchair and who had the cognitive ability to participate in a series of interviews. Seven out of nine had attended both mainstream and specialist settings at some point and two had only attended segregated special school. Life stories were written collaboratively; students had input after each interview to ensure biographies were a true reflection of the children's voices. The biographies were all very different, so researchers found it difficult to draw conclusions. However, on the whole students who attended a special school felt positive about their experiences. Students who had attended both mainstream and specialist settings felt both positively and negatively about their experiences. The two students who had not attended a mainstream setting were adamant that they would not ever want to, as they felt they would not have their needs met, would not fit in and would be lonely and bullied. The researchers concluded from their study that the experiences of children with a physical disability are all very different, and as such each young person should be listened to individually. It is only by assessing on an entirely individual basis that a young person's needs can be identified and accommodated accordingly.

Both the above papers highlight the importance of listening to children's voices to gain an understanding of their views regarding education. Although they offer data from two different parts of the UK and include a variety of differing views from their samples, there are trends in the findings. Both papers tend to indicate a preference towards specialist education, from the point of view of children and young people with SEND. However, it is pertinent to take into consideration the fact that some of the children who expressed a negative attitude towards mainstream schooling had not actually experienced it. Therefore, their view may not be as objective as individuals expressing a preference who have encountered both forms of education. Furthermore, it may be important to consider that

the view of children and young people may be influenced by their parents' views, making it difficult to establish purely their opinions when conducting research.

2.6.4 Conclusions

In this section of the review I wanted to explore the literature regarding perceptions of progress for the SEND population. I aimed to find papers including the voices of important stakeholders in child's life, including children themselves. Unfortunately, there is a distinct lack of papers exploring the perceptions of all these stakeholders in relation to progress specifically. Papers in this section were included because they explored the impact of perceptions for children with SEND, even if not exploring perceptions of progress specifically. The papers detailing teacher's perceptions are important when considering impact and they perhaps indicate the significance a teacher's perceptions can have on the perceptions of the children they teach.

2.7 Conclusions from Literature Review

This literature review sought to explore and present key research relevant to this study with the aim of providing a critical review of the current knowledge and understanding relating to academic progress and SEND.

Interestingly throughout all sections of the review, there tended to be a focus on inclusion. Although this an important and relevant topic for children with SEND there seems to be a lack of exploration of other factors related to progress. Furthermore, and possibly due to the quantitative nature of most of the studies, there is no attempt to explore which elements of inclusive or special education settings have an impact upon children. Of further interest is the fact that the papers regarding inclusion from the perspective of children with

SEND indicate the opposite to studies exploring the best kind of education for this group. As mentioned previously, most papers tended to indicate that mainstream schooling promotes the best outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Data suggests that less than half of children with a statement or EHC attend a specialist provision (DfE, 2017) potentially providing evidence to support these papers. However, as the studies in the children's perceptions section indicates, this may not be their preference and children and young people with SEND may in fact feel happier in specialist education. As also indicated, children's views regarding school preference are highly individual and so it may be impossible to conclude in research that an overarching opinion exists for the SEND population.

Undertaking this review indicated the importance and significance of this current piece of research. Firstly, the value of eliciting and listening to the voices of children and young people has been highlighted. Furthermore, the review indicates a lack of literature exploring perceptions relating to the progress of children with SEND. There is therefore an absence of literature relating to the aims of this study; to elicit the views, experiences and perceptions of children with SEND with regards to their academic progress. Papers included in the review all tended to focus on ability, attainment or progress as quantifiable, pre-existing measurable constructs, rather than exploring children's own constructs of concepts such as ability and progress. The current study therefore provided a unique opportunity to not only explore the perceptions of a group that seems to have been left out of the literature, but also to consider that the individual experiences and views of these children are most important. This current research fills a current gap in the literature, exploring

perceptions of progress for children with SEND, providing a voice to this group of children at the same time.

Of the 13 papers reviewed, only five were undertaken in the UK. The international nature of the remaining papers means that the context i.e. relevant policies or culture of the included populations may not be applicable to the English population. The current research therefore provides an opportunity to add to the few papers exploring academic progress for children with SEND in England.

2.8 Summary of Chapter Two

This chapter has explored the current literature base for this area of research. I have outlined how a funnel approach to searching the literature allowed me to cover all pertinent areas. Through carrying out this review I have identified a clear gap in the research that this study fills, and the aims of the study were to elicit the views, experiences and perceptions of children with SEND with regards to their academic progress.

The next chapter will present the methodology employed to address the aims and purpose of this study, including the chosen method for data analysis.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Overview of Chapter Three

This chapter provides a description of the methodology used in this research. I start by discussing my ontological and epistemological positions (3.2), first providing an introduction (3.2.1) before describing the position I took when designing and undertaking this study (3.2.2). I then present the aims and research questions (3.3) before describing the design of the research (3.4). This section includes information on the data analysis (3.4.1) data collection (3.4.2) and data gathering (3.4.3) methods used. The steps of data analysis (3.5) trustworthiness and validity (3.6), reflexivity (3.7) and ethical considerations (3.8) of the research are then explained, followed by a summary of the chapter (3.9).

3.2 Ontological and Epistemological Position

3.2.1 Introduction to Research Paradigms

When designing and conducting a piece of research, it is important to be aware of the philosophical position or paradigm within which the research is framed. This is because the philosophical position a researcher aligns themselves with can have a significant influence on the approaches undertaken. Mertens (2010) believes that the philosophical orientation of a researcher impacts every decision and step taken within the process of research. Creswell (2009) states that decisions regarding research design must be informed by the researcher's worldview. A worldview is our way of looking at the world, which includes the philosophical assumptions that guide our thinking and the action we take (Mertens, 2010). Which worldview is taken can have such an impact that two researchers investigating the same phenomenon using two different approaches could produce unique data and thus

draw very different conclusions. Creswell (2003) describes how the worldview taken can affect the questions a researcher chooses to explore, and the methodology chosen to attempt to answer those questions.

The worldview or paradigm underpinning a piece of research consists of the ontological position (what is the nature of reality?) and epistemological position (what is the nature of knowledge?) of a study. Guba (1990) suggests that the design of research is influenced by the position a researcher takes due to the assumptions that position leads a person to make about the world. Ontology, epistemology and methodology combined create a holistic view of what knowledge is, how we understand knowledge, and the methodology used to discover this knowledge, thus together they create a framework for the research. Ontology should be considered at the start of the research process and is of paramount importance, as the ontological position taken consequently impacts the research process throughout, including data collection and data analysis techniques. Ontology asks questions such as: What exists? and What is the nature of reality? Once a researcher is clear about what reality is, they can consider what kind of knowledge can be obtained about that reality, thus deliberating their epistemological position. Epistemology affects the way a researcher interacts with what is being researched. For example, is the researcher part of the knowledge being explored or external to it? Once a researcher's ontology and epistemology are clear, the methodology that will be used can be considered.

Robson (2002) describes three paradigms in social research: positivism, social constructionism and critical realism.

Positivists take the stance that there is one reality or truth, and that researchers gain objective knowledge about the world through scientific investigation. Through research, causal explanations can be found and experimentation leads to the discovery of general laws to describe relationships between variables (Mertens, 2010). In a study, participants and the researcher are assumed to be independent and do not influence each other (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). In terms of methodology, a piece of research undertaken using a positivist paradigm tends to be quantitative, studies in social science are viewed in the same way as studies in the natural sciences. A positivist stance within research with people has been criticised. For example, Moore (2005) states that due to the complexity of human nature, it is almost impossible to consider truth and meaning as being independent from an individual.

Social constructionist thinking was developed in response to some of the criticisms of positivism. The underlying premise is that reality is constructed through social settings and experiences; it is individual. Realities about the world are constructed individually, socially and through language, therefore concepts can mean different things to different people. In studies underpinned by a social constructionist paradigm, the researcher and the participants are joined together in an interactive process with each influencing the other (Mertens, 2010). Methodology used is more likely to be qualitative, whereby an interactive and more personal method for data collection is employed. The use of interviews for example, is more dominant in this paradigm. Social constructionism was established from the study of hermeneutics; exploring understanding and meaning. Meanings are created in response to historical or cultural norms (Creswell, 2003), and the best way to discover these

meanings is to explore individual experience. For a social constructionist researcher, there are as many realities as there are participants (Robson, 2011).

Critical realists believe that knowledge is dependent upon historical and social context. Reality is seen in a similar way to positivism except that it is influenced by the people present (Robson, 2002). In critical realism, things exist apart from our experience and knowledge and the aim of research is to develop theories to explain the world.

3.2.2 Paradigm of Current Research

The purpose of this research was to gain an understanding of children's individual experience related to academic progress. When considering the phenomenon of academic progress, I believed that each participant's perception and construction of progress in school would be unique. I hold the opinion that academic progress is not a concept that can be described objectively, and as such is a socially constructed phenomenon with associated multiple realities. My beliefs therefore align themselves best with a social constructionist paradigm. The aim and research questions of this study alongside the focus on the experiences of each individual participant meant that a social constructionist perspective was the most appropriate framework to use. I deemed the phenomenon of progress to be socially constructed; taking this approach allowed participants to talk freely about their own constructions of progress, rather than having an existing perceived reality of progress emphasised to them. The most appropriate way to understand individual representation of progress was to interact on a 1:1 basis directly with participants, allowing them to freely express and explain their personal constructions and experiences.

A premise of social constructionism is that the way in which the world is understood is culturally and historically relative therefore knowledge is an artefact of a context. In the current research, there was no assumption that one understanding of academic progress was any closer to reality than another understanding, and as the research is set within a social constructionist paradigm I appreciated that all participants would have individual constructs of the phenomenon of progress. In this study, I believe that the children who were interviewed would understand progress with some influence from their current contexts, and the language they have heard others use to describe it. The social constructionist paradigm underpinning this research influenced many decisions regarding the methodology employed to gather and analyse data.

3.3 Aims and Purpose of Research

The aim of this research was to gain an understanding of how children with SEND make sense of the phenomenon of academic progress. Furthermore, the study aimed to explore what these children feel is helpful in school. As such, the purpose is exploratory. The research also provides a group of children with a voice, to express their views which according to the literature review, are not often explored.

As described above, the lack of existing literature conducted this research to focus on the following main question:

What meaning do children with SEND assign to academic progress and what do they think makes them improve?

The research also aimed to answer the following sub-research questions:

What does getting better at school mean for children identified as needing SEN Support?

What do these children think helps them to get better in school?

3.4 Research Design

Research can be classified as being exploratory, explanatory, evaluative or emancipatory in its purpose (Creswell, 2009). Exploratory research asks questions aiming to elicit participants' views. By exploring participants' beliefs and thoughts about a phenomenon it is thought that an insight into that phenomenon can be gained (Robson, 2011). The current study is therefore exploratory in nature, as it sought to explore how children with SEND think about and understand the phenomenon of academic progress.

As already described, the purpose of this research was to explore how children with SEND make sense of the concept of progress, in their own words rather than compared to a pre-conceived notion. I therefore needed a research design that would allow me to collect data from my participants in a manner that suited the research questions, and allowed flexibility for participants to express their views freely. Consequently, I decided that a qualitative research design was most appropriate to address my research questions and guide the method for data collection.

3.4.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The method deemed most appropriate for data analysis in this study was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is a qualitative method of data analysis "committed to the examination of how people make sense of their life experiences" (Smith, Flowers &

Larkin, 2011, pg. 1). It is concerned with an in-depth exploration of human experience. IPA has three significant theoretical underpinnings. Firstly, phenomenology, the study of experience. Phenomenologists are interested in what it feels like to be human, and how we understand the experiences we have as humans. These experiences are considered to be individual but are often not viewed in isolation. IPA is deemed to be phenomenological because it is concerned with exploring experience, in its own terms. This means that experience is not predefined before it is explored. IPA is based on the premise that people reflect on the significance of their experiences, and so an IPA researcher aims to explore these reflections.

The second theoretical underpinning of IPA is hermeneutics; the theory of interpretation. IPA believes that when people reflect on their experiences, they are making interpretations. In order to understand the experience of participants, the researcher needs to interpret their accounts. This is known as 'double hermeneutics' (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The IPA researcher is part of the research, as they are trying to interpret the interpretations of the participants. Smith et al., (2011) describe the researcher's interpretations as 'second order'; they only have access to the experiences of the participants through the account of the participants themselves.

The third influencing philosophical theory on IPA is idiography. Generally speaking, psychological research often aims to make claims at a group level, attempting to discover general laws which are applicable to multiple individuals across multiple contexts. However, in IPA, experience is explored at an individual level. This approach comes from the influence of idiography, which is concerned with the particular. In IPA, there are two strands to the

exploration of the particular: firstly, through the in-depth analysis of data, and secondly through understanding the perspectives of a small group of individuals in a particular context. IPA therefore often uses small sample sizes or case studies.

The influence of these theoretical underpinnings has led to the development of IPA as a qualitative research methodology interested in an in-depth exploration of human experience and sense making. This type of analysis was deemed most appropriate for this study for multiple reasons. The purpose of this research was to explore children's understanding and experiences of academic progress. IPA therefore offers a strong theoretical basis to underpin the study. IPA assumes that the accounts provided by participants are based on their experiences. It aims to obtain an insight into a person's thoughts and beliefs in relation to the phenomenon upon their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). In this case this phenomenon is academic progress, and the study is concerned with the meaning that participants have assigned to the concept of progress, through their experiences. Furthermore, as the focus in this study is on individually constructed meaning, IPA also fits well with my social constructionist epistemological position as researcher.

3.4.1.1 Considered Alternatives

Before selecting IPA as the chosen method for analysis in this research, I considered a range of qualitative analysis methodologies. For example, Thematic Analysis (TA). TA can be deemed as like IPA in that it aims to find patterns across data, generating themes that are relevant to a phenomenon and answer a specific research question. It tends to be used for larger data sets when the focus is on shared meaning across the data. However, TA does not have the same idiographic focus nor does it lend itself to research questions related to

people's experiences or perspectives. When planning this research, I attached significance to the idiographic and phenomenological nature of my research questions, thus IPA is a more appropriate method for data analysis than TA.

I also considered using Grounded Theory, one of the first formally identified methods of data analysis in qualitative research (Smith et al., 2011). Grounded Theory is an inductive method as it aims to produce a theoretical-level account of a phenomenon, researchers propose a theory to help explain a concept at the end of the study. The aim of this research was not to produce a theory related to the phenomenon of academic progress. Rather, the purpose related to gaining understanding of how a group of children with SEND understand and attach meaning to the concept of progress. Grounded theory was therefore deemed not an appropriate method for analysis, when considering the aims and purpose of this study.

3.4.2 Data Collection

3.4.2.1. Recruitment and Participants

Smith et. al. (2011) state that IPA studies are usually conducted on a relatively small sample size. They suggest that sample size should be decided on an individual basis, based on the details of the research, but indicate that as a rule between three and six participants is a good number to aim for. Smith et al. (2009) also propose that between four and ten interviews is a sensible number for doctoral students to carry out. IPA is best used when looking at detailed accounts of an individual's experience and a smaller sample size is more likely to provide a researcher with a rich analysis.

IPA studies also tend to use a purposive sampling method as usually the aim is to explore a phenomenon and answer a research question related to a specific group, for whom the research question holds relevance (Smith et al., 2011). Smith et al. (2009) also suggest that homogeneity is important for the use of IPA in research, this helps to ensure that the phenomenon being explored has been experienced by all participants.

In this research, I used purposive sampling to recruit participants. I wanted to conduct my research in a school that would be interested in the findings, so that there was a joint motivation to complete the study. I therefore spoke to EPs in my EPS area team and asked whether they thought any of their schools would be interested in the topic of my research. One EP suggested one of theirs would probably be keen to take part.

I wanted to recruit participants in Key Stage 2 (aged 8-10), predominantly those in Year 4 of primary education. The rationale for this was that additional needs would have been identified; those that have been in the same school throughout their education would be very well known. Staff would also have had the opportunity to become familiar with the needs of children who may be in an infant and junior school structure and so started their current placement in Year 3. Furthermore, developmentally, during middle childhood (6-12) is when children begin to use more psychological statements about the self and others (Damon and Hart, 1998; Harter, 1998). This stage in development is relevant for this study as I wanted participants to be at the developmental phase where they are more likely to begin to see themselves in terms of psychological characteristics such as intelligence. This differs from earlier stages, when children are more likely to describe themselves in terms of physical attributes or preferences. Finally, it is also likely that throughout Key Stage 2

there is more of an emphasis on assessment and progress, as children begin to work towards end of Key Stage SATs.

Participants must have been on their school's SEN Support register for at least one academic year. There were no exclusion criteria regarding type of SEN, but participants had to be at the level of SEN Support in school, those with Statements or Education, Health and Care Plans were excluded. This was due to the rationale and purpose of the study. The SENCo identified potential participants who would be able to understand the questions asked of them and articulate their responses back to me. They needed to have a level of verbal reasoning that allowed them to express themselves and justify or expand on answers to questions. I therefore used the SENCo as a qualitative judge for this criterion and provided the SENCo in advance with the proposed interview schedule, in order for her to consider the appropriateness of potential participants.

Six participants were recruited for the study following the recruitment process. The SENCo of the school identified eight appropriate participants and sent information and consent forms to these children and their parents. In total six forms were returned to school. All participants were in year 4 at the recruited primary school, across two classes. Participant information can be found in Table 6 below. The school that took part in the study had slightly lower proportions of children receiving SEN Support and those with EHCPs, when compared to national averages (DfE, 2017.)

Name*	Age at time of interview	SEND
Gemma	9 years 6 months	SEMH
Emma	9 years 5 months	Learning
Tim	9 years 5 months	Memory
Lily	9 years 6 months	Learning
Susan	9 years 3 months	Learning
David	9 years 7 months	SEMH/ADHD

*Real names have been replaced with pseudonyms

Table 6: Participant Information

3.4.2.2 Pilot Study

Prior to completing interviews with the six participants recruited, I conducted a pilot interview. An adapted information and consent form was sent to the pupil and the pupil's parents. The participant who took part in the pilot interview shared many characteristics with the participants whose data was gathered in recorded interviews. The pilot interview was carried out for several reasons:

1. To practice the interview schedule
2. To see how a child responded to me as an interviewer
3. To practice my interviewing skills
4. To seek the views of the child on what it felt like to be part of the interview and what changes I should make to the interview questions.

When I met with the child who took part in the pilot interview, I explained what the purpose of my research was. I told him that although his answers to my questions could not be used at a later stage, his input was valuable as it helped me to practice and I could learn from his feedback.

The pilot interview helped me with one significant decision. When planning the interviews, I knew that rapport would be important. Smith et al. (2011) state that “unless you succeed in establishing rapport, you are unlikely to obtain good data from your participant” (pg. 64). However, I was not sure whether to have some time before the start of each interview during which I could complete some activities to build rapport with the children, or whether to have a separate session with each participant to do this. When undertaking the pilot interview, I completed some rapport building activities before moving on to the actual interview questions all in one session. When reflecting on the pilot I found that the child was not as relaxed as he could have been during the rapport building activities, possibly because he knew the interview questions would be coming soon. I therefore decided that in order to successfully build rapport with my six participants, I would meet each of them on a separate occasion to complete some initial activities.

After the pilot interview, I asked the child some questions regarding the experience of the interview. He described it as “fun” and said he did not feel any of the questions were too hard. Following the interview, I changed the wording of some questions in the schedule slightly as, based on the child’s responses, I thought they could be phrased in a more accessible way. Conducting the pilot assisted me in practising the interview schedule, and my interviewing skills. It also helped to lower my anxiety about completing the interviews and I felt more confident when approaching the recorded interviews with my six participants.

3.4.3 Data Gathering

3.4.3.1 Semi Structured Interview

When research focuses on understanding the perspectives and experiences of individuals, or when depth of meaning is important, interviewing is deemed to be an appropriate method for gathering data (Gillham, 2000). The use of a semi-structured interview in this study allowed participants to answer questions in their own words, whilst ensuring that I as researcher retained control overall (Drever, 1995).

Greig, Taylor & MacKay (2007) suggest that the questions that a researcher asks during interview should be appropriately matched to a child's age and ability. To ensure this, the proposed interview schedule was discussed during supervision with my Director of Studies and Placement Supervisor before a draft was sent to the SENCo. Sending the draft to the SENCo ensured that the participants selected would have the verbal reasoning skills needed to understand and provide answers to the questions. The interview schedule was also adapted slightly following the pilot interview.

3.4.3.2 Procedure

The procedure for gathering data in my research was as follows:

1. An EP colleague suggested that a primary school in their patch may be interested in taking part. I approached the SENCo of the school and provided some brief details regarding the research. The SENCo said she would like to take part and thought that the findings would be useful. I asked the SENCo to seek consent from the Head of school.

2. Once the Head of school agreed for the school to take part I sent draft information and consent forms and a proposed interview schedule to the SENCo. The SENCo identified eight children who met inclusion criteria for participation in the study, as well as one child who would be appropriate for participation in the pilot.
3. The SENCo sent out an adapted information and consent form to the pilot child and his parents (see Appendix 2). Information and consent forms were sent to the eight identified potential participants and their parents at the same time, so that consent was already obtained once the pilot had taken place and any adaptations that needed to be made to the interview process had been actioned. Final drafts of both can be found in Appendices 3 & 4 respectively.
4. When the consent form for the pilot child had been returned I made arrangements to go into school to conduct the pilot interview. Once the pilot had been completed and I had reflected on the process, I made slight changes to the interview schedule. The final schedule can be found in Appendix 5.
5. Once consent forms for all six participants had been returned I arranged dates with the SENCo and class teachers for me to go into school and conduct rapport building sessions with all pupils. These took place over a two-week period, I conducted 2 or 3 sessions per day with the pupils. During these rapport building sessions, I explained the purpose of the study and checked the participants were giving fully informed consent and knew of their right to withdraw. I asked the children questions to get to know them and invited them to do the same if there was anything they wanted

to know about me or the research. To provide some structure to these conversations I asked some questions from a 'more about me' sheet (see Appendix 6). I also asked questions about their favourite: food, colour, singer, hobbies and TV shows. I finally asked them some questions about school; which lessons they liked and disliked, and the things they enjoyed or did not enjoy most about school. These rapport building sessions took approximately 30 minutes for each participant, and were undertaken in either a library or a private room in the school. Although I could not offer participants a variety of options for location, I ensured that they were comfortable with the surroundings, and they were able to choose which chair to sit on at the table we were working on.

6. When rapport building sessions had been completed with all participants, I arranged dates with the SENCo and class teachers for me to come into school and conduct the recorded interviews. These were completed over a three-week period, I conducted a maximum of two interviews per visit as I thought my own fatigue could have an influence if I attempted to do more than this. The interviews took place in either of the same two locations as the rapport building sessions. Participants were again offered a choice of seat at the table.
7. Before starting each interview, I confirmed again that participants were still happy to take part and that they knew they could withdraw from the research. I confirmed their consent for the interview to be recorded. I used applications on my laptop and my mobile phone for recording, to ensure that recording happened if one did not work for any reason. I showed participants both so that the recording process was

transparent. I explained that after the interview the recordings would be kept on my laptop in a locked folder. As all the laptop recordings were successful, the phone recordings were subsequently deleted.

8. At the end of each interview I thanked the participants for taking part in the study. They were offered the chance to ask me any further questions. I also offered each child some time to sit and reflect before going back to class if they wished.

The above steps were undertaken over a total period of approximately 22 weeks, February – July 2017.

3.4.3.3 Transcription

The six interviews were transcribed by myself in the two weeks that followed completion of the last interview. I felt that it was important that I transcribed the interviews myself so that I was already immersed in the data prior to beginning analysis.

Smith et al. (2011) state that IPA requires a “verbatim record of the data collection event” (pg. 73). They also suggest that there is no need to transcribe all non-verbal utterances, as one would if using a method such as conversation analysis. When transcribing my interviews, I followed Smith et al.’s guidance and produced purely semantic records of interviews, i.e. transcripts showing all words spoken, and I did not include information which would not be analysed. Lindsay and O’Connell (1995) state that there is no point to including information in a transcription which will not be analysed.

Once I had transcribed each interview I listened back again with the transcription in front of me to check it was an accurate record of the interview. I noticed when doing this that I

was already beginning to make sense of the interpretations participants were making about their experiences. This was only possible because I already felt immersed in the data, which then made approaching data analysis easier.

Prior to commencing data analysis, I put all transcripts into the format as suggested by Smith et al. (2011), including wide margins and space between each utterance in the interview (see Appendix 7 for an example).

3.5 Data Analysis

As described above, I used IPA to analyse the data. There is no prescribed single method for the stages of analysis in IPA. The existing literature includes multiple methods for approaching data, but there is often a common set of processes to be followed. “IPA can be characterised by a set of common processes (moving from the particular to the shared and from the descriptive to the interpretative) and principles which are applied flexibly according to the analytic task” (Smith et al., 2011, pg. 79). The general process includes a movement from the particular to the shared, and from descriptive to interpretative. Common principles include a commitment to understanding an individual’s point of view, and a focus on sense making by an individual in a particular context. As a fairly novice researcher in terms of experience of IPA, I decided to follow a step by step process to data analysis, as described by Smith et al., (2011). As well as reducing my own anxiety and risk of being overwhelmed when approaching the data, following specific guidance developed my skills in order to produce analysis considered “good enough” (Smith et al., pg. 81). Six steps of analysis are proposed and they are described in detail below.

Step 1: Reading and re-reading

The purpose of this step is for the researcher to immerse themselves within the data. This step ensures that the focus of the analysis is the participants. Smith et al., (2011) suggest an active engagement with the data; repeated reading and listening. I found listening to audio recordings alongside reading transcripts helpful at first, as when I read transcripts again subsequently, I could hear the participant's voice in mind. The transcripts were re-read for each participant several times. Any initial thoughts I had when reading were recorded elsewhere. Smith et al., (2011) suggest that this is a helpful 'bracketing' exercise, so that focus remains with the data and analysis does not start too quickly.

Step 2: Initial noting

Smith et al., (2011) consider this to be the most detailed and time-consuming step of analysis. The aim of this step is to examine "semantic content and language use on a very exploratory level", (Smith et al., pg. 83). The researcher notes down anything of interest within transcripts. As well as ensuring an increased familiarity with the data, it helps to begin the process of identifying the ways a participant discusses, thinks and understands the phenomenon in question. There is no rule regarding the types of notes that must be made. The purpose of conducting such a close analysis is to avoid superficial reading which could lead to notes made on what is expected to be in a transcript rather than what is actually present. I used the left-hand margin of my transcriptions for comments. Smith et al., (2011) suggest that three types of comments can be made during this stage:

1. Descriptive comments – focused on describing the content of what a participant is saying

2. Linguistic comments – focused on the specific language a participant is using
3. Conceptual comments – an interpretation of the concepts underlying what a participant is saying.

As I analysed each transcript, these three focuses were held in mind. I used a different colour highlighter to represent each type of comment. Descriptive comments were highlighted in pink, linguistic comments in green and conceptual comments in orange. An extract from a transcript, demonstrating the three types of comments made during initial noting can be found in Appendix 8.

Step 3: Developing emergent themes

In this step, the researcher works more with the notes made in step 2 rather than the original transcript. It is important in this step to reduce volume of detail without reducing depth. The researcher begins to link patterns and connections between the exploratory notes taken. If step 2 has been carried out rigorously, notes taken will be closely linked to the original transcripts. The process of developing themes involves breaking up the 'narrative flow' of the interview so that emergent themes across the interview can be discovered.

Smith et al. (2011) describe how themes generated are a reflection of the original words and thoughts of participants but also the researcher's interpretation. They should reflect a "synergistic process of description and interpretation" (Smith et al., pg. 92), i.e. a move from loose and open notes in step 2, to themes that reflect an understanding of what a participant is saying. I used the right-hand margin of my transcripts for emerging themes. At this stage multiple emergent themes were created, to ensure that the essence of what

each participant was saying remained in focus. An excerpt from a transcript which demonstrates the recording of emergent themes during step 3 can be found in Appendix 9.

Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes

The purpose of this step is to map how the themes from the first participant fit together and form superordinate themes for that participant. The aim is to produce a structure that highlights the interesting and important aspects of the participant's interview. Smith et al., (2011) suggests specific ways to look for patterns and connections between themes. Firstly abstraction, whereby themes that are very similar can be put together and given a new name. Subsumption, whereby one already existing theme becomes a super-ordinate theme to bring together related themes. Polarisation, whereby oppositional relationships between themes can be seen. Contextualisation, whereby the contextual elements of a theme can be used to build connections. Finally, numeration, the frequency in which a theme occurs can be an indication of its importance. These strategies were all used during data analysis to help with the construction of super-ordinate themes.

To search for connections, all emergent themes were written onto individual post-it notes and placed on an a3 sheet of paper. Figure 3 illustrates an example of this for participant Tim. Using the strategies outlined above, I grouped emergent themes together, moving themes around several times until I was happy with the connections and groupings I had made (see Figure 4 for an example for participant Tim). Repetitions of emergent themes were removed but kept. I could therefore keep superordinate themes tidy but refer to the frequency of emergent themes if I needed to. The superordinate and emergent themes were typed into a table so that I had an easily readable graphic representation of the

structure of themes. Appendix 10 provides an example of this for participant Lily. I also added key phrases from the transcript so that I could easily see where each emergent theme came from.

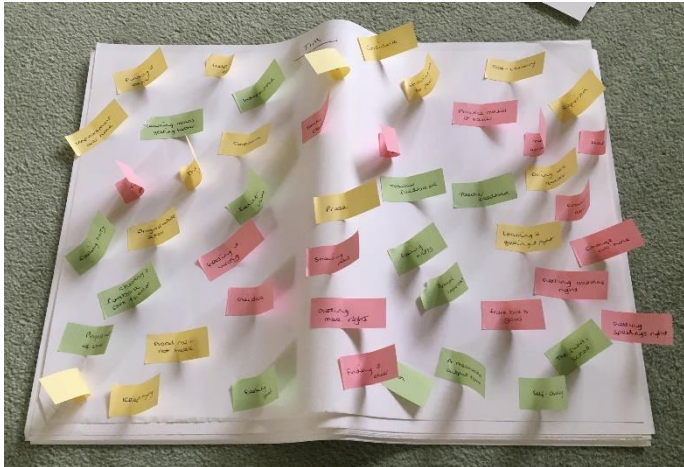


Figure 3: Presentation of all emergent themes for participant Tim

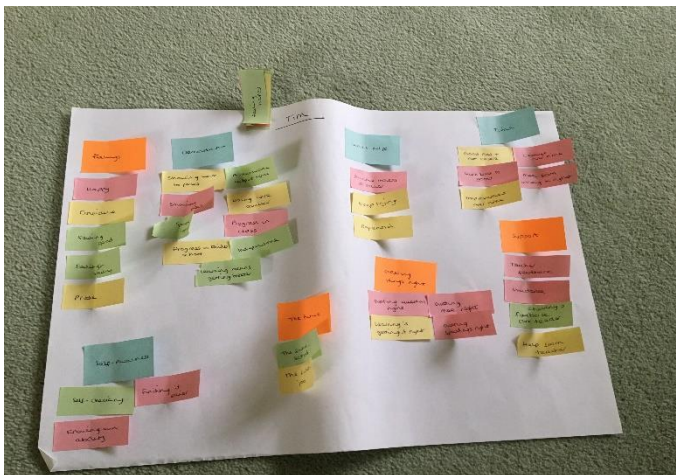


Figure 4: Presentation of superordinate and emergent themes for participant Tim

Step 5: Moving to the next case

Steps 1-4 were repeated for all participants. To ensure that I stayed aligned to IPA's idiographic theoretical underpinning, I put all other transcripts and related themes away when working on the analysis for one participant. This physical bracketing allowed me to

concentrate on the data of one participant at a time. Steps 1-4 were undertaken for all participants across approximately four sessions. When I finished the steps for each participant I ensured that I took a break and engaged in an unrelated activity. This use of mental bracketing alongside the physical bracketing assisted me to view each participant's data individually. Steps 1-4 being complete for all participants meant that I had produced a typed table for each, providing a graphical representation of themes. In preparation for step 6, I typed all superordinate themes across all participants into one table. This allowed me to begin to see connections and patterns across cases (see Table 7).

Emma	Gemma	Lily	David	Susan	Tim
An active learner Teacher Moving forward Future Feelings Learning Peers Achievement	Feelings Self Peers Adult Reinforcement Getting it right Strategies Future Movement	Home Strategies Improvement Future Focus Feelings Knowledge	Tests Future Difficulties Resources Feelings Others Journey Approach as a learner Markers	Feeling Indicators Approach Supporters Definition	Feelings Self-awareness The future What is helpful Getting things right Time Support Demonstration

Table 7: Superordinate themes for all participants

Step 6: Looking for patterns across cases

This step involves looking for connections between the themes identified for each participant. Once I had completed steps 1-5 for all participants I used the following process to identify master themes. All superordinate themes across the data set were cut out and colour coded, each participant's themes were represented by a different colour (see Appendix 11). This allowed me to identify whether the master themes I was drawing together represented the data from all the participants. This visual approach also made it easier to search for patterns and connections across the data. I could physically move

themes around until I was content with the master theme groupings I had made. It surprised me that there were so many similarities across participants, meaning that some superordinate themes were potent for all six participants. The colour coded superordinate themes were laid out on a large surface. This step allowed for further creative exploration of the data. As I worked through this step, some superordinate themes were renamed or reconfigured to ensure that all the data was represented. Smith et. al (2011) allow for this by describing the analysis process as fluid. Master themes were moved around and renamed several times before the final version. The final version comprised four master themes (see Table 8). In order to ensure that interpretation was underpinned by what participants had actually said rather than being guided by external influences, I frequently referred back to the original data, as recommended by Smith et al. (2011). Once I had finalised my four master themes, I completed a further check to ensure that these themes represented the original data. The master themes were colour coded, and the superordinate and emergent themes for each participant were checked alongside each colour. Relevant emergent themes were highlighted (see Appendix 12). Through this process I was able to see that the master themes I had devised clearly linked back to the emergent themes for all participants and so I was satisfied that they represented the original data.

A process for future gains	(Defined by) outside checks	Various influences	Associated feelings
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Table 8: Master Themes

3.6 Trustworthiness and Validity

Producing research which is trustworthy is important in order to evaluate the contribution that findings of a study can make. The principles of reliability and validity are fundamental when considering the trustworthiness of a piece of research. Silverman (2005) states that it is the responsibility of the researcher to show that procedures used within a study are reliable, and therefore the conclusions drawn from findings can be considered valid. In a qualitative study, validity and reliability are harder to define and check and may not be appropriate. Qualitative research is variable and diverse, and as such Yardley (2008) suggests that trustworthiness might be a more appropriate measure in qualitative research.

Golafshani (2003) offers a different conceptualisation appropriate for qualitative studies, and redefines validity and reliability as trustworthiness, rigour and quality. A set of criteria to judge the quality and trustworthiness of qualitative studies has also been suggested by Guba & Lincoln (1989): credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These authors also suggest ways in which each of these criteria can be ensured within research. I have chosen these criteria to evaluate this study and have considered each in turn as follows:

3.6.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which data represents what participants said, and the confidence in the 'truth' of the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Ways in which Guba & Lincoln suggest this can be satisfied include developing rapport and trust with participants and using peer debriefing. To build rapport with participants I met with each of them informally, and asked questions to get to know them, and offered them the chance to ask

me anything they wanted to know. I have also included excerpts from participants in the findings chapter and used supervision with my Director of Studies to discuss analysis of the data. I also kept a research diary for reflection throughout the entirety of the process.

3.6.2 Transferability

Transferability equates to external validity in quantitative research; the extent to which the results of a study can be generalised to other contexts. The equivalent of validity in qualitative research is a 'thick description' of a phenomenon. Although the purpose of this research is not to provide findings that can be generalised, it is hoped that there is enough detail in the data to provide a thick description and for readers to assess the transferability of findings to similar contexts. It is also hoped that this study will begin to introduce the ideas of discussing academic progress with children themselves into the field.

3.6.3 Dependability

Dependability equates to reliability in quantitative research; the extent to which the research can be replicated, and that findings are consistent. Guba & Lincoln (1989) suggest this can be ensured through an external audit, whereby a researcher not involved in the original study examines the process and determines whether findings and conclusions are supported by the data. The detail provided in the methodology overview will allow for the study to be repeated. I have also discussed each stage of the process with my Director of Studies in order that replicability and hence dependability can be assessed. This included considerable discussion regarding findings. It is important to note that in qualitative research, replicability is not necessarily a key consideration due to the individuality of each study.

3.6.4 Confirmability

Confirmability links to objectivity; the extent to which the researcher minimises their impact on the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In qualitative research, the method for data analysis should be made explicit and the source of the data should be traceable to readers. The data analysis section in this chapter provides sufficient detail to ensure this. To minimise my impact on the research I have remained reflexive throughout (discussed in more detail below). I used supervision with both my Director of Studies and Placement Supervisor to ensure that this happened. Any influence on the analysis was identified and discussed.

3.7 Reflexivity

The qualitative nature of this research meant that my role as researcher had to be considered throughout. I was mindful of remaining aware of how I may influence the study at all stages. For example, my personal influences could have affected planning, what happened during interviews, and throughout analysis and interpretation of the data. To ensure I had awareness of my influence throughout, the issue of reflexivity was considered at all phases. I kept a reflective research diary throughout. I also used supervision with my Director of Studies and Placement Supervisor to reflect on my research at all stages.

Reflexivity is important in all qualitative studies but is of particular importance in IPA studies. When using IPA, researchers need to be mindful of 'double hermeneutics' (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Participants in IPA research discuss their experience and as they do so, they try to make sense of their world. As the researcher listens to what the participants are saying, they too are interpreting. Findings are therefore the researcher's interpretation of participants' interpretations, through their own personal lens. Consequently, the influence

of the researcher cannot be ignored, and in IPA their impact on analysis is acknowledged (Smith et al., 2009). IPA researchers are not encouraged to exclude any impact, but instead to remain reflexive and acknowledge and consider the influence that their biases, assumptions and preconceptions may have on the research. Clancy (2013) states that reflexivity in IPA studies is a process that at times may be difficult but is crucial for becoming self-aware. If a researcher is self-aware, they can see any influences which could have an impact on both data collection and the analysis process. Remaining reflexive aids understanding.

As mentioned above, to remain reflexive throughout the research process, I kept a reflective research diary. I found this to be particularly helpful when conducting the interviews and considering analysis. I used the diary to write down any thoughts or feelings I had in relation to my research.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

3.8.1 Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from The University of East London (UEL) School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee on the 5th March 2017 (see Appendix 13). Ethical principles for this research were guided by the British Psychological Society's (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2014), along with the Health & Care Professional Council's (HCPC) guidance for conduct and ethics for students (HCPC, 2016). Each principle stated within the BPS guidelines was considered and it was ensured that the research adhered to these principles throughout.

3.8.2 Risk: Safety of Participants

The BPS Code of Human Research Ethics describes risk as “the potential physical or psychological harm, discomfort or stress to human participants that a research project may generate” (BPS, pg. 10, 2014). The Code also stipulates types of research that would be considered to involve more than minimal risk, one of which is research involving participants under the age of 16. It was therefore crucial in my research to ensure the safety of the children who took part.

Whilst I did not envisage that the study would provoke any unwanted emotions for my participants, nor that they would feel unsafe at any point, I considered the participants wellbeing throughout. I ensured fully informed consent was obtained before the research began. Before interviews started, each participant was informed that they could pause at any time for a break and they were also made aware of their right to withdraw, as detailed below. After each interview participants were offered some time before going back to class. They were invited to ask any questions they may have and to share their views about taking part in the research.

To ensure that questions were not likely to cause any distress for participants I discussed them in supervision with both my Director of Studies and Placement Supervisor.

3.8.3 Informed Consent and Right to Withdraw

In accordance with the BPS guidance, researchers must ensure that every person that provides data in a study consents freely to participation, based on the provision of adequate information to make that decision. The BPS Code states that whatever their age or competence, consent should be sought from the individual taking part. Additional consent

must be sought if a participant is under 16. In this study, I sought consent from the children who took part, and their parents. The wording and format of the children's consent form was tailored to the age and literacy levels of the pupils.

Giving participants sufficient information about a piece of research means that they can provide fully informed consent to take part. In order to ensure that consent gained from participants and their parents was fully informed, and the study was transparent, I provided an information sheet appropriate for the children's ability. The BPS Code stipulates that an information sheet should offer information relevant to the decision to consent and provides guidance on the areas that could be covered. It also advises that participants are given enough time to absorb the information before making the decision to consent to participation.

The process of gaining consent from participants and their parents was as follows:

- Prior to information and consent forms being sent to children and parents, the SENCo of the school checked them to ensure the language of the children's forms were accessible to the identified potential participants.
- The SENCo then sent home information and consent forms for the parents and children to sign. The SENCo requested that forms were returned within 2 weeks.
- Once completed consent forms were returned to school, I made arrangements to meet with each child for an initial meeting.
- During this introductory rapport building meeting, I reiterated what the research involved, the purpose, participant consent and the children's right to withdraw at

any time. The children also had the opportunity to ask any questions about the study.

- At the start of the recorded interviews the children were asked again if they were happy to take part in the research and had not changed their minds since signing their forms and meeting with me initially.

This process meant that there were three occasions when right to withdraw was stressed.

3.8.4 Confidentiality

The research was carried out in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). As mentioned above, there were three opportunities for participants to be made aware of their right to withdraw, and to confidentiality and anonymity. This was provided once in written form and twice in verbal form when I met with the children and when the recorded interviews took place.

All data provided by participants was anonymised and the individual identity of recordings were not known to anyone except me. Individual identities were protected throughout, even when transcripts and findings were discussed in supervision. Excerpts used are not identifiable to any individual. Real names have been replaced with pseudonyms. Data was stored in password protected files. Any paper files, such as consent forms, were stored in a locked bag. No information is included that can be used to trace the participants locations.

3.9 Summary of Chapter Three

This chapter outlined the methodology used in this research. In the first part of the chapter I introduced the notion of paradigms in research and described the social constructionist paradigm underpinning this study.

The rest of the chapter provided information on all aspects of methodology used in the research. I have explained the rationale behind decisions relating to data collection and data gathering and have carefully detailed the method of data analysis. The relevant ethical considerations and importance of reflexivity were also discussed.

The next chapter will describe the findings of the research.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Overview of Chapter Four

This chapter presents the findings of the research. I start by restating the research questions and the method used to analyse the data (4.2). I then explore the findings from data analysis by focusing on each of the master themes and the respective superordinate themes, starting with *A process for future gains* (4.3) followed by *(Defined by) outside checks* (4.4), *Various influences* (4.5) and lastly *Associated feelings* (4.6). I finish with a summary of the chapter (4.7).

4.2 Research Questions and Data Analysis Summary

This research aimed to address the following main research question:

What meaning do children with SEND assign to academic progress and what do they think makes them improve?

The research also aimed to answer the following sub-research questions:

What does getting better at school mean for children identified as needing SEN Support?

What do these children think helps them to get better in school?

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used as a method for analysing the data in this research. Transcripts were analysed on a case by case basis to ensure that each participant's interview was considered individually. The first step of analysis was a thorough reading and re-reading of the transcript so that I could become familiar with the interview. I then undertook initial noting of the transcript, focusing on descriptive, linguistic and conceptual elements, which provided the idiographic, hermeneutic and phenomenological

lenses of my analysis. Exploring the comments from the interview led to the creation of emergent themes. Through drawing connections between these emergent themes, superordinate themes were generated. This process was completed for each of the six transcripts available for this study. Bracketing was used for each case when I began working on the next, this ensured that I kept within the parameters of IPA's idiographic stance. I then addressed the data set as a whole, exploring similarities and differences between the participants' accounts. I made links between the superordinate themes and combined them to form final master themes and secondary superordinate themes. Various steps were taken to ensure that the final master themes represented all participants. The final four master themes generated, together with their respective superordinate themes, are represented in Table 9.

A process for future gains	(Defined by) outside checks	Various influences	Associated feelings
The future	Getting things right	Others	Positive feelings
Journey	Reinforcement and feedback	Self	Negative feelings
Movement			

Table 9: Final Master and Superordinate themes

The remaining sections of the chapter describe these master and superordinate themes. They represent my interpretation of the participants' interpretations of progress. Each master theme and relevant superordinate themes will be discussed in turn. I use excerpts from the transcripts to demonstrate my analysis. Quotes commence by using the specific participant's pseudonym. I then detail the location of the quote within the participant's transcript using the shorthand format of page followed by starting line number. For example, *Tim: "....." (4:115)*, illustrates a quote from Tim's transcript, page 4, starting line number 115.

The four master themes represent how the participants interpret progress. Master theme 1 explores the way in which the participants understand progress as a process; it is a concept that is ongoing, and has relevance for their future lives. Master theme 2 explores the external sources that the participants use a point of reference for understanding and monitoring their progress. Master theme 3 describes the various factors the participants discussed that influence their progress. Finally, Master theme 4 explores the variety of emotions the participants associate with progress.

4.3 Introduction to Master theme 1: A process for future gains

Data analysis suggested that the participants understand progress as an ongoing process which would help them in the future. The corresponding superordinate themes, The future, Journey and Movement (Figure 5) seem to be particularly representative of this process. The participants stressed the importance of making progress in school in the present time, to shape their futures (4.3.1: The future). The view of progress as an ongoing concept that happens over time is also explored (4.3.2: Journey). The final superordinate theme explores how participants viewed progress as representing a change of some form (4.3.3: Movement).

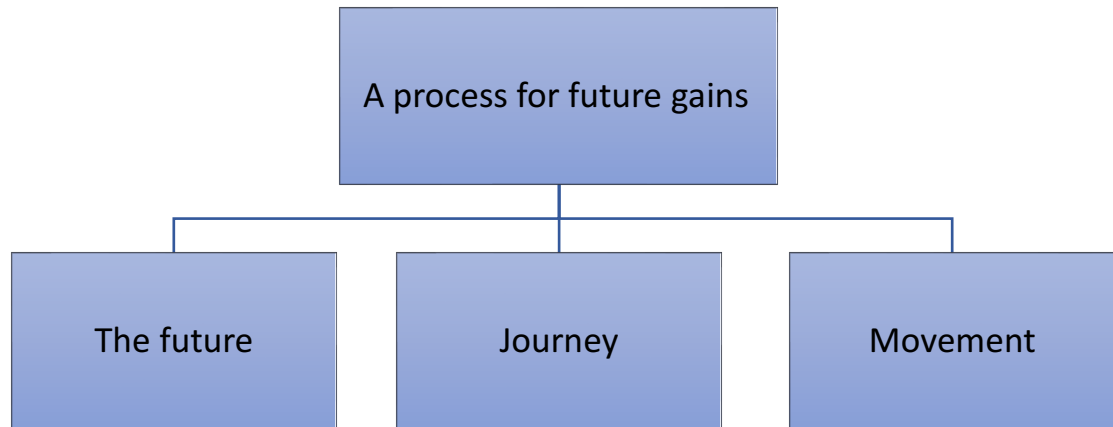


Figure 5: Master theme 1 with its accompanying superordinate themes

4.3.1 The future

Participants were asked whether getting better in school was important, to which they all answered yes. The reasons they gave for this tended to allude to the importance of getting better in school in the present moment in order to support their futures. They seemed to link making progress now with various factors in their future lives, with some thinking slightly ahead to high school and college and some thinking into their future lives as adults.

Tim and Emma both mentioned the importance of doing well now to help them in high school:

Tim: "if you don't learn stuff now, when you want to, say you wanted to get in 11+ or something, a good high school... you need to learn stuff so you can pass the test." (3:81)

Emma: "in high school you might get all of them wrong and you won't get to college." (2:52)

There was an indication from the participants that they felt that progress is important to help them to do well in the latter stages of their education. Tim in particular seemed to

reflect on what progress actually means by defining it as learning and passing tests both now and in the future. This gave an indication as to how he understood what getting better in school actually means and how he perceived how well he is doing.

The participants also related doing well in school now to their future careers, they seemed to feel that making progress in primary school would lead to them to having jobs when they were older:

Lily: "Erm because if you don't get better, then when you get older if you when you do like exams and stuff If you don't get them right you could not get a job." (3:63)

Tim: "Same when you're older and you want a job." (3:86)

As can be noted from these extracts, Lily and Tim seem to associate not doing well now with not being able to get a job in the future. The way in which they spoke suggested that not doing well now, therefore not getting a good job in the future, would represent a form of failure. Similarly, you can only get a job in the future if you have achieved good grades in school.

David, viewed doing well now as being linked to the future in terms of money:

Interviewer: "...why is it important?"

David: "Erm because if you don't... So let's say I'm gonna do 2 formats...The bigger the book is, the richer you are. Don't pay attention and not do well... Erm can I use this for the smallest one? Can I, I need to use something small. Ok, this is the poor people on the street, like this or probably like that. This is for the slightly rich people, this is the rich people, and that is like some of the richest people who tower over and rule."

Interviewer: "Ok so how does that link to getting better at school?"

David: "Erm you'll get a better job if you do smart because you'll get promoted and then you get promoted more." (7:187)

David associated getting better in school to becoming rich in the future. He used the analogy of size to demonstrate varieties in richness; the poorer you are the smaller you are, and the richer you are the bigger and more powerful you are. He linked this future richness to school by saying that you will get promoted and therefore become richer if you are smart. This quote gave a fascinating insight into the way in which David sees doing well at school now in shaping his future life. He also identified money as being associated with status or power. He then added the following caveat to his point:

David: Or, all you need to do is be like Ed Sheeran, have a really good voice, which is really quite rare, and sing you head off... And just perform on the streets until you get noticed. There you go.” (8:208)

This suggests that although he thought that doing well in school gets you far in life, David also recognised that sometimes having a talent that somebody notices helps you to be successful. This was obviously an important part of the interview for David and he spoke passionately about it for a for a long time.

Gemma was the only participant to mention family amongst other things when talking about the importance of getting better in school:

Gemma: “Because well I need to like learn lots so when I have children which I might not erm I could like teach them and then like every day when they get back from school.” (4:127)

This quote emphasises how Gemma viewed her own progress in school now as meaning she would have something to pass on to her children. She felt that getting better now would help her when she is an adult, as she could teach her children things that she knows. This was interesting as compared to the other participants, Gemma was the only one to focus

more on how her own progress now would help others in the future, rather than how it would help herself in the future.

Gemma was also the only participant to speak in the first person when talking about the future. This could link to the fact that her representation of the future was focused on herself and her children; it felt more personal to listen to compared to the other participants. The others all referred to “you” rather than “I” which could indicate that the future is not something they currently associate with themselves.

Interestingly when discussing why getting better is important, most of the participants seemed to focus more on the future in terms of materialistic gains, such as getting a good job or making lots of money. None of the participants mentioned the importance of doing well for their own sense of achievement or pride. There was a sense that making progress would set them up for a successful future, and not getting better in school would lead to the opposite.

This superordinate theme indicates how most of the participants similarly viewed making progress in their present lives as important for their future lives. They differed in how they expressed the future, and in terms of the impact that progress now would have on their futures.

4.3.2 Journey

This superordinate theme represents how the participants conceptualised progress as something that happens over time, and is signified by improvement.

David was the only participant to specify the journey as taking place between the start of the academic year and the end:

David: "And September, September the first ones well September the cold piece which you're not really supposed to get that many right. Then erm summer the warm piece when you're supposed to improve." (4:119)

David used the weather to illustrate the differences in the two points of time. The opposite nature of warm and cold could mirror how different he felt progress should be between the start and end of the year. His use of the word "supposed" could indicate that he felt reality may not always be the same as expectations.

Later in the interview he mentions the difference between the start and end of the year again:

David: "Ermm so the beginning of the year, you don't know anything of what you're doing... And at the end of the year if you actually pay attention" (16:444)

He also uses a metaphor to help him to describe the journey from the start to the end of the year:

David: "Ok I'm going to get two stones out of my pocket...So this is when you start the year...And this is when you finish the year."

Interviewer: "So you go from a tiny stone to a big stone."

David: "Pretty much." (16:459)

I asked David to explain what the metaphor of the stones looked like in school:

Interviewer: "Ok so it's the beginning of the year and I'm this stone. What does that look like in class?"

David: "Erm you have no idea what's going on... Absolutely none."

Interviewer: "Ok and what's happened between this tiny stone and this big stone, to get to that big stone."

*David: "You've got progress and you've understood what's being going on."
(17:478)*

As in his previous analogy, David used size to represent what he means; in this case the journey from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. At the beginning of the year, you are a small stone and as you make progress and journey to the end of the year you get bigger. I wondered whether for David the use of size in this metaphor represented the confidence associated with progress. Being a small stone at the start of the year represents low self-confidence as you *"have no idea what's going on"*. However, by the end of the year you have high self-confidence, represented by being the biggest stone. He mentioned the academic year as his point of measurement a number of times, indicating that for him, the journey from the start to the end of the year was an important part of his conceptualisation of progress.

Tim mentioned then and now to help illustrate the journey that making progress takes him on:

Tim: "I wasn't as good as I was then as now." (1:21)

Although he did not specify what he meant by *"then"* and *"now"*, he illustrated that he had changed and made progress between the two points in time. This was Tim's response when I asked him what people meant when they said to him that he'd got better in something. It was interesting that Tim used *"I"* in his quote as opposed to David who used *"you"*.

This superordinate theme explores how participants conceptualised progress a journey. For some this journey happened between two points in time. For others the journey was

represented by a change, such as being better at doing something now than they were in the past. Interestingly, the participants also used symbolic or concrete tools to support their expression of complex and abstract concepts such as time and progress.

4.3.3 Movement

As well as progress being conceptualised as a journey, it was also described by participants as a change. Progress seemed to represent the movement between two points:

Susan: "Cause like when I do it I was like that close, and that close." (3:94)

In this quote Susan is talking about doing the splits in gymnastics. She described how she knew she got better at doing the splits because she had got closer and closer to doing them in the way in which they are supposed to be done. Susan found it difficult to think of an example of getting better in school, so she used the context of her gymnastics class instead. She illustrated her progress in gymnastics as the movement between not being able to do the splits, to gradually getting closer to doing them correctly.

An example that Gemma gave also came from outside of her school lessons:

Gemma: "Erm like, I only learnt erm how to do a backwards bend, I was really bad at it and then like just earlier when it was at lunchtime I just be able to do it." (1:24)

She described progress in her gymnastics as the movement between not being able to do something and being able to do something.

Tim explained progress as the movement from being bad to good at something:

Tim: "Like you like you weren't very good and now you've like got better" (1:10)

Tim seemed hesitant to say “*weren’t very good*” at the beginning of his sentence but was more confident when describing the “*got better*” part of the movement he was referring to. As with Susan and Gemma, Tim’s example referred to playing tennis outside of school. The preference to describe an example of progress from outside of the school lessons context is interesting. It could symbolise the areas of their lives that the participants consider progress to be most important in. It could have just been that these examples are ones that have occurred most recently for the pupils; Gemma’s for instance had happened during lunchtime on the day of our interview.

Emma kept her example of progress as movement quite small, only referring to the next time she did something as her explanation of progress:

Interviewer: “So if someone said to you, E, you’re making really good progress in your maths, what would that mean?”

Emma: “Erm that next time I do it I might get them all right again.” (6:156)

On the contrary, Lily’s example to demonstrate progress as a movement was over a longer period of time:

Lily: “It means like it means when you’re when you’re erm so like if you’re little and you don’t know how to write your name or something... Then the teachers teach you and you learn how to write it.” (2:32)

Lily struggled to verbalise this example, but once she had settled on the example of writing your name she could explain the movement over time from not being able to do it, to being able to do it, following input from a teacher.

David’s expression of movement was most extreme when compared to the others:

David: “Erm, you failed a test one time then you succeed 100%.” (1:8)

For David, progress represented the movement between failing something and succeeding at it.

The participants all gave examples demonstrating progress as a movement in varying degrees and this superordinate theme captures this. The differences in how they expressed this movement were interesting to explore. Some chose a small movement, either in content or period of time, whereas others had a representation of movement over a longer period of time, or as symbolising something larger and more complex to comprehend.

4.4 Introduction to Master theme 2: (Defined by) outside checks

This master theme captures the various ways in which participants seemed to use external sources as indicators of the progress they made both in and outside of school. These ways are defined further in the two superordinate themes of Getting things right (4.4.1) and Reinforcement and feedback (4.4.2). See Figure 6 for a visual representation of this master theme.

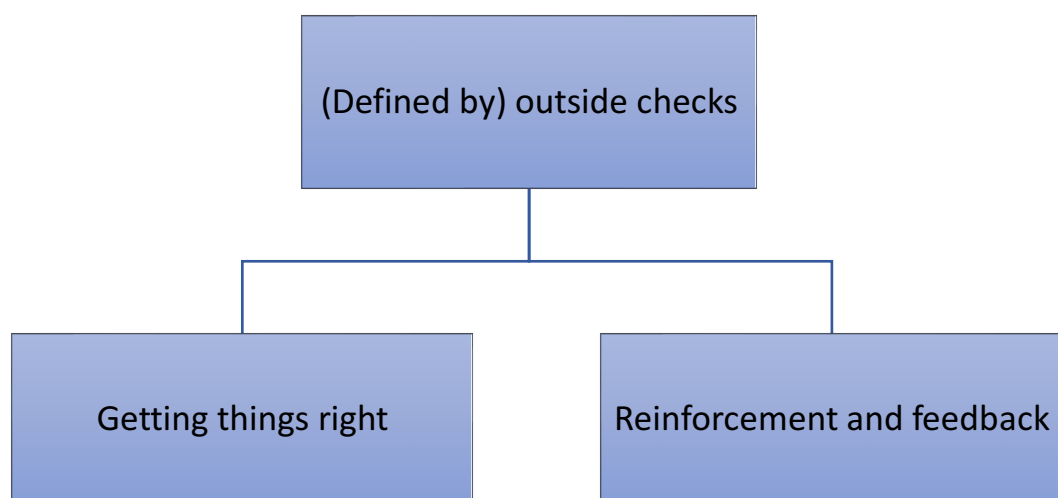


Figure 6: Master theme 2 with its accompanying superordinate themes

4.4.1 Getting things right

This superordinate theme seemed to be particularly pertinent for the participants. It appeared to be the most significant indicator used to define progress, and to help the participants to know how well they were doing in school. This theme was conceptualised in different ways across the participants. Some seemed to quantify their progress by checking how many of something they get correct:

Interviewer: "so how do you know if you're doing well in your lessons at school?"

Tim: "Erm you'll get more questions right." (2:31)

For David, number correct was his indicator for when he had successfully learnt something:

Interviewer: "Tell me, how do you know when you've learnt something in school?"

David: "Because if you do the thing again and then you got it more right." (4:114)

David: "Erm, you failed a test one time then you succeed 100%" (1:8)

He talked about doing the *"thing again"* or repeating a test which suggests that for David, progress is when there is a difference in terms of number correct, when he repeated an activity. David's use of the word *"failed"* could imply that his perception of success is 100% correct, and anything less than this is considered a failure.

Tim used getting things right as his indicator for doing well both generally in lessons, and for making specific improvements in something that he previously found difficult.

Interviewer: "...how would you know that you'd got better at that thing?"

Tim: "Well Miss would mark my questions right" (4:112)

Tim also talked specifically about his spellings:

Tim: "...sometimes I do get, do get spellings wrong but yeah I'm getting a lot of spellings right." (6:184)

Tim was quite shy in his interview and did not come across as particularly confident in his own abilities. His preference to state that he was still getting some spellings wrong before telling me that he was getting many right is perhaps an indication of this. It was almost as if he felt he could not just say that he was getting a lot of spellings right without first adding a caveat that he was still getting some wrong.

Lily highlighted that she used scores to help her to know that she had improved in something. She had had a maths test on the day of her interview and she discussed the fact that some of the questions were similar to questions she had seen previously. At first she said:

Lily: "There were some questions which were the similar and like I like worked out how you do them so I saw the next one so I knew them better" (7:203)

It was interesting that Lily began by saying that she worked out how to do something and she knew it better. This gave a sense that an internal process such as a sense of knowing helped her to recognise that she had learnt something. However, when I asked her how she knew she could work them out she said:

Lily: "Because I get a better score" (7:207)

She therefore reverted back to using an external measure to help her to recognise that she knew something.

Gemma also mentioned getting things right when I asked for a class example that illustrated that she knew she had got better at something:

Gemma: "Er, when we come to the marking I get them all like right well some of them at least the ones like I practised, then I practise the ones that I don't get and then." (7:201)

The participants also talked about the type of marks they received in their books and how they gave an indication of how well they were doing:

Interviewer: "... so how do you know you're doing well in your lessons?"

David: "Erm, there's barely any green marks in my book"

Interviewer: "And what do green marks mean?"

David: "Fail!" (2:55)

As mentioned previously, David's use of the word "*fail*" provides an interesting insight into the way he perceived getting things wrong. It seems that for David, he is only succeeding if he gets everything right. He then went on to mention growth mindset:

David: "Growth mindset! You need to grow! You need to get stronger you need to get smarter! There's mostly blue tick marks which mean right!" (3:61)

The way in which he perceived failure is linked to his perception of what growth mindset means. He did not seem to view getting things wrong an opportunity to learn or an indication that he just did not know something yet, rather getting things incorrect is an indication of a need to get "*stronger*" and "*smarter*".

Emma also mentioned the type of marks she receives as an indication of her progress:

Interviewer: "And how do you know that you're doing well in your lessons?"

Emma: "Well erm when you go to Miss. You.. get.. So when you go to Miss, she marks your work and she does a dot or a tick if you get them right or a dot if you get them wrong"

Interviewer: "Ok, and how do you know when you've learnt something?"

Emma: "Erm, I think because erm... when you've got them all right you think in your head like oh I've learnt something and I know how to do it." (1:24)

At first Emma talked about the significance of receiving a dot or a tick to help her to know how many she has got right. However, when I asked a question to get her to think about how this related to her knowing that she had learnt something she paused at first ("Erm, I think because erm...") but then went on to say that in her head she thinks about the fact that she got them all right and this means she had learnt. Emma's hesitation when asked this question could suggest she was not used to translating the dots and ticks she sees in her book, or the number of questions she gets correct, into knowledge of her learning.

This superordinate theme highlights how the participants used an outside check in the form of marks in their book or number correct to indicate how well they are doing in school. What they did with this information varied amongst the participants. Some tended to use the information as motivation to improve next time, whereas some seemed to find not getting everything right demotivating, or as an indication that they were failing.

4.4.2 Reinforcement and feedback

The participants also expressed in varying forms how they use reinforcement and feedback from outside sources to define how well they are doing both in and outside of school.

Praise seemed to be an important indicator for some:

Interviewer: "...what might she say?"

David: "Erm she'd probably congratulate someone who did well...if not, she'd say well done, try and get better." (5:126)

David seemed to feel that "well done" is not a form of congratulating. He appeared to be saying that someone who does well would get congratulated and someone who has not done well will receive a "well done". This possibly provides an indication of how David perceives the language of feedback given with class and I wondered whether if someone were to say "well done" to him, he would not perceive it as a motivator.

Lily also talked about praise received from the teacher as an indicator of progress:

Interviewer: "...how do you know if you're doing well or not?"

Lily: "Erm... sometimes like my teacher tells you"

Interviewer: "Yep and what might the teacher say?"

Lily: "Well done." (1:23)

This contrasts with David's understanding of the phrase "well done". For Lily, it genuinely means that she is doing well in school.

Tim talked about reinforcement in the form of his work being shown to peers:

Tim: "...sometimes if you've done really well she shows the class" (3:66)

Tim: "And then erm Miss showed my first one to the class because I did really well" (5:138)

Tim said that when this happened to him he felt "happy" (3:74). Tim used this as an example when I asked if he knew how his friends were doing in school (3:64). He therefore seemed to use work being shown to the rest of the class as an indicator of progress; both his own progress and the progress of his peers.

Gemma also talked about recognition from peers:

Gemma: "...erm like everyone claps for you so." (6:182)

The context for this was Gemma talking about receiving a bronze, silver or gold award for doing well in her work. It seemed that her peers clapping for her held more significance than the awards themselves. She gave her peers clapping as the reason that receiving an award felt "good".

There were specific positive reinforcers mentioned by participants:

Gemma: "And sometimes I getting a gold star" (4:97)

Lily: "...when you get a certificate or you get a gold star" (8:218)

Gemma used the gold star as an example of the kind of feedback she would receive from her teacher. She used this to illustrate something her teacher would do to tell her she is doing well. She did not seem to read any further into the presentation of a gold star other than something her teacher would give her. Lily however, used the example of a gold star or a certificate in a slightly different way. She said that these were examples of the best way to show she had learnt something. For Lily the presentation of a certificate or gold star signified more than just positive reinforcement from her teacher, they were the best way for her to know that she had made progress.

Participants seemed pay particular attention to feedback received from teachers to help them to define their progress. Teacher feedback acted as an important form of reinforcement:

Interviewer: "Ok, so if you were making progress in school, what would that look like, how would you know?"

Lily: "Erm...the teacher could tell you" (8:230)

Interviewer: "...how would you know that you're doing well in your lessons?"

Gemma: "Er... I don't know. Sometimes the teacher says keep it up you're doing good."

Interviewer: "Ok, and who tells you that you're doing well in your school work?"

David: "Erm the teacher I guess" (5:126)

Interviewer: "So at school, who tells you that you're doing well in your work?"

Emma: "Sometimes my friends and the Miss'." (2:35)

I had asked David and Emma to name a person within school who lets them know that they are doing well, and so them naming their teacher made sense as the most likely response. However, in Lily and Gemma's quotes, I had not asked them to name a person, I had asked them how they knew that they were making progress or doing well, and they still named the teacher as their outside checker. This demonstrates the significance of the teacher in defining progress to the children. They used their teacher as their source of knowledge for how well they were doing in school.

Overall, feedback received seemed to be a helpful source of information for the participants to let them know how well they were doing. However, there seemed to be a slightly different interpretation of the usefulness of tests:

Interviewer: "Ok so do you think tests help you to show how much you know?"

Gemma: "Yeah sometimes but when I get them wrong no." (6:184)

Interviewer "Do you think that doing tests in school helps you to show what you know? Are they helpful?"

David: "No... they put pressure on you which makes you nervous." (10:282)

It was interesting that Gemma seemed to find quantifiable feedback helpful, apart from when that quantifiable feedback suggested she is not doing as well as she would like. I wondered whether this was because she becomes demotivated when she gets things wrong. She felt that there were other ways in school which worked better for her to show how much knowledge she had, such as doing show and tell in front of the class. David felt tests were always an unhelpful way to demonstrate what he had learnt.

This superordinate theme has explored the way in which participants use a variety of forms of reinforcement and feedback to define their progress. Some of the findings in this theme highlight how language was interpreted differently by the participants and carried different meaning in terms of progress. It was also interesting to note the significance of the teacher and furthermore how there were varying perceptions on the usefulness of tests.

4.5 Introduction to Master theme 3: Various influences

This theme explores the influences on progress, in the participants' views. The structure of the theme can be seen in Figure 7. The two overarching superordinate themes of Others (4.5.1) and Self (4.5.2) are included. Within these superordinate themes, there were important emergent themes following the analysis, which I judged to be relevant to be separated, as they had prominence in participants' accounts.

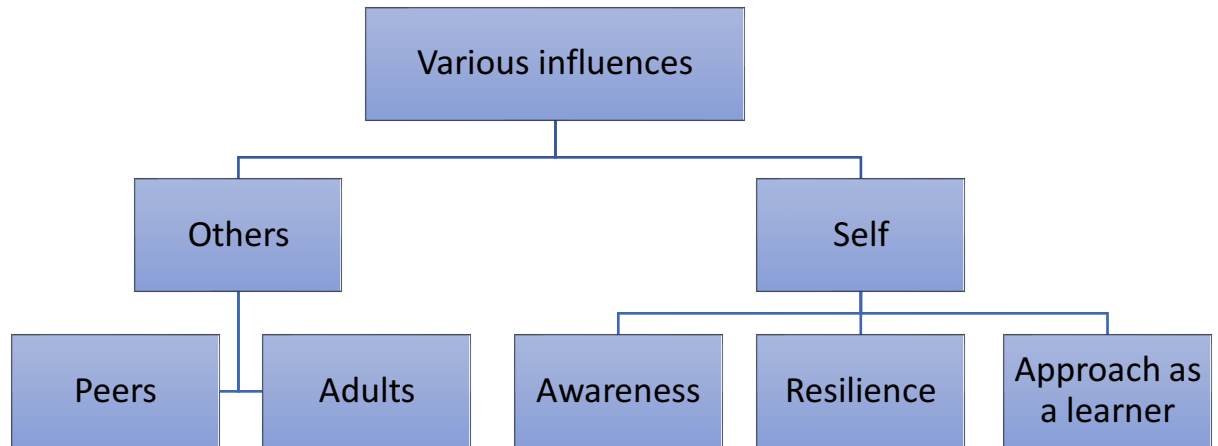


Figure 7: Master theme 3 with its accompanying superordinate themes

4.5.1 Others

As mentioned above, this superordinate theme captures the influences that others seemed to have on the participants' interpretations of their progress. The participants focused on the influence of adults and peers, these emergent themes are explored separately below.

Peers

This emergent theme captures the influence that peers had on the participants. There was a real variation between the participants in the way in which they viewed the influence of their peers. Some mentioned peers several times throughout in their interview and noted the positive aspects of peers supporting their progress. Emma spoke particularly positively regarding her peers:

Interviewer: "So at school, who tells you that you're doing well in your work?"

Emma: "Sometimes my friends and the Miss'." (2:35)

Emma placing her friends before the teachers in her response could provide an indication of the importance of each type of feedback for her. She could place a higher value on her friends telling her that she is doing well than she places on the teachers telling her that she is doing well. Emma also talked about both giving help to her friends and receiving help from them:

Interviewer: "Ok and what might they what might they say?"

Emma: I'll ask them if I get them right and they go and they check my work and they go you're doing well keep going (2:38)

Interviewer: "Ok, how do you know if your friends are getting better?"

Emma: "Erm.. if when we have... when your friends ask you something, and, you look at their work and you say it's getting better keep going and you might get them right." (2:41)

Emma talked about both giving and receiving positive reinforcement and encouragement. Her use of "keep going" in both quotes suggests that she has heard this language in relation to her own work and used it when she encourages her friends to persevere with their work. Emma also talked about a reciprocal "mini mentor" (4:105) relationship whereby her and friends helped each other when they got stuck:

Emma: "Erm like if X got stuck I would go over to her or she would come to me and go I'm stuck on this question can you help me?"

Interviewer: "Oh ok"

Emma: "So I do then next time she gets it right."

Interviewer: "...do you always go to the same person or can you pick who you go and ask for help?"

Emma: "Sometimes I go to my friend and the teacher." (4:110)

In the last sentence of this quote Emma again placed her friend before the teacher, perhaps further emphasising which form of support she found most useful or valued the most. She also seemed to have confidence in the help that she gave to her peers, stating that once she had helped a peer *“next time she gets it right.”*

Susan also placed importance on her peers when discussing support and feedback, albeit in a slightly different way to Emma:

Interviewer: “Who would you like to hear that from, that you’re doing really well? You don’t know? Would it be a friend or an adult?”

Susan: “Friend”

Interviewer: “Ok. And do you ever know how well your friends are doing?”

Susan: “Erm no”

Interviewer: “You don’t? Do you ever mark their work?”

Susan: “No” (4:123)

Susan gave a sense that she wanted to receive feedback from her friends, and expressed a preference to this over receiving feedback from an adult. However, she also mentioned that she does not know how her friends are doing and does not mark their work. This contrasted with Emma’s responses and was interesting given that they were in the same class. Earlier on in her interview Susan did talk about her friends giving her feedback:

Interviewer: “How do you know if you’re getting on alright in your lessons? Does someone tell you?”

Susan: “A”

Interviewer: “And who’s that?”

Susan: “My partner” (2:44)

Interviewer: "Ok, and is there anyone else in school that tells you that you're getting better at things? Or at home?"

Susan: "My mate does." (3:85)

It seemed as if Susan enjoyed receiving feedback from her peers, and provided evidence that this did happen. However, she did not give feedback to her peers and did not seem particularly interested in how her peers were doing in school, stating that she does not mark their work and does not know whether they are getting on ok in their lessons. When I first asked Susan about her preference for receiving feedback, I offered two options (*"Would it be a friend or an adult?"*). I therefore wondered whether her response of *"friend"* reflected her genuine opinion or whether she was picking the first option in my question. However, when I asked Susan about this again I asked more open questions and she still indicated that she would prefer to hear from a friend. Thus, I can be more confident that this was her opinion.

When Lily spoke about peers she did not seem to see them as a resource in the same way as Emma or Susan:

Interviewer: "Do you ever know how well your friends are doing?"

Lily: "We only look at each other's work if we have to mark it." (2:55)

Lily made no mention of using her peers as a source of help or another way to get feedback. She also indicated that she compared herself to her peers during tests:

Lily: "Because normally I'm one of the children who's last at doing the tests." (3:89)

Gemma and David also talked about their peers in terms of comparison:

Gemma: "And then so I was really really angry that all the other girls could do it..." (2:40)

Gemma: "...like I always ask them like how much do you get? Cause I'm on the hardest like the full grid but I don't do my twelves 'cause I can't really do them."
(4:114)

These two extracts from Gemma are contradictory. In the first instance it frustrated her when she compared herself with her peers because they could do something, and she could not. In the second instance Gemma purposefully asked peers what level they were on with timetables because she knew she was doing well with them. The comparison in the first instance undermined her self-esteem whereas in the second instance her self-esteem was boosted by the fact that she was working on higher level than her peers.

David spoke quite negatively about peers throughout his interview. He mentioned a couple of names several times and emphasised his negative opinions of them:

David: "And then some people are like this, like X, who don't listen at all" (2:36)

David: "But I wouldn't really trust a classmate like X to mark my work... She's the person who I mentioned who doesn't pay attention at all... So she'd probably mark everything wrong... And if she could she'd mark all of her things right" (5:141)

David seemed to hold quite negative opinions about this particular peer and emphasised quite strongly that he would not want her to mark his work. His use of the word "*trust*" is interesting, rather than just saying he did not want her to mark his work he felt that he could not trust her to mark his work because she "*doesn't pay attention at all*". This could be considered a fairly justified opinion, he quite rightly may want someone to mark his work who does pay attention. However, his last point in the quote seemed particularly loaded and highlighted his dislike of the pupil. He was accusing her of manipulating her own marks on purpose if she could get away with it. I did not know if this was justified or not but it

struck as a strong opinion against this peer. David went on to talk about when he is marking his peers' work:

*David: "Yeah and I don't really like proof marking someone who is better at English than me. I'm happy to mark anyone at maths because I'm the best in the class."
(6:151)*

He expressed a preference to mark the work of people who would not do as well as him. I wondered whether this was an indication of David's fragile self-esteem: perhaps he found it too much of a threat to mark the work of someone who may do better than him, but it was easier to cope with marking the work of someone who he knew would not do as well.

As indicated in the exploration of this emergent theme, the participants all viewed the influence of their peers differently, some found peers to be a source of help and feedback, some used peers a source for comparison which seemed to be helpful sometimes and not so helpful other times.

Adults

For most of the participants, the teacher seemed to a significant adult in terms of influence on their progress. Gemma, Susan, Tim, Emma and Lily all talked about their teachers helping them to learn or helping them to get better:

Interviewer: "And who do you think helps you to get better?"

Gemma: "Err... Miss..." (5:158)

Interviewer: "So who do you think helps you to learn things in school?"

Susan: "Erm teachers"

Interviewer: "Mmhmm and what do they do?"

Susan: "Erm, they basically teach you" (3:68)

Interviewer: "So when you want to get better at something, who helps you to do that?"

Tim: "Erm Miss my teacher" (4:102)

Interviewer: "Alright so who helps you to get better at something if you are finding it tricky?"

Emma: "The teachers?" (3:91)

Interviewer: "...and what about in school, who helps you in school to get better?"

Lily: "The teacher." (4:111)

Emma's response could indicate that she perhaps felt that she was supposed to say teachers helped her to get better. She articulated her response almost as a question and did not seem particularly sure when she said it.

What varied between the participants was what they found helpful about what their teachers did. Emma said she used her teacher to help her understand:

Emma: "So if I get, like get, if I don't understand it I'll go up to Miss and she helps me understand it."

Interviewer: "And what does she do? Can you think of an example?"

Emma: "Erm like if I was stuck on a question, and I didn't know she would have come to me or I would go to her, sometimes I go to her and I go I'm stuck on this question"

Interviewer: "Mmhmm"

Emma: "And then she answer it and then she helps me to do it and understand it."(4:95)

Although Emma could identify that her teacher helped her to understand something when she was stuck, she found it difficult to articulate exactly what it was the teacher did that was helpful, or how the teacher helped her to understand.

Lily gave a specific example of what her teacher did that helped:

Interviewer: "And what does the teacher do?"

Lily: "Erm sometimes if there's some children who aren't, like they don't get it that very well, she like takes them away from all the other children and teaches them by herself."

Interviewer: "Yeah so in kinda smaller groups?"

Lily: "Yeah."

Interviewer: "Does that ever happen to you? Does that help? Ok. What do you think is helpful about that?"

Lily: "Erm you get to erm so instead of her talking to loads of different people and not focusing on like like erm focusing on everyone." (4:113)

Lily was identifying that being taught in smaller groups rather than the whole class was a helpful strategy when some children, including herself, found something more difficult. She was able to specify what it was that she found particularly helpful about this:

Interviewer: "What do you, why do you think that helps?"

Lily: "Because if like normally we bring out white boards and like we put our answers on there."

Interviewer: "Mmhmm."

L: "And because in the class she doesn't really check them but when we do it there she like says like yep to you." (4:124)

Lily was implying that during whole class use of the whiteboards, she had noticed that the teacher may not have time to check everybody's answers, but in a smaller group Lily felt the teacher was able to give individual feedback. She seemed to find this most helpful.

Tim also provided a specific example of something his teacher did that he found helpful:

Interviewer: "What does she do?"

Tim: "She says like say I had erm a question, and she erm shows us how to answer that question then erm she gives us a question, helps us through it, and then gives us one on our own and sees if we can do it on our own." (4:104)

Tim seemed to struggle to articulate his example at the beginning and I wondered if this reflected the fact that he may not be used to identifying what it is his teacher did that he found helpful, or being asked about it. Towards the end Tim paused less often and was able to express what he meant.

Although Lily spoke about her teacher, this was in response to me asking about who helped her in school only. When I asked who at school or at home helped, she spoke about her mum first and foremost:

Interviewer: "What, who at school or at home helps you to get better at something?"

Lily: "My mum." (4:99)

Lily identified her mum first as the person who helped her. However, she found it difficult to think about what her mum did that helped her:

Interviewer: "What does Mum do?"

Lily: "Erm"

Interviewer: "How does she help you to get better?"

Lily: "Erm she erm"

Interviewer: "Shall we think of an example? So say you were doing some maths, and you were finding it a bit tricky, what might mum do to help you get better at it? What do you find helpful?"

Lily: "Erm she might help me learn it at home?" (4:102)

This passage contained the most “*erms*” in Lily’s interview; she seemed to find it extremely difficult to verbalise what it was her mum did that she found helpful. This is in stark contrast to when she spoke about her teacher; she provided a detailed and specific example of what her teacher did that was helpful.

David was the only participant to not mention his teacher much. He in fact demonstrated a preference for receiving help from the class teaching assistants:

Interviewer: “And are there any adults in school that help you get better?”

David: “A few.”

Interviewer: “Like who?”

David: “Erm I can’t. You’ve got like the MDAs no not MDAs, you’ve got helpers, you know the helpers?”

Interviewer: “Yeah like classroom TAs do you mean? Like teaching assistants?”

David: “Yeah” (12:330)

Although David struggled to remember their job title, it was clear that he was referring to the teaching assistants. I wanted to understand how David perceived the differences between teachers and teaching assistants and he was able to articulate this:

Interviewer: “So what’s the difference then between a teacher and a TA and what they do to help? Are they different?”

David: “Yes a lot.” (12:340)

When referring to the teaching assistants he said:

David: “They’re the ones who you can like ok so you’ve got this wrong and let’s go over it” (12:336)

David: “Erm basically, they’re more like interactive and social” (12:348)

Whereas the teachers:

David: "Yeah they're like ok so you need to do this, to do this, to do this to do that, this, that, this that, everyone do this that." (12:352)

By "*interactive and social*" I wondered whether David meant that teaching assistants are more able to give him time, as he also said they are more likely to say "*let's go over it*". The quote where David described the approach of the teachers was said in a much more rushed way, and contained many more words. This could reflect David's perception that his teacher did not have time to sit and go through things with him and instead give out multiple instructions.

This superordinate theme has explored the various influences from others that the participants expressed as influencing their progress. There was a disparity between participants regarding whether these influences were helpful or not.

4.5.2 Self

Some participants spoke about themselves throughout their interviews in a way that reflected their own influences on their progress. This superordinate theme explores the influence of themselves and is split into three key emergent themes.

Awareness

The participants highlighted a level of self-awareness when talking about their progress in school and the things that they can find difficult.

Gemma talked about the particular things she knows she is good at:

Gemma: "I like hardly get the answers wrong" (5:155),

as well as indicating an awareness of the things she finds more difficult:

Gemma: "Well, on the carpet, because I'm not that good at everything like in maths and stuff erm I sit on the carpet and Miss taught me how to do division which is actually really fun now for me." (2:62)

Gemma also said that she used to find division *"really boring"* (3:65), indicating that when she finds something difficult she interprets it as boring, but once she can do something it becomes fun. I asked Gemma what helped her to move from finding something boring to finding it fun and she found it difficult to explain:

Gemma: "Like I don't really know. I was just on the carpet with Miss and then I kept writing them down and then I was realising I got them right so then I kept and then I got them all right so then I was like I know like that I can do it now." (3:73)

Gemma saying this gave an indication that it was getting them all right that made the difference between division being boring and fun.

Tim also gave an indication that he knew his own ability and was aware when he began to find things easier:

Tim: "Cause I was finding it easier to hit over the net and do rallies." (2:60)

Interestingly in this example Tim is talking about an activity he had made progress with outside of school; his tennis. He provided this example when I asked why his tennis coach told him he had got better at something. Tim provided an example in school which indicated his awareness of his abilities when writing a story. He was explaining to me how the second draft of a story he had written got taken to the Headteacher (5:140). I asked Tim how he knew that he could improve on his first draft and he said:

Tim: "I knew that I could do better." (5:152)

This indicated that Tim had the self-awareness of what he was capable of and this enabled him to improve on his work.

Emma demonstrated a different kind of self-awareness as she talked. She mentioned the level of challenge she chooses to work on several times, explaining that questions are set at three levels of difficulty with A being the easiest and C being the most difficult.

Emma: "and I understood it and I didn't wanna go on A"

Interviewer: "Ok"

Emma: "and Miss my erm Miss' teacher assistant"

Interviewer: "Is she your class teaching assistant? Yeah"

Emma: "She she went do you wanna go on A or B and I went B because I understand it"

Interviewer: "Ah ok, so if you understand the easiest level you challenge yourself and try the next level?"

Emma: "Yeah" (5:127)

Emma talked about choosing to challenge herself and try level B, because she knew she had understood the questions in level A. This demonstrates that she had the self-awareness to know what level of difficulty she was capable of trying. She also demonstrated an awareness of what she might do if she found level C too hard:

Emma: "Erm I'd like to challenge myself and if I get them wrong I might go on B and then." (5:142)

Here she meant that if she got the questions in level C wrong she would go back and try level B. This indicates Emma had a good level of insight into setting herself the right level of challenge in her work.

Lily also demonstrated self-awareness in a different way. She talked about being involved in a person-centred meeting and how this helped to be aware of the things she should be working on in school:

Interviewer: "And what happens in that meeting then?"

Lily: "She... they... talk about my learning."

Interviewer: "Ok, what kind of things do you talk about with your learning in that meeting?"

Lily: "Erm... about things, sometimes about things say what could should help me" (5:155)

When Lily first described the meetings she changed from "you" to "I" (5:148) which could indicate that she felt as much a part of the meeting as anybody else. However, her use of "they" rather than 'we' could imply that she did not have much input into them and took a more passive role.

I asked Lily why she found the meetings helpful:

Lily: "Because there's nobody else there and they tell, and they tell my mum and dad like how I'm doing and stuff"

Interviewer: "So who's there? The two people from school and mum and dad and you? Ok, and you talk about things that are going well? And that helps?"

Lily: "And things I need to improve on" (6:162)

Lily seemed to find the meetings helpful to support her self-awareness for two reasons: firstly because the meeting focused on just her, and secondly because it provided her with things to work on in school and at home.

David was the only participant to show a self-awareness of his additional needs and talked about how they influence his learning, and how they influence the way he is treated by

others within school. David had a diagnosis of ADHD and he talked about both this and his yet to be confirmed Autism. He seemed angry that school do not seem to recognise these difficulties:

Interviewer: "Is there anyone, anything anyone in school could do to help you more?"

David: "Definitely, realise that I have ADHD and autism for once." (13:360)

It was interesting that he also said:

David: "Because you don't wanna know what it's like to have an autism." (13:363)

This indicates that David viewed his autism as having a negative impact. He also showed an awareness of his ADHD and how that was having an impact on him in school:

Interviewer: "And do you think that affects you getting better in school David?"

David: "Yeah"

Interviewer: "Tell me how?"

David: "It's also much harder for me to learn"

Interviewer: "Ok tell me about that"

David: "Because with ADHD it's really hard to concentrate." (14:397)

David demonstrated an insight into his difficulties that the other participants did not allude to. This could reflect the fact that he viewed them as having a significant negative impact on his learning in school. He also seemed to feel frustrated that the staff in school didn't realise how his difficulties could have an impact on him.

Resilience

There was a sense from the participants that resilience was key in their progress, particularly the use of perseverance and repeated practise when they found something difficult:

Interviewer: And if you did an answer wrong what would you do next? To help you get better?

Gemma: "Err keep practising at home and keep practising like at school." (5:156)

David: "You spend hours and hours and hours practising." (18:508)

David: "...just keep doing what you're doing to get better." (11:308)

Gemma and David gave an indication that they understood the importance of practise to help them to get better at something.

Lily and Emma also noted that it was important that they keep trying:

Lily: "And and if you say a first answer and it's wrong"

Interviewer: "Yep"

Lily: "Erm you have to try again and keep doing it until you get it right." (1:6)

Lily said this at the very beginning of her interview when discussing what progress means.

This could indicate that perseverance was a key element of her definition of progress.

Interviewer: "And if you check your own work and it's not right, what would you do then?"

Emma: "I go back and keep trying" (3:75)

Interviewer: "And if it didn't go so well, how would that feel? And what could you do next?"

Emma: "Erm I would feel upset and next time I'll keep trying to get it right" (3:87)

Emma indicated that she was particularly resilient in this quote by saying that she would keep trying despite feeling upset.

Tim demonstrated that he understood perseverance to be an important part of making progress:

Interviewer: "Ok, and say you did that one, and you perhaps got it wrong, what would you need to do next?"

Tim: "I would need to persevere"

Interviewer: "Oh yeah that's a great word Tim! What does persevere mean?"

Tim: "Carry on going." (4:108)

He demonstrated here that he had a good understanding of the word persevere with his definition.

In these extracts the participants gave an indication that they were resilient learners. This was reflected in the fact that they were prepared to persevere to help them to get better.

Approach as learner

There was a sense from some of the participants that the approach they took to their learning was having an impact on their learning.

Lily indicated that she used prior experience to help her:

Lily: "There were some questions which were the similar and like I like worked out how you do them so I saw the next one so I knew them better." (7:203)

Emma seemed to describe herself as an active learner:

Emma: "I'll ask them if I get them right." (2:39)

Emma: "So if I get, like get, if I don't understand it I'll go up to Miss and she helps me understand it." (4:95)

She talked about seeking feedback which indicated that she takes a role and is not passive in class. Although Emma could identify that she does these things, she did not necessarily give an indication that she knew that they were helpful.

Gemma however, mentioned herself when talking about what helps her to get better:

Interviewer: "And who do you think helps you to get better?"

Gemma: "Err... Miss. Sometimes I like help myself." (6:159)

Although she put the teacher first in her sentence, Gemma also naming herself as a help in her learning indicates that she is more aware than Emma of the role she takes in her learning.

Susan indicated from her interview that she possibly tended to take more of a passive role in her learning:

Interviewer: "Have you ever told anyone that you've got better at something?"

Susan: "Not really"

The fact that Susan does not share her successes with anybody could indicate a preference not to be involved with her progress. It could also indicate that she feels embarrassed about sharing that she has got better at something. The fact that she said, "*not really*" rather than

'no' could also suggest that she may have shared a success in the past but cannot remember it.

David mentioned several things that indicated that he knew the importance of the approach one takes to learning and how this may impact on progress.

David: "... and then you need to push yourself to the absolute LIMIT" (3:89)

David shouted the word "LIMIT" which could imply that he thought trying as hard as you can is important in school. He also talked about the difference in grades between people who pay attention and those who do not:

David: "So you've got the people like some of my friends which really don't pay attention at all... Then you've got some people like X so who pay attention but they're still pretty chilled... And then you've got the people like here, like me where I'm like...what next?"

Interviewer: "Ok"

David: "I need to know. I am like that but I also don't care."

Interviewer: "Ok so what would be the difference in the grades of those people?"

David: "The people that are like what's next do the best" (1:23)

David contradicted himself by stating that on one hand he needed to know, but also that he didn't care. David could be trying to portray himself as a student who does well without trying hard. Regardless of which approach he believes he took, David illustrated that he understood the importance of taking a proactive approach to learning.

He also noted that trial and error can be a helpful approach when trying to get better:

David: "And then just try something else"

Interviewer: "Ok so if you're not doing so well at something, you'd try a method and then you'd try something else?"

David: "Until you're good at that method"

Interviewer: "Ok"

David: "Until you found the method that you're best at." (11:314)

He talked about the importance of trialling different methods until you find the one that worked best. From this he gave another indication of the importance of being an active learner.

This superordinate theme explored the various ways the participants spoke about themselves with regards to their progress. They alluded to a range of factors related to themselves that seemed pertinent to their understanding of progress and what helped them to make progress.

4.6 Introduction to Master theme 4: Associated feelings

This master theme explores the feelings that the participants associated with the concept of progress. As the two superordinate themes suggest (see Figure 8 for a visual representation), a variety of emotions seemed to be experienced, some positive (4.6.1) and some negative (4.6.2). There were some direct questions related to feelings in the interview schedule and some participants also mentioned feelings during other parts of the interview.

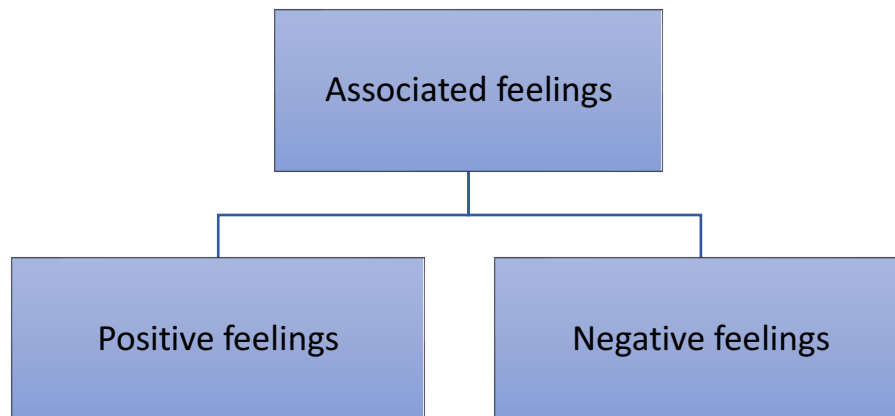


Figure 8: Master theme 4 with its accompanying superordinate themes

4.6.1 Positive feelings

This superordinate theme captures the positive emotions that the participants seemed to associate with progress. Several of the participants expressed feeling happy when they are doing well in school:

Interviewer: "How did that make you feel?"

David: HAPPY! (2:53)

David shouted his response which could indicate how strongly he felt this emotion when he had been doing well in school. At a later point in his interview David talked about feeling happy without directly being asked:

David: "And you feel really happy, especially when you got twenty." (18:515)

He is talking about getting questions correct, stating that if a person got twenty they would feel "really happy".

Susan and Gemma did not shout their responses but seemed as sure as David that they associated doing well with the emotion of happiness:

Interviewer: "If someone said to you, S you're doing really well at school, how would that make you feel?"

Susan: "Happy" (4:120)

Interviewer: "So how do you feel when you're doing well at school?"

Gemma: "Really happy" (5:146)

Others were more tentative in their responses:

Interviewer: "Ok and how do you feel when you're doing well at school?!"

Emma: "Erm happy" (2:56)

Interviewer: "Ok so how do you feel when you're doing well at school?!"

Lily: "Erm happy" (3:67)

The pauses at the beginning of Emma and Lily's responses could indicate that they needed time to think about how they feel. It could also indicate that they were not used to being asked this kind of question in relation to their progress in school. At a later point in the interview a similar question was asked, and Emma did not pause. This could suggest that the question was not so surprising, and she did not need extra thinking time to consider her feelings:

Interviewer: And if you know that you've got better, how does that make you feel?

Emma: "Happy" (5:153)

Tim associated the feeling of happiness with getting better at something:

Interviewer: "And how would you know that you'd got better at that thing?"

Tim: "Well Miss would mark my questions right"

Interviewer: "Yeah and how do you think you'd know in yourself? What would be going through your head do you think?"

Tim: "I would be feeling happy"

This extract demonstrates how I had to specifically ask Tim about an internal representation before he could identify with a feeling that he associated with progress. His initial response links to Master theme 2; his first source of knowing that he had got better at something came externally from his teacher and was related to his questions being marked as correct. Asking directly about feelings elicited this response:

Interviewer: "And how do you feel when you've learnt a new spelling?"

Tim: Erm... happy that I'm improving (7:206)

Some participants also mentioned feeling a sense of pride in their achievements in school:

Interviewer: "Can you tell me how you feel when you're doing well at school?"

David: "Proud" (8:222)

Interviewer: "And what does it feel like to get better at something?"

Tim: "Erm you feel proud." (1:29)

There was also an allusion to a feeling of pride, without using the word specifically:

Emma: "erm yesterday day was I got 14 right so" (3:80)

Emma was talking about the fact that she normally gets one or two correct on a test. She was clearly pleased with this score and proud of herself for achieving it. Similarly, Gemma used the words *"really good"* (2:33) to describe what it feels like to get better at something. This could also be an indication of a sense of pride.

Another emotion that seemed to be key for some of the participants was excitement:

Emma: "And excited" (2:59)

Interviewer: So can you tell me what it feels like when you get better at something?

Lily: Erm... it feels exciting (1:17)

Tim found it difficult to answer when I asked how he knew that was doing well:

Tim: "Erm... it's hard to explain" (2:47)

However, he was able to answer when I asked specifically about how it felt:

Interviewer: "How does it feel do you think?"

Tim: "Feels good" (2:49)

Interestingly, Tim also responded with the following when I asked what he would be doing in a lesson that shows he is doing well:

Tim: "Erm...smiling I guess?"

Tim's response in these extracts added to the sense I gained from some of the participants that they may not be used to discussing their feelings in relation to their progress in school. It did not seem to be natural to some of them to mention feelings and even when directly asked some of them paused before responding. Tim's example of smiling perhaps gives an indication that a physiological response which indicates an emotion was easier to identify than the emotion itself. However, his use of a pause, and the way in which he articulated his response as a question made me wonder whether he was checking his answer with me. This could indicate that he was just as unsure about this as he was with labelling emotions.

4.6.2 Negative feelings

This superordinate theme reflects the fact that some participants referred to negative emotions in their interviews when discussing their progress. These emotions seemed to be related to when the participants were finding something difficult or not doing as well as they would like:

Gemma: "Because I was really angry that I couldn't do it..." (2:35)

Emma: "Erm I would feel upset and next time I'll keep trying to get it right" (3:87)

It was interesting to note Gemma's emotion of choice compared to Emma's. Anger struck me as a very different emotion to upset. Emma's response indicates that she would do something constructive with her emotion and use it to help her to persevere the next time she tries something. Whereas Gemma just stated that she was "*really angry*" and she gave no indication of how she could use this emotion to help her in the future.

There were also emotions associated with the comparison of their own progress with peers:

Gemma: "And then so I was really really angry that all the other girls could do it like during dance but I couldn't" (2:40)

I wondered whether this comparison was why the emotion Gemma linked with this example was anger. Anger could perhaps represent the frustration she felt that her peers in the dance class could do something that she could not. During this part of the interview Gemma also said:

Gemma: "I used to be in loads of dance classes but I had to go out because I was busy" (2:37)

She could have felt that the reasons that she was unable to do something her peers could do was out of her control. She was frustrated that she could not do it, and this frustration was borne out of the fact that she had been unable to attend class due to how busy she was.

Some participants alluded to a sense of embarrassment when they compared their own progress with that of their peers:

Lily: "Because normally I'm one of the children who's last at doing the tests"

Lily was talking about her reasons for not liking tests in school. She seemed to feel embarrassed that she was slower than her peers at finishing tests.

Gemma also mentioned a feeling of embarrassment:

Gemma: "...when like you're on TV or something like a maths quiz if you get them all wrong then you're gonna get be embarrassed." (5:129)

In this extract Gemma was talking about the importance of progress for her life as an adult. This example indicates that Gemma believes feeling embarrassed when you get something wrong is not limited to being a child.

David took this sense of embarrassment a stage further when also discussing tests:

David "You would be humiliated, you'd be shouted at and you'd get forced to stay in" (8:233)

He also seemed to express a feeling of resentment when he compared his own progress to that of peers:

David "It's just forty out of forty on everything... it just sucks" (6:166)

David was talking about a particular peer and at an earlier point in his interview had said *“he never gets anything wrong”* (6:158). By saying *“it just sucks”* David seemed to be airing his jealousy that this particular peer always seems to do well. This could be an indication of how he felt about this peer specifically, rather than how he perceived the progress of peers in his class for whom he did not hold such a negative view.

Throughout Emma’s interview, she talked about the different levels of work in class and how they represented difficulty and challenge. When talking about trying level C (the hardest level) she said:

Emma: “I’ve never tried C though but I’d like to try C.” (5:136)

There was a sense that Emma was perhaps unwilling to try level C due to a fear of failure. As highlighted in a previous quote, Emma described how she felt upset when things did not go so well. Her reluctance to try harder work could be interpreted as a desire to avoid this feeling of upset.

This superordinate theme has explored the variety of negative feelings the participants described when discussing aspects of their progress in school. The emotions highlighted reflect how participants felt when they were not doing as well or when they compared their own progress to that of their peers.

4.7 Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter has provided an analysis of the lived experiences of progress, of six children with SEND. The experiences were grouped into four themes and within each of these various superordinate themes were identified. Within the analysis, commonalities and

differences between the participants were highlighted and discussed. The next chapter provides a critical evaluation of this research and reflects upon the findings in relation to current literature and psychological theory.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Overview of Chapter Five

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings in relation to psychological theory and the relevant literature. I start by summarising the findings (5.2). I then provide a discussion of the findings (5.3), focusing on each of the master themes in relation to theory and research. A critical evaluation of the research follows. This includes researcher's reflections (5.4) and the strengths and limitations of the study (5.5). I then discuss implications of the findings (5.6), future research (5.7) and finish with a conclusion (5.8).

5.2 Summary of findings

In this study, four master themes were identified through the use of IPA (Smith et al., 2011) to analyse the data. These four overarching master themes represent the views of the six participants and incorporate superordinate themes and emergent themes. The findings signify my interpretation of the participants' interpretations of academic progress.

This research focused on one main question:

What meaning do children with SEND assign to academic progress and what do they think makes them improve?

This research also aimed to answer the following sub-research questions:

What does getting better at school mean for children identified as needing SEN Support?

What do these children think helps them to get better in school?

The findings of this study directly answer these research questions. The four master themes and their respective superordinate themes reflect the meaning that the participants

assigned to progress and the factors they identified as helping them to improve. The first master theme, *A process for future gains*, represents the way the participants understood progress as a process. Making progress was defined as something that is ongoing and will have a benefit in the future. Participants placed importance on making progress in school now to shape their futures. These discussions are reflected in the superordinate theme 'The future'. The participants also emphasised the view that progress is something that takes place over time, from the start of their schooling through to adulthood. This concept is encapsulated and explored in the superordinate theme 'Journey'. The final superordinate theme within *a process for future gains* explores the way in which the participants viewed progress as representing change or 'Movement'.

The participants described using external sources as a point of reference for monitoring and understanding the progress they are making, and this is explored in the second master theme, *Defined by outside checks*. The most significant factor in allowing participants to define and quantify their progress seemed to be the extent to which their work is correct. This was conceptualised in different ways by the participants and is explored in the superordinate theme 'Getting things right'. The participants also talked about using information from others to help shape their understanding of their individual progress. For example, in the form of 'Reinforcement and feedback', the second superordinate theme presented in the previous chapter within this master theme.

Both external and internal sources seemed to have an impact upon progress. These were highlighted by the participants and are all represented in the third master theme, *Various influences*. Within this master theme, participants talked about influences from others and

self-influence, hence the two superordinate themes 'Others' and 'Self' were generated. Within these superordinate themes there were significant emergent themes that were prominent within the participants' interpretations, thus were explored separately. For example, within the superordinate theme of 'Others', there were differences in the way the influence of peers and adults were conceptualised. Within the superordinate theme of 'Self', participants talked about self-awareness, their approach as a learner, and personal resilience.

The final master theme, *Associated feelings*, explores the feelings that the participants connected with progress. Participants were directly asked about feelings, but they also mentioned a variety of feelings or emotions at differing moments throughout the interviews. The diversity in emotions mentioned resulted in the construction of the two opposite superordinate themes 'Positive feelings' and 'Negative feelings'.

5.3 Discussion of findings

The aim of this research was to explore the meaning that children with SEND assign to academic progress. The participants were six children in year 4 from a local mainstream primary school. They were all on the school's SEN Support register and had been for at least one academic year, for a range of additional needs. Participant information can be seen in Table 10.

Name*	Age at time of interview	SEND
Gemma	9 years 6 months	SEMH
Emma	9 years 5 months	Learning
Tim	9 years 5 months	Memory
Lily	9 years 6 months	Learning
Susan	9 years 3 months	Learning
David	9 years 7 months	SEMH/ADHD

Table 10: Participant Information

As stated above, four master themes were generated through IPA data analysis. In this section I will explore the findings by discussing each master theme in turn in relation to existing theory and research.

5.3.1 Master theme 1: A process for future gains

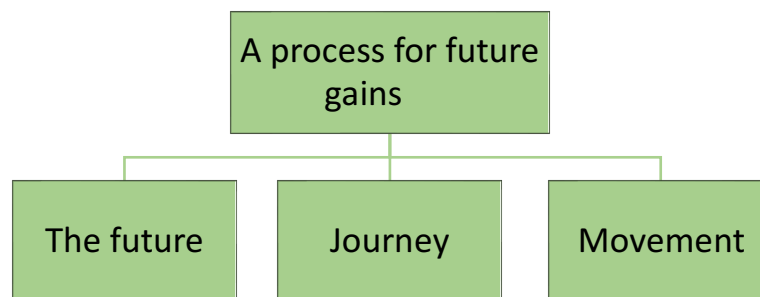


Figure 9: Master theme 1: A process for future gains

This master theme (Figure 9) explores the way in which the participants view progress as an ongoing process. All participants deemed making progress in school to be important. The reasons given for this tended to relate to the importance of making progress now, in order to support life in the near to distant future. For some this meant the transition into secondary school being easier and successful. Others discussed the importance of doing well in primary school to have a positive impact on their ability to gain jobs in the future. Research has demonstrated that children as young as four can begin to make decisions that affect their future (e.g. Moore et al., 1998). Interestingly, the participants in this study were demonstrating this ability; they show understanding that their performance in education

will affect their futures. Additional research literature suggests that, by age seven, children reach a developmental stage where they begin to have more realistic aspirations for the future rather than fantasising about it (Moulton et al., 2015). They begin to have occupational aspirations and envisage their future careers. For example, they may be more likely to say they want to be a 'police officer' rather than a 'unicorn'. This may explain the tendency for some of the participants in this research to reference jobs in the future.

In particular, participant David related success in the future to money, he felt that by being "smart", one would be more likely to get a promotion and get rich. David identified financial status as being associated with power. In 1981, Gottfredson proposed a developmental theory of occupational aspirations, Circumscription and Compromise (Figure 10). The theory postulates that there are four stages of development that children experience with regards to self-concept and occupational preferences.

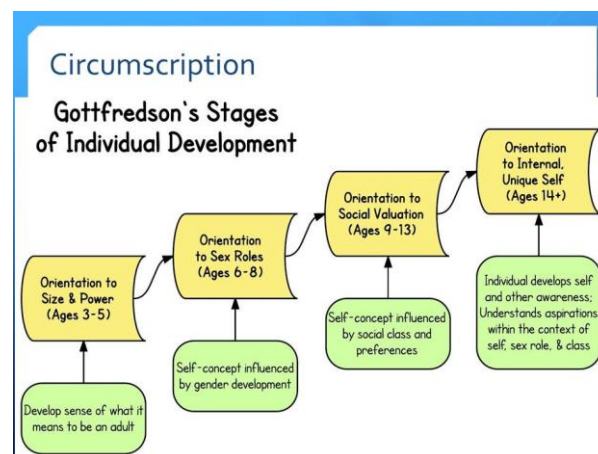


Figure 10: Gottfredson's stages of Circumscription (Belser, nd).

The participants in this study all fall into Stage Three of Gottfredson's model in terms of their age (age 9-13 years). This stage is when children begin to resemble adults in the way that they view society; considering who and what are valued highly. In some of his

responses, David is demonstrating elements of this stage in his thinking. For example, he is beginning to view class and status in terms of income, one of the most concrete indicators of class. During this stage children also tend to aspire to careers that are deemed prestigious, as they are motivated by money and social value.

Findings from the six participants in this study are important as there is ongoing debate regarding the age at which primary career education should start. In this study, the participants have demonstrated that at age 9 they are thinking ahead to the future, with some of them including potential careers into their thinking. However, as Gottfredson's theory explores, the motivation for future careers varies with age. It is therefore pertinent to consider how careers are explored with different aged children depending on what stage they are in and thus what they regard as important.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991) is a well-known and evidence supported theory of human motivation. SDT stems from intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to the desire to complete an activity for self-satisfaction rather than to obtain an external goal (extrinsic motivation). The theory has been expanded to include three psychological needs underpinning self-determination. These needs are universal necessities and if met, provide the basis for optimal functioning. The three psychological needs are competence, autonomy and relatedness. Competence relates to the desire to control and master the environment and outcome. Autonomy is defined as being self-regulating of one's own actions. Finally, relatedness refers to the need to develop secure and satisfying relationships with others. The relevance of SDT can be seen within the first master theme of this study. When talking about the impact of their current

progress on their future lives, the participant's answers could be indicating a sense of autonomy. They are aware that what they as individuals achieve in primary school in the present will have an impact on their futures. The way in which they spoke about their futures could indicate that they are extrinsically rather than intrinsically motivated. None of the participants referred to progress being important because it would give them a sense of achievement (an intrinsic motivator). Instead, almost all the participants referred to more materialistic gains such as becoming wealthy or having a high-status job (extrinsic motivators). This could have implications for the extent to which children achieve their best and work within the best possible environment for optimal functioning. As mentioned above, if career education is to take place with children of the age and features of the participants in this study, it may be pertinent to focus on how careers can be intrinsically as well as extrinsically rewarding.

5.3.2 Master theme 2: (Defined by) outside checks

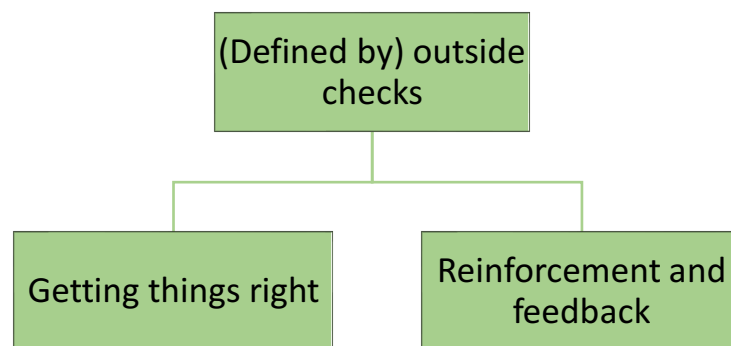


Figure 11: Master theme 2: (Defined by) outside checks

The second master theme (Figure 11) explores the indicators that the participants referred to which helped them to monitor their progress. Participants discussed a variety of external sources that they use to conceptualise whether they are getting better in school. This master theme includes two superordinate themes: 'Getting things right' and

'Reinforcement and feedback'. The first of these superordinate themes explores the tendency of the participants to view progress as the capacity to get things correct. The participants discussed 'scores' and 'marks' as indicators of doing well. This could reflect a tendency to prefer concrete rather than abstract symbols of success, appropriate with the children's age. Research has shown that until the age of at least 10, children have a natural preference towards concrete symbols and concepts (Schwanenflugel, 1991). The inclination of the children in this current study to define their progress in terms of concrete symbols such as ticks in their books or scores on a test could reflect their developmental stage. It could be that older children however may be more inclined to conceptualise progress in a more abstract way; defining it in terms of what it feels like or what it means in terms of confidence. When participant Emma was asked about the significance of receiving a dot or a tick in her book, I noted how she paused when thinking about what these symbols mean. This could again reflect a tendency to consider the external, concrete sources of information as a means to understand her progress on a superficial level, which is in line with her preference to understand the world in concrete concepts.

The way in which the participants all define their progress in terms of outside checks, such as getting things right, may reflect the human tendency to simplify and potentially catastrophise in some situations. Originating from research on depression (Beck, 1972), catastrophising is a type of cognitive distortion that can underlie human thinking. A good example of this was provided by David, who stated that receiving 'green marks' in his book was an indication of failure. Rather than viewing these marks as an opportunity to improve or an indication that he is yet to learn something to fluency, he catastrophises that these marks mean he has failed. This tendency may also reflect a lack of growth mindset (Dweck,

2006) in the style of thinking of the participants. Carol Dweck postulated that intelligence can develop and is not fixed, and that effort can lead to success. If something is not known, it is because we do not know it 'yet' not because we will never know it. The way that participants define their progress in terms of number correct could reflect their tendency to view how they are doing in the present moment. This potentially contradicts the ideas from master theme one, that progress is a process. The conceptualisation of progress as a process does indicate growth mindset thinking, viewing progress as something that is ongoing, i.e. we continue to develop. It is therefore interesting that the markers the participants use to define their progress are in stark contrast, relying on quantifiable measures to indicate how well they are doing based on one moment in time.

The second superordinate theme in this master theme explores the way in which participants use external reinforcement and feedback to define their progress. The participants talked about receiving awards or gold stars in their books for their work, or enjoying their classmates clapping for an achievement. This is indicative of them responding well to positive reinforcement, as described in behaviourist psychology. Skinner (1938) coined the term operant conditioning to explain how desired behaviour can be encouraged if it rewarded positively. We learn to associate the behaviour with the reward and thus are more likely to demonstrate that behaviour again. The participants in this research are displaying this effect by working to gain a reward. As mentioned previously, SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991) differentiates between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. The participants in this research indicated that they are extrinsically motivated; they work to gain a reward. SDT would argue that this is not as effective as being intrinsically motivated.

The findings of this research could therefore indicate that there is more to be done in education to foster children's intrinsic motivation.

5.3.3 Master theme 3: Various influences

This master theme (Figure 12) explores the influences on progress that the participants discussed. Within this are two superordinate themes, 'Others' and 'Self', which have been separated further into significant emergent themes.

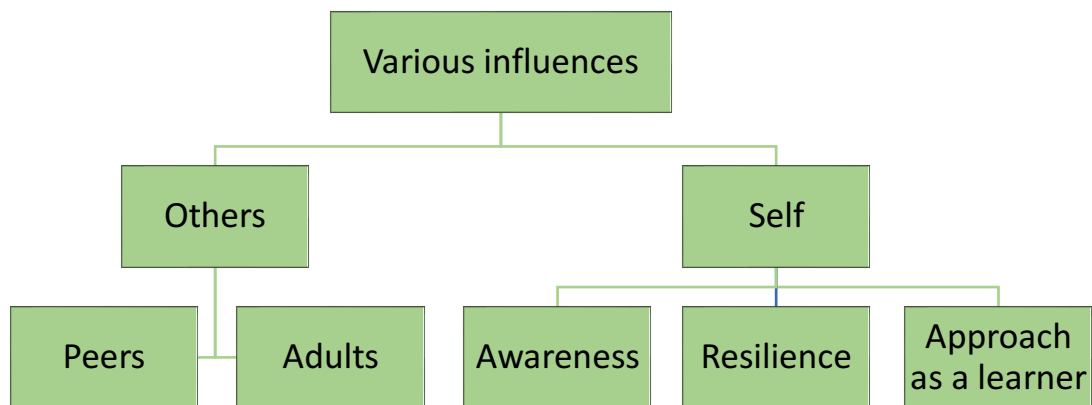


Figure 12: Master theme 3: Various influences

Within the 'Others' superordinate theme, participants seemed to feel that peers and adults had unique impacts upon their progress. There were variations in the way in which participants viewed the impact of their peers. For participant Emma, feedback from her peers seemed to hold more significance than feedback from her teacher. Others enjoyed both giving and receiving peer feedback, whilst some were not interested in how their peers were doing or seemed to deem the comparison between themselves and their peers as threatening.

Theories of child development suggest that within late childhood and adolescence, young people start to become concerned about how they appear to others. They may be increasingly self-conscious about themselves and their situations, in comparison to those around them (Erikson, 1959). The discrepancies in how peers are viewed by the participants in this research could be indicative of their variation in development. Some may be yet to reach the stage where they are concerned by how they appear to others, thus are happy to give and receive feedback from peers. For those who are becoming increasingly self-conscious, they may be more reluctant to give and receive feedback. This makes sense for participant Gemma, who was willing to share progress with peers if she was doing well at something, but was not so keen if she knew peers were outperforming her, therefore presenting as a threat to her self-esteem. Johnson & Johnson's (1975) theory of cooperative learning would suggest that encouraging students to work together to achieve academic goals alleviates the competitive elements of individual learning. Working together allows pupils to capitalise on each other's skills and furthermore, cooperative learning has also been linked to increased pupil satisfaction (Maxwell-Stuart et al., 2016). If applied successfully, the principles of cooperative learning could alleviate some of the comparison that may be causing some of the participants in this study to be self-conscious around their peers.

Adults also seemed to be significant and for most of the participants, this meant their teacher. The participants talked about their teachers helping them to get better by teaching them, guiding them through difficult work or teaching in smaller groups. It is significant that only one of the participants mentioned a Teaching Assistant (TA) as a significant adult. Research has shown that often children with SEND do not have enough quality time with

their teachers and that there can be an over-reliance on TAs to support SEND children to the detriment of their learning. Webster & Blatchford (2013) for instance found that students with high level SEND receiving the most TA support made significantly less academic progress than similar pupils who received much less support. The findings from the current study could therefore indicate that the school may use TA support effectively for these children as the participants spend adequate time with their teacher, who remains a significant part of their progress. It may be important to note however that the pupils tracked in Webster & Blatchford's study were those with EHCPs. Research exploring the impact of TAs for children requiring SEN support is limited. However, existing research has been summarised by the Sutton Trust-EEF (Education Endowment Foundation) in their Teaching and Learning Toolkit. The summary states that TAs can have a positive impact on academic achievement, depending on how they are deployed. Increases in attainment are seen when teachers and TAs work closely together. However, some research has found that children with SEN can perform worse in classes where TAs are present (EEF, 2018). Overall, more research is required in this area; at present there are no meta-analyses which specifically explore the impact of TAs on learning.

The remaining superordinate theme 'Self' explores the way in which participants described the influence they have on their progress as individuals. This superordinate theme was separated into three significant emergent themes: awareness, resilience and approach as a learner. Some participants indicated that they took an active role in their progress. Some knew what they were capable of and thus would challenge themselves. Others referred to the importance of practise to make improvements, indicating that they understood the significance of perseverance. This superordinate theme reflects the way in which the

participants alluded to a range of factors related to themselves that seemed pertinent to their understanding of progress. This could indicate that the participants are beginning to show an awareness of self-regulation in their learning. There is a wealth of research regarding self-regulated learning theory (e.g. Zimmerman, 1986). Self-regulated learners take an active role in their learning, motivationally, behaviourally and metacognitively. Learners that display these characteristics are also more likely to achieve academic success (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1988). The fact that some participants alluded to these tendencies whilst others did not could imply that in education more could be done to encourage these self-regulatory behaviours, to foster success.

5.3.4 Master theme 4: Associated feelings

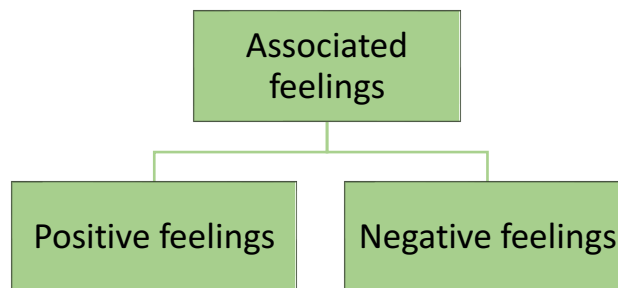


Figure 13: Master theme 4: Associated feelings

The final master theme (Figure 13) constructed from the findings of this study explores the various feelings the participants mentioned when considering the concept of progress. The two superordinate themes explore the positive and negative emotions that participants mentioned during their interviews. Some mentioned pride and happiness when considering their achievements in school. For others a sense of embarrassment or humiliation seemed to be key. As mentioned previously, this could be reflective of different levels of one's psychosocial development. As Erikson's theory postulates (Erikson, 1959), between the

ages of 5-12, children are in the 'competence' stage of psychosocial development. Erikson viewed these years as crucial for the development of self-confidence; children of this age become much more aware of themselves as individuals. The differences in feelings expressed by the participants could reflect various parts of this stage of development. For example, those that mention embarrassment or humiliation may be comparing themselves with others, and self-confidence is damaged if they perceive others to be better than them. During this stage children can also be drawn to activities they enjoy as they recognise what their strengths are. This could be why some of the participants express negative emotions when talking about things they find difficult. Conversely, those that mention feelings of pride or happiness could be demonstrating willingness to persevere at tasks they enjoy, another key component of the competence stage of psychosocial development.

5.3.5 Summary of discussion

This piece of research has provided an insight into the way in which progress is understood by a small group of children with SEND. Analysis led to the development of four master themes to help understand the interpretations of the participants related to academic progress. Through discussion of these master themes, links to relevant theory such as Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991) have been made. The participants in this study expressed their concept of progress in a way that suggests it is something understood externally. They did not make any reference to what making progress feels like in relation to internal markers.

Some of the discrepancies between the participants can be explained developmentally, illustrated by Erikson's (1959) psychosocial theory of development.

5.4 Researcher's reflections

Keeping a reflective diary throughout the process of planning and conducting this research has allowed me to understand the extent to which I have undergone a journey. I can see from my reflections that during the planning stage and prior to commencing the research I was anxious about many things. I wanted to carry out a piece of research that was relevant, unique and interesting. I also wanted to ensure that the way the research was undertaken would provide a genuine opportunity for the children selected as participants to share their views and individual perspectives in an environment that felt open and safe. When I reflect on the research now that it is complete, I am reassured that I achieved these goals. The research provides an insight into a phenomenon that has not been investigated in the literature, particularly with the sample used in my study. I also feel that by including the rapport building session with the participants and using the strengths of my personality I was successful in providing an atmosphere during the interviews which allowed the participants to be honest and feel safe to be so.

I was acutely aware prior to undertaking the interviews that I had little experience in carrying out semi-structured interviews with children as part of research. This is reflected in excerpt 1 of my reflective diary (see Appendix 14). However, it was following the pilot interview that I had particularly helpful supervision sessions with my placement supervisor and director of studies. We discussed two areas on which my anxiety seemed to be focusing. Firstly, although I had little experience with formal interviewing, speaking to children and allowing them to share their perspectives is a considerable part of my daily work as a TEP. I therefore needed to use all the skills involved in this but in a slightly different way. I also

had concerns regarding my ability to collect rich data due to lack of experience, and following the pilot interview this concern was heightened. I was worried that the interviews with the six participants would be the same. However, through exploring what the participant said in more detail during supervision, I could identify that there were already some interesting points to be explored further. By altering the interview schedule slightly, I ensured that the questions allowed for this. There was a stark contrast in how I felt following the pilot interview, and how I felt when I had completed some of the recorded interviews, and this is reflected when comparing excerpts 1 and 2.

During the analysis stage I was surprised and elated by the data I had collected. The data was rich and reflected the participants' ability to honestly and articulately express their interpretations of progress. I was also surprised by the extent to which I genuinely enjoyed exploring the data for the analysis stage of the research. Turning what the six participants had shared with me into meaningful themes was a rewarding and exciting experience.

Using my reflective diary and supervision effectively helped me to successfully cope with the demands of the study. These strategies have also allowed me to see that I did not need to be worried about some of the aspects of the study that I had concerns about at the beginning. I have been able to see how I have developed as a researcher throughout the whole process; advancing both my skills and my confidence.

5.5 Strengths and limitations

5.5.1 Sample size and recruitment

In line with IPA commitments to provide a rich account of individual experience, the sample size in this research was kept suitably small. This allowed for a thorough, in-depth

exploration of participants' interpretations of progress. IPA studies tend to use a purposive sampling method as it is likely that the purpose is to explore a phenomenon and answer a research question related to a specific group, for whom the research question holds relevance (Smith et al., 2011). I used a purposive sampling method in this research because I wanted to recruit a school that would be interested in the findings of the study. Purposive sampling can be criticised as being judgemental and subjective, therefore lending it to be highly prone to researcher bias. However, these criticisms are only relevant if a researcher cannot justify the reason for their sampling method, i.e. the judgements they have made are not based on clear criteria. I have clearly explained my reasoning for wishing to recruit a school that shared my motivation to complete the study, and as Palinkas et al., (2016) state, the importance of participants' availability and willingness to participate cannot be undermined in qualitative research.

Generalisability was not an aim of this research, and due to the nature of the sample, generalisability of results should be approached with caution. The findings represent one small group of participants with SEN receiving SEN Support in one primary school. The findings do not, therefore, claim to represent all children with SEN. IPA studies are not designed with the aim of making wide generalisations from their findings, rather they focus on explaining the meaning assigned to a phenomenon by one group. The latter focus has been achieved in this research.

5.5.2 Homogeneity of sample

IPA requires a homogenous sample, which allows for a rich exploration of shared experience, although limiting the generalisability of findings. The sample in this research

were homogenous in that the participants were all in year 4 at the same primary school, and were all aged 9 at the time of interview. Furthermore, they all had SEN and were receiving SEN Support at school, having been on the school's SEN Support register for at least one academic year. However, there were differences within the sample. For example, the participants had varying SEN, which could have impacted on the meaning they associate with progress. I did not ascertain whether the participants were aware that they were receiving additional support in school, but whether they had this awareness or not could have affected their engagement with the study. For example, if they did have an awareness of their SEN, this could have either positively or negatively impacted upon how they felt about participating in the study. The participants were recruited from two year 4 classes, meaning that their experience of adults in their school was not completely shared. Finally, males were under-represented as the sample consisted of four females and two males.

5.5.3 Interviews

This research used semi-structured interviews, as is common in IPA studies. Interviewing children carries a unique set of challenges and opportunities (Eder & Fingerson, 2002). Cohen (2000) describes some of these challenges. For example, the importance of exploring a child's world through their eyes and not the lens of an adult. A researcher should also be aware of the difference in children's language development, attention and concentration span, the importance of establishing trust and the need to address the inevitable power imbalance between participant and researcher.

To assess whether questions were at an appropriate level based on the participant's language development, the proposed interview schedule was sent to the SENCo at an early

stage of the study. This ensured that the participants selected had the verbal reasoning skills required to understand the questions asked and engage in the interview. A pilot study also allowed for the research questions to be practiced with a participant who matched the sample.

The structure of the interview was considered carefully to ensure a feeling of comfort and a length that would be suited to the attention and concentration span of the participants. Participants were told that they could ask for a break at any point during the interview and I ensured that each individual was ready to start before I began. I endeavoured to create an environment within the interview that felt safe and relaxed, to facilitate trust and an open space for conversation. I also ensured that the participants knew the interview questions had no right or wrong answers, so that they felt able to be honest and not judged in their responses. To establish rapport with the participants I met with each of them once before their recorded interviews.

The nature of the interview being semi-structured meant that although I had an interview schedule, I wanted discussions to be participant led, allowing each interview to truly capture individual experience. This meant that each interview was different, with questions being asked in a different order and some questions not being asked to all participants. Although this allowed for rich individual data, the information gathered varied slightly within the sample.

As mentioned above in researcher's reflections, my experience as an interviewer was fairly limited prior to undertaking this research. Although there may have been some residual effect on the participants of this lack of experience, various precautions were taken to limit

the impact. For example, the pilot interview allowed for practise of both the process and the interview questions themselves. I also used supervision regularly and ensured that I had read literature on the best way to conduct interviews with child participants.

To address the power imbalance, I tried to introduce myself as an equal to the participants and not a figure of authority as they may view other adults within school. I stressed to the participants that they could refer to me as 'Kirsty', not as 'Miss'. Members of school staff who spoke to me in front of pupils also addressed me as 'Kirsty'. However, as the interviews took place within school, the participants may have found it difficult to view me differently to any other adult in school, thus impacting how they interacted with me.

5.5.4 Quality of the research

As explained in Chapter Three, I used a set of criteria suggested by Guba & Lincoln (1989) to evaluate the quality (trustworthiness and validity) of this research. I will briefly revisit each of these to critically evaluate the study.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which data represents what participants said, and the confidence in the 'truth' of the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This is achieved through building rapport and trust with the participants. To support the rapport building process, I met with each participant once before the interview. Although this helped the participants to feel more at ease during their recorded interviews, I remained a relative stranger to them, and this could have impacted on the extent to which they said what they truly felt during their interviews. Guba & Lincoln also suggest that the use of peer debriefing during a piece of research aids with the credibility of findings. I am more certain that I managed

this successfully. I discussed the findings with my Director of Studies at length, and was able to answer questions related to the findings, using evidence from the raw data. This ensured that I had confidence that the findings from data analysis were explicitly linked to the participants' transcripts.

Transferability

Transferability equates to external validity in quantitative research; the extent to which the results of a study can be generalised to other contexts. As detailed above when discussing the sample, the aim of this study was not to produce generalisable findings. However, I believe I have provided a rich description of the phenomenon of progress for my participants, that the findings could be assessed by readers to consider transferability to similar contexts. I believe that this study also provides a model for the notion of discussing academic progress with children themselves.

Dependability

Dependability equates to reliability in quantitative research; the extent to which the research can be replicated, and that findings are consistent. As with generalisability, replicability was not a key consideration in this research, due to the individuality of the study. However, I have included sufficient detail in the methodology to allow for the research to be replicated. Guba & Lincoln (1989) also suggest that dependability can be ensured through an external audit, whereby a researcher not involved in the study examines the process and determines whether findings and conclusions are supported by the data. This was achieved through my Director of Studies, who engaged in considerable discussion with me regarding the findings, linked to the interview data.

Confirmability

Confirmability links to objectivity; the extent to which the researcher minimises their impact on the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This is difficult in qualitative research, particularly in studies employing IPA due to the nature of the role of the researcher and double hermeneutics. By definition the findings are my interpretation of the participants' interpretations of progress. However, I believe I have provided sufficient detail within the findings chapter, allowing for the source of the data to be traceable. The method for data analysis is also explicit. Finally, I used my reflective diary and supervision with my Director of Studies to ensure that I remained reflexive regarding my impact on the research throughout.

Smith (2011) proposed an IPA quality evaluation guide. He suggested four criteria which could be used to judge the process but predominantly the product of a piece of research. To be deemed an acceptable IPA paper, a study must adhere to the following criteria:

- It clearly subscribes to the theoretical principles of IPA; phenomenological, hermeneutic and idiographic
- It is sufficiently transparent, allowing a reader to see what was done
- The analysis is coherent, plausible and interesting
- Sufficient evidence from all the participants is used to demonstrate density of each theme

This study focused on understanding a group of children's lived experiences of academic progress, exploring their interpretations of their experiences. Furthermore, the participants were all based in a particular context. The study therefore adheres to the theoretical

principles of IPA. There is sufficient detail in the methodology chapter of the research to allow a reader to clearly see what was done; the process for all stages is explicit. Data analysis and presentation of findings addresses both individual and shared experience, and master themes are evidenced by transcript extracts from all participants. For that reason, I believe this study adheres to Smith's (2011) criteria and meets the standards for an acceptable IPA piece of research.

5.6 Implications of findings

The findings from this study are relevant both in the field of Educational Psychology, and to the wider education context. The study provides ideas for further exploration, regarding how children receiving SEN Support can be supported in school. As part of their role, EPs work collaboratively with educational settings to support the needs of individuals and groups of children. This research has indicated that EPs could play a role in highlighting key theory relevant to supporting children with SEND to achieve their best:

- The participants in this study have demonstrated that they respond well to extrinsic motivators such as praise, rewards and other forms of positive reinforcement. It may be therefore pertinent for EPs to highlight the theory underpinning why this can be successful to educational settings, and encourage the use of extrinsic motivators.
- The findings from the research could suggest that at present the participants are more extrinsically than intrinsically motivated. As is known from the principles of behavioural psychology, and as mentioned above, this is a successful strategy for encouraging desired behaviour. However, the philosophy of SDT would argue that this is not the best form of motivation to promote optimal functioning. Instead,

perhaps EPs and educators should foster intrinsic motivation in all students, alongside supporting the three psychological needs that SDT states are crucial.

- For some of the participants, success in school seemed to be constructed in an 'all or nothing' manner. For example, not achieving the best score on a test or receiving the 'wrong' kind of marks in their books meant they were failing. This could imply that the participants have a fixed rather than growth mindset. The principles of growth mindset should be encouraged to support students to understand that their progress can grow, with perseverance and positive attitude. This would also provide an alternative to the catastrophising way in which some of the participants seemed to view progress.
- As children of the age of those in this research start to become more self-conscious and compare themselves to their peers, perhaps the principles of cooperative learning theory are important. As indicated in the findings, some participants found the comparison of themselves to peers as threatening. If pupils were encouraged to work together to achieve common goals rather than work as individuals they may find comparison with peers less of a threat, and more of something to be celebrated.
- As already stated, according to SDT, to achieve personal fulfilment and the best possible growth, people need to have three basic psychological needs met: competence, relatedness and autonomy. It is therefore important that all children but in particular those who sometimes have less opportunity to express their views, such as those in this study, are given ample opportunities to develop skills that will

empower them. They should also be given opportunities to ensure that their voices are heard. There are two ways to achieve this. Firstly, to encourage self-regulation skills such as those described in Zimmerman's (1986) self-regulated learning theory. Secondly, to support children to be self-advocates; to equip them with the skills to voice what is important to them. EPs are well placed to encourage children with SEND to be self-advocates, either by working with schools and other professionals or by doing individual work directly with students.

5.7 Future research

This research has provided an insight into the way in which a small group of children with SEND assign meaning to the concept of academic progress. I have considered and identified some ways in which this research could be extended and added to in the future to provide supplementary insights into this phenomenon. For example, as previously stated the sample was a small group of children with SEND who were being provided with additional support within school. What is not known is whether these children were all aware of their additional needs and support provided. It would therefore be interesting to explore any differences between the interpretations of this sample and the interpretations of a sample of children who are perhaps more acutely aware of their SEND, such as children who have been granted an EHCP. Furthermore, it would be useful to consider any differences in interpretations of progress of children with no additional needs.

In a similar vein, future research could explore the extent to which meaning assigned to progress may vary with age. This study has demonstrated the degree to which the participants attributed the monitoring of their progress to external sources. Furthermore,

as mentioned above theories of motivation such as SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991) are relevant when considering how to encourage the best outcomes from children. It may be helpful to investigate whether older children are more prone to use internal sources as points of reference to monitor their progress. This would allow for exploration into developmental differences that may cause this change, or environmental effect such as the way progress is discussed with different age groups throughout education.

Finally, this research is one example of only a small number which has given children with SEND the chance to voice their perspectives on their education. I believe that further qualitative research should be undertaken to continue to give a voice to an under-represented population in the existing literature.

5.8 Conclusion

In summary, this research has explored the way in which a small group of primary aged children with SEND conceptualise academic progress. The findings provide a greater understanding of how the participants interpret their progress in school, what influences them and what feelings they attribute to the process. The research has made a unique contribution to a topic not widely researched to date. Recommendations are made that inform practice for EPs and educators alike. Suggestions to extend the research further have also been made. Finally, the study emphasises the importance of providing this group of children with a voice; a group currently underrepresented in the literature.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Overview of studies resulting from literature searches

Factors Affecting Academic Progress for all Children

Authors & Date	Location	Design & Methodology	Findings
King, G., Mcdougall, J., Dewit, D., Hong, S., Miller, L., Offord, D., . . . Laporta, J. (2005).	Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative Cross-sectional Parent report data Structural equation modelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little evidence that children with chronic conditions were at direct risk for poorer outcomes. Children with activity-limiting conditions were at increased indirect risk for academic difficulties Cognitive functioning and hyperactivity/inattention difficulties were the major predictors of academic performance. Recreational participation and behavioural functioning were the main predictors of prosocial behaviour. The model of competence development may be useful for understanding the pathways and processes by which various factors affect children's academic and social outcomes.
Wilson, K. M., & Trainin, G. (2007).	California	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative Children responded to questions measuring attributions, self-efficacy and perceived competence Structural equation modelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literacy attributions in young children mediated between achievement and self-efficacy and perceived competence. First-grade students differentiate among their self-efficacy for reading, writing, and spelling. The ELMS is a reliable measure of children's motivation. There is a strong link between literacy achievement and attributions.
Blatchford, P., Bassett, P., Brown, P., Martin, C., Russell, A., & Webster, R. (2011).	England & Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative Longitudinal Examined academic progress and positive approach to learning (PAL) at the end of the school year in relation to the amount of support received 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results for PAL were inconsistent. There was a consistent trend for those with most support to make less academic progress than pupils with less support. This was not explained by characteristics of the pupils such as prior attainment or level of special educational need.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covered primary and secondary school stages 	
Strand, S., & Demie, F. (2006).	England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative Measured end of key stage results and unusual movement between schools Large sample size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key stage 2 tests for mobile pupils considered were significantly across reading, writing and maths. The association was reduced by half when other factors were considered such as SEN, ethnicity, gender but remained significant.
Mavroveli, S., & Sánchez-Ruiz, M. J. (2011).	England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative Measures end of key stage and SAT results Correlations calculated between achievement and emotional intelligence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Associations between trait EI and academic achievement were modest and limited to Year 3 children. SEN students scored lower on trait EI compared to students without SEN.

Factors Affecting Academic Progress for Children with SEND

Authors & Date	Location	Design & Methodology	Findings
Dessemontet, R. S., Bless, G., & Morin, D. (2012).	Switzerland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative Quasi-experimental Comparative study – children in mainstream (34) & children in special education (34) Measures of academic achievement and adaptive behaviour taken ANOVA analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children in mainstream made slightly more progress in literacy skills than children attending special schools. No differences were found between the progress of the two groups in mathematics and adaptive behaviour.
Ruijs, N., Peetsma, T., & Veen, I. V. (2010).	Holland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative Achievement measured by language and arithmetic tests Multi-level regression analyses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact of found for whether students were the only student with SEN in their class, or whether they had a few or more classmates with SEN. Unequivocal results were found for other variables measured such of socio-economic functioning.
Szumski, G., & Karwowski, M. (2014).	Poland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statistically significant differences between forms of education.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement measured by Szumski standardised test • Compared special, integrative and mainstream pupils • MANOVA used to analyse group differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in inclusive forms of education (integrative and mainstream) had a significantly better level of school achievement than those in special schools. • Students from special schools were significantly better integrated emotionally and socially than integrative and mainstream school students.
Tremblay, P. (2013).	Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative • Achievement measured by test results in reading, writing and mathematics • Compared children in inclusive education and in special education • T-tests used to compare groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant differences between the two groups at the start of the academic year (October). • In June, students in inclusive classes scored significantly better in reading and writing but not in maths.

Teacher Perceptions of Progress and SEND

Authors & Date	Location	Design & Methodology	Findings
Brady, K., & Woolfson, L. (2008).	Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative • Compared attributions of teachers in different settings • Regression analysis used to assess the impact of teacher role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers with more experience attributed children's difficulties as more internal than teachers with less experience. • Teachers with higher self-efficacy scores were more likely to attribute difficulties externally than those with low self-efficacy scores.
Monsen, J. J., & Frederickson, N. (2004).	New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative • Categorised teachers by their attitude towards inclusion • Explored the relationship between these attitudes and pupil perceptions • ANOVAs used to analyse data between groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were significant differences in pupil perceptions between the teacher groups. • Children tended to have higher satisfaction in classrooms with teachers who had strong, positive attitudes towards inclusion.

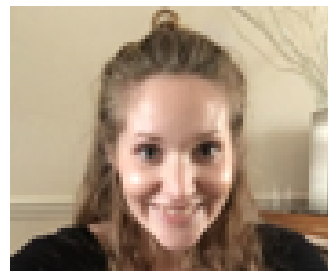
Children's Perceptions of Progress and SEND

Authors & Date	Location	Design & Methodology	Findings
Prunty, A., Dupont, M., & Mcdaid, R. (2012).	Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative • Focus groups and individual interviews • Thematic analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested more favourable support for learning and social issues in special schools and special classes than in mainstream classes. • Friendship was a recurrent theme in students' accounts and mediates school enjoyment.
Curtin, M., & Clarke, G. (2005).	England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative • Interviews • Collaborative life stories written with participants • Thematic analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicated mixed views about education. • Participants who attended a special school were generally positive about their experiences. • Participants who had attended a mainstream school discussed both positive and negative experiences.

Information for Children

**I'd like you to take part
in my research!**

THIS IS ME...



Hello! My name is Kirsty and I'd love for you to help me with my research study.

This sheet is an invitation to take part. It will give you information to help you decide whether you'd like to join in. I've also asked your mum or dad for their permission for you to take part. You might want to talk through this sheet with your mum or dad to help you decide.

What is research?

Research is a way you can find out about something you don't know the answer to yet.

What is my research about?

I am really interested in hearing what children your age think about getting better at school. I think that it's important that us adults understand what helps you to get better, in your opinion.

What will you have to do?

I need your help to practise for my study. We will meet to talk for about 45 minutes. I'll ask you some questions and at the end it would be really helpful for you to tell me what you think went well and what I can make better.

Do you have to take part?

No! It's up to you to decide if you want to take part. I'd really appreciate your help though!

What happens after?

With your help I'll be able to ask other children in your school similar questions. The questions will be even better because you will have given me your thoughts.

What do you do if you have questions?

You could ask your mum or dad to email me to ask me anything you like. My email address is kirsty.wagner@essex.gov.uk

Now that you've read through the information you can tell me whether or you want to take part. Please fill in one of the sentences below:



My name is and I have read the information sheet and would like to take part in the pilot

OR

My name is and I have read the information sheet but don't want to take part in the pilot

Thank you!

Information and Consent Form for Parents (Pilot)

Dear parent,

My name is Kirsty Wagner and I am training to be an Educational Psychologist at the University of East London. As part of my studies I am conducting a piece of research looking at children's understanding of academic progress, and what they think helps them to make progress in school. I am particularly interested in the views of children who are on their school's SEN Support register. From my research, I hope to gain an insight into how meaning is assigned to progress by children. There is very little evidence that this area has been looked at before.

Before I do the study 'for real' I need to have practise, or what we call a pilot study. I am inviting your child to take part in my pilot interview. In the pilot interview I will ask very similar questions to those that will be asked in the real interviews, but I will ask your child for feedback about what it feels like to be asked those questions, or whether they would suggest any changes to the wording of the questions. This is invaluable feedback as I can adapt any questions or alter my approach ready for the real interviews.

The information your child shares with me will be confidential and will only be used to help me. This means that your child would not be eligible to take part in the real interviews.

I am writing to you to explain the study and to ask for your consent for your child to take part. If you agree, I have enclosed information and consent sheets for your son or daughter. Your child can withdraw from the interview at any point.

Please complete the below consent form and return to the school. If you agree to your child taking part in the pilot, please complete their consent form with them and return it at the same time.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information!

.....

Your name:

Name of your child:

Please delete as appropriate

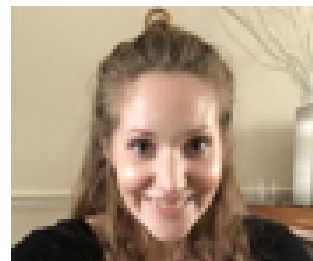
I do/do not give consent for my child to take part in the research. I have read and understood the information.

Signed

Information for Children

**I'd like you to take part
in my research!**

THIS IS ME...



Hello! My name is Kirsty and I'd love for you to take part in my research study.

This sheet is an invitation to take part. It will give you information to help you decide whether you'd like to join in. I've also asked your mum or dad for their permission for you to take part. You might want to talk through this sheet with your mum or dad to help you decide.

What is research?

Research is a way you can find out about something you don't know the answer to yet.

What is my research about?

I am really interested in hearing what children your age think about getting better at school. I think that it's important that us adults understand what helps you to get better, in your opinion.

What will you have to do?

My research will involve you and me meeting to talk for about 45 minutes. We will meet twice. I'll ask you some questions to help us to talk. Our meeting will be recorded on a CD to help me remember everything we talk about.

Do you have to take part?

No! It's up to you to decide if you want to take part. Even if you say yes now you can change your mind later, until I have started sorting out the data.

What happens after?

Once I've written up what we talked about, the CD will be destroyed. Everything that we say in our meetings will be kept private unless you say something that means you or someone else is in danger. After my research is finished, I'll share what I have found out with you and the adults in your school.

What do you do if you have questions?

You could ask your mum or dad to email me to ask me anything you like. My email address is kirsty.wagner@essex.gov.uk

Now that you've read through the information you can tell me whether or you want to take part. Please fill in one of the sentences below:



My name is and I have read the information sheet and would like to take part in the research

OR

My name is and I have read the information sheet but don't want to take part in the research

Thank you!

Appendix 4: Parent information and consent forms

School of Psychology

Acting Dean: Dr Pippa Dell BA(Hons) MSc PhD CPsychol CSci FBPSS FHEA



Information and Consent form for Parents

Dear parent,

My name is Kirsty Wagner and I am training to be an Educational Psychologist at the University of East London. As part of my studies I am conducting a piece of research looking at children's understanding of academic progress, and what they think helps them to make progress in school. I am particularly interested in the views of children who are on their school's SEN Support register. From my research, I hope to gain an insight into how meaning is assigned to progress by children. There is very little evidence that this area has been looked at before. My study will therefore provide your child with an opportunity to share their views in a piece of research which will provide a unique contribution to information currently available.

I am therefore inviting your child to take part in my study. I would hope to meet with them twice, once for about 30 minutes to build rapport with them and once for about 45 minutes, to talk about their views on academic progress. Our discussion will be audio recorded so that I can create a transcription of our conversation. The information will be confidential and your child's name will not be identifiable in any written report. The report may include quotations from interviews but these will never be associated with names. Once the study is completed, the audio recording will be destroyed.

I am writing to you to explain the study and to ask for your consent for your child to take part. If you agree, I have enclosed information and consent sheets for your son or daughter. Your child can withdraw from the study at any point, up until I have started to analyse the data. Your child does not have to provide an answer to any question in the interview if they don't wish to.

Please complete the below consent form and return to the school. If you agree to your child taking part, please complete their consent form with them and return it at the same time.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information!

.....

Your name:

Name of your child:

Please delete as appropriate

I do/do not give consent for my child to take part in the research. I have read and understood the information.

Signed

Appendix 5: Interview schedule

1. Have you heard of the word progress before?



If yes, can you explain what you think it means?

(If no, interviewer to explain what progress is...) – adults words for 'getting better'

What do we mean by getting better?

2. What does getting better in lessons mean to you?
3. What does it feel like to get better?
4. How do you know you're doing well in lessons?
5. How do you know when you've learnt something?
6. Who tells you that you're doing well in your school work?
7. How do you know if you're getting better at something in school?
8. Who tells you you're getting better?
9. Do you know if your friends are getting better?
10. Is getting better at school important?
11. How do you feel when you're doing well at school?
12. How do you know if you're not doing well at school?
13. Do you think tests help you show how much you know?
14. Who helps you to get better at something?
15. What do they do that helps?
16. Is there anything anyone could do to help you more?
17. Can you tell me about a time when you know you've got better at something?
18. How do you show you're getting better at something in school?


MORE ABOUT ME

 I FEEL HAPPY WHEN _____ 

I HATE _____

I WISH THAT I WAS _____

I WORRY ABOUT _____

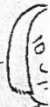
THE THING THAT MAKES ME ANGRY IS _____ 

MOST PEOPLE THINK THAT I AM _____

I FEEL JEALOUS WHEN _____

WHEN PEOPLE SHOUT AT ME I FEEL _____

WHEN I LEAVE SCHOOL I HOPE THAT _____

IT MAKES ME FEEL CONFUSED WHEN _____ 

THE BEST THING THAT COULD HAPPEN TO ME IS _____


I FEEL GUILTY WHEN _____

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN MY LIFE IS _____

I FEEL SUCCESSFUL WHEN _____

I THINK THAT I HURT OTHERS WHEN _____

_____ PAGE A13 _____


RETRACKIN

Appendix 7: Example of a transcript in the format suggested by Smith et al., (2011)

Q: Ok, so T, can you tell me if you've heard of the word progress?

T: Yes

Q: You have heard of it? Ok, where have you heard that word?

T: ~~Erm~~, I've heard it from my tennis teacher

Q: Ah ok

T: He says I've been making a lot of progress

Q: And what does that mean do you think?

T: Improvement?

Q: Oh good word! Yeah, so what does improvement mean?

T: Like you like you weren't very good and now you've like got better

Q: Yeah exactly, getting better. That's kind of what we're going to be talking about. So you've heard it in tennis, have you ever heard it in school? The word progress?

T: Yes, I heard it from Miss Beeson. She said I've really ~~erm~~ progressed in ~~erm~~ my maths.

Q: ~~Mmmmm~~, was that your year 3 teacher?

T: ~~Mmmmm~~

Appendix 8: An example of initial noting for participant David

Comments

	Q: Ok D, can you tell me if you've heard of the word progress before?
	D: Yeah I have
	Q: And can you tell me what you think that means?
Improvement / gaining	D: Erm it's when you improve
Interesting word	Q: Mmhmm
something there that wasn't before - movement	D: You just gain something
from failure to success	Q: Can you think of an example of that in school?
	D: Erm, you failed a test one time then you succeed 100%
	Q: Yep perfect that's exactly it. So when we say progress we kinda mean getting better at something don't we. Can you tell me what getting better in lessons means to you?
Negative language	D: I don't really care
Not bothered	Q: Ok, you don't care about it but what do you think it means when we say oh you're getting better in school, in lessons.
Why?	D: You're improving your work
Improvement	Q: Mmhmm
Achievement = higher grades	D: And overall you're just becoming a higher grade student
	Q: Ok so it would be about your grades do you think?
	D: Yeah

Appendix 9: An example of emergent themes for participant David

Themes

Q: Ok D, can you tell me if you've heard of the word progress before?

D: Yeah I have

Q: And can you tell me what you think that means?

D: Erm it's when you improve

Improvement

Q: Mmhmm

D: You just gain something

gaining

Q: Can you think of an example of that in school?

D: Erm, you failed a test one time then you succeed 100%

from failure to success

Q: Yep perfect that's exactly it. So when we say progress we kinda mean getting better at something don't we. Can you tell me what getting better in lessons means to you?

D: I don't really care

Q: Ok, you don't care about it but what do you think it means when we say oh you're getting better in school, in lessons.

D: You're improving your work

Improvement

Q: Mmhmm

D: And overall you're just becoming a higher grade student

High grades

Q: Ok so it would be about your grades do you think?

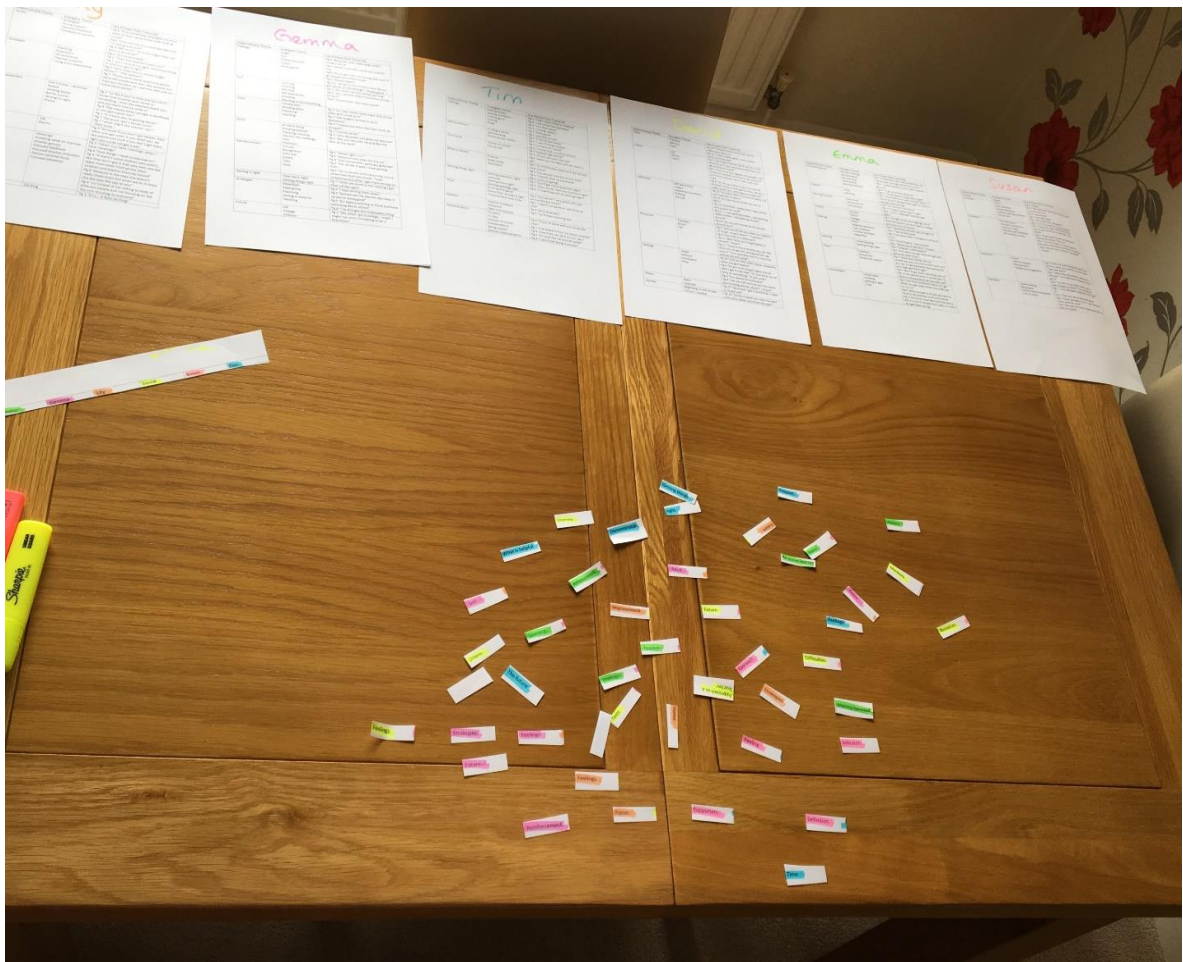
D: Yeah

Appendix 10: Superordinate and Emergent themes for participant Lily

Superordinate Theme	Emergent Theme	Key Phrases from Transcript
Home	Strategies Home support Parental feedback Feedback to parents	Pg 6 "Erm sometimes they give my mum ideas to help me at home with stuff at home" Pg 6 "they tell my mum and dad like how I'm doing and stuff" Pg 4 "My mum" "Erm she might help me learn it at home?" Pg 2 "mums and dads"
Strategies	Teaching Repetition Perseverance Teacher support Using prior experience	Pg 2 "Then the teachers teach you" Pg 1 "you have to try again and keep doing it until you get it right" Pg 4 "who helps you in school to get better?" "The teacher" Pg 7 "There were some questions which were the similar and like I like worked out how you do them so I saw the next one so I knew them better"
Improvement	Don't know – do know Award Getting better Better scores Wrong to right Praise	Pg 2 "so like if you're little and you don't know how to write your name or something...Then the teachers teach you and you learn how to write it" Pg 8 "like maybe when you get a certificate or you get a gold star" Pg 1 "it means you're getting better." Pg 7 "Because I get a better score" Pg 1 "what might the teacher say?" "Well done."
Future	Job Exams	Pg 3 "because if you don't get better, then when you get older if you when you do like exams and stuff If you don't get them right you could not get a job"
Focus	Meetings Knowing what to improve Smaller groups Focused feedback Focused teacher attention Person centred focus Focused attention	Pg 5 "When you have meetings, when I have meetings" Pg 6 "And things I need to improve on" Pg 4 "if there's some children who aren't, like they don't get it that very well, she like takes them away from all the other children and teaches them by herself" Pg 5 "because in the class she doesn't really check them but when we do it there she like says like yep to you" Pg 4 "so instead of her talking to loads of different people and not focusing on like like erm focusing on everyone"

Feelings	Exciting Happy Embarrassment	Pg 1 "Erm... it feels exciting" Pg 3 "Erm happy" Pg 3 "normally I'm one of the children who's last at doing the tests"
Peers	Peer marking Peer comparison	Pg 2 "We only look at each other's work if we have to mark it" Pg 3 "normally I'm one of the children who's last at doing the tests"
Knowledge	Getting it right Learning Showing ability Ticks Teacher indicators Teacher feedback	Pg 2 "Because, they get the answer right." Pg 2 "you learn how to write it" Pg 4 "Letting your teacher know what you're capable of " Pg 2 "Erm... because you're getting more ticks" Pg 1 "sometimes like my teacher tells you"

Appendix 11: Colour coded superordinate themes for all participants



Appendix 12: Colour coded master themes

1) A process for future gains

2) (Defined by) outside checks

3) Various Influences

4) Associated feelings

Susan

Superordinate Theme	Emergent Theme	Key Phrases from Transcript
Feeling	Happy	Pg 4 "Happy"
Indicators	Marks Peer feedback Teacher feedback Teacher marks/comments Good score	Pg 5 "Miss Bowman would put a little mark in at the bottom" Pg 2 "my partner" Pg 3 "my mate does" Pg 3 "she does ticks and writes" Pg 5 "Erm if it's past 5 I'd say it's good" Pg 2 "Have you ever told anyone that you've got better at something?" "Not really" Pg 5 "do you ever know how well your friends are doing?" "Erm no" Pg 5 "Erm if it's past 5 I'd say it's good" Pg 4 "And who would you want to tell you that? Would it be a friend or an adult?" "Friend"
Approach	Not self-aware No peer comparison Having a target Request peer feedback Not sharing success	
Supporters	Praise Teacher support Perseverance Teacher encouragement	Pg 3 "Does she write things like well done or this is what you need to do next time?" "Yeah well done." Pg 2 "What does she write or what does she say?" "Erm like keep trying and you'll get it" Pg 3 "So who do you think helps you to learn things in school?" "Erm teachers"
Definition	Understanding Being good Move towards being able Out of school	Pg 2 "Erm like keep trying and you'll get it" Pg 1 "That erm you're basically good" Pg 3 "Cause like when I do it I was like that close, and that close" Pg 3 "She says erm you're getting better at your erm splits"

School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

For research involving human participants

BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates

REVIEWER: Dr Matthew Jones Chesters

SUPERVISOR: Dr Helena Bunn

COURSE: Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

STUDENT: Kirsty Wagner

TITLE OF PROPOSED STUDY: What meaning do children with special educational needs assign to academic progress and what do they think makes them get better? An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

DECISION OPTIONS:

- 1. APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below): In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.

DECISION ON THE ABOVE-NAMED PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY

(Please indicate the decision according to one of the 3 options above)

APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS

Minor amendments required (for reviewer):

- 1 Please use plain paper for the *Information Sheet* and *Consent forms* - coloured paper is fine, but avoid a patterned background as this can be hard to read, and might particularly affect this sample.
2. You may be obliged by the university and/or school(s) to add letter-heads to your documents (*Information Sheet* and *Consent forms*) so please bear this in mind when preparing them.

ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEARCHER (for reviewer)

If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

☐

HIGH

☐

MEDIUM

☒

LOW

Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any):

Reviewer: Matthew Jones Chesters

Date: 17.02.2017

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

Confirmation of making the above minor amendments (for students):

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

Student's name: Kirsty Wagner (*Typed name to act as signature*):

Student number: U1528701

Date: 28/02/2017

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

Appendix 14: Excerpts from reflective diary

Excerpt 1 – Pilot Interview

I did the pilot interview for the research today. I felt so nervous and I hope this didn't come across to the child. All I could think about before starting was that I hadn't had much experience with formal interviews, and what if it all goes wrong? He was really nice and seemed quite relaxed about doing the interview with me so that was good. As I was asking the questions and listening to his answers I found myself not listening to him as intently as I could and not being as 'present' as I should, as I was thinking about what his answers meant in relation to the study. For the actual interviews I need to forget about this and just be in the moment. I quickly looked back at some of the answers the boy gave today and am really worried that I'd have nothing to analyse if all the other interviews go the same way. I need to allow what is being said to me to just be that though and not try to overthink what that means for analysis. I think he understood most of the questions but I will look at tweaking them with my supervisors just to make sure. I also need to remember that I didn't do rapport building on a separate occasion with the pilot boy so today was the first time he had met me, that could have made a difference to the way the interview went and the way he answered the questions!

Excerpt 2 – Interview 3

I have just got back from interviewing the third pupil and it was so enjoyable! My nerves seem to have finally passed and I feel like I'm finding my way with conducting the interviews in a manner that suits both me and the participants. The pupil seemed really relaxed and I hope that I came across to him that way too. I got the sense that he was enjoying talking with me. I'm feeling really good about this interview and how it went. This participant seemed to be quite reflective, he took his time and seemed to consider his responses before he said them, so I am looking forward to data analysis now.