Exploring perceptions of enablers and barriers to positive outcomes in a primary Pupil Referral Unit; The perspectives of pupils, primary caregivers, and staff.

Eleanor Taylor
Institute of Education, University College London

Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology (DEdPsy)

I, Eleanor Taylor, hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Word count: 35,570 (excluding abstract, impact statement, references and appendices)

Abstract

Permanent school exclusions in the UK are increasing, particularly for primary-aged pupils who now represent 15% of the total exclusion population. Pupils who experience permanent exclusion and attend alternative provision, of which pupil referral units (PRUs) are the most common form, are likely to experience negative long-term academic and social outcomes. Despite this, there is a paucity of research which explores the perceptions of the pupils, primary caregivers, and staff who experience attendance in a PRU. These perceptions would provide a more rich picture of the phenomenon and influence policy and practice regarding the support of these pupils. Of the existing research that does explore these perceptions, it is often the views of professionals in these settings that are taken into account, rather than of the pupils and primary caregivers. The current study aims to build on the existing limited knowledge of pupil perceptions in primary PRUs, alongside the views of their primary caregivers and the staff who support them.

This research adopts a case study approach to explore these perceptions in one primary PRU. Participants consisted of four pupils (Year 3-5), four primary caregivers and five staff members. Participants' views regarding what they perceived to be positive outcomes of pupil attendance, alongside the enablers and barriers to these outcomes were captured through interviews. A range of 'task-centred' tools and techniques were used in the pupil interviews to facilitate discussion. Thematic analysis was carried out, which resulted in the construction of a number of themes and subthemes. Seven themes were drawn from the data that related to school belonging, social and emotional skill development, successful reintegration, staff skills, relationships, the learning environment, and priorities of the senior leadership team. These findings are discussed in light of the existing literature and in relation to the research questions, with the study's strengths and limitations considered. To conclude, further research directions and implications for practice are reflected on.

Impact statement

This piece of research is one of few studies exploring the perceptions of pupils in a primary PRU. By exploring the perceptions of a younger age group, alongside those of their primary caregivers and the staff who support them, this research fills a critical gap in the literature regarding alternative provision.

The findings from this study have highlighted a number of perceived positive outcomes from attending a PRU, namely; feeling a sense of school belonging, developing social and emotional skills, successfully reintegrating to mainstream, and developing 'life skills'. Alongside this, a number of enablers and barriers were identified by participants, with the importance of positive relationships being the cornerstone of many participants' views.

These findings have implications for future research directions, as they may be used to explore the perceptions of these participant groups further. For example, through a mixed-methods approach to track pupils' long-term outcomes or the use of digital technologies to support pupils to express their views. Alongside this, the findings from the current study have significant implications for the practice of local authorities, education settings (both mainstream and alternative provision), teaching staff and paraprofessionals including educational psychologists. These implications are broad and cover the following areas:

- Support for pupils to develop positive relationships with staff both in mainstream and alternative provision.
- Promotion of the development of belonging in educational settings.
- Support for mainstream schools to implement more inclusive practices for pupils with social and emotional needs, for example through using an ecological perspective and placing emphasis on early intervention and prevention.
- Ensure pupils in alternative provision develop internal attribution styles that will put them in a better position to experience successful reintegration.
- Ensure the unique views of primary caregivers and pupils in alternative provision are captured (for instance through regular forums and workshops), and these views are used to inform borough-wide policy. This will ensure that

there exists a greater co-negation of pupil needs and how these needs can be best met.

In order to ensure the findings and implications from this research have the broadest effect, the study will be presented to peers and tutors at UCL Institute of Education, in order to share and support good practice. Alongside this, with the support of academic supervisors, the study will be entered for publication in an appropriate academic journal. Within the borough where the research takes place, the findings will also be presented to staff in Children’s Services.

Acknowledgements

I would first like to express my thanks to the pupils, primary caregivers, and staff who participated in this study for their time, honesty, and enthusiasm. I would also like to recognise the professionals within the participating PRU for their belief in this research and support to get it off the ground.

My thanks also go to my university supervisors, Hilary McQueen and Helen Upton for their guidance and support over the past two years. Thank you also to my placement supervisor Mark Coates for his encouragement and interest in my research.

In addition, thanks go to my family and friends, especially my mum for her endless support and to John for always making me laugh. Thanks also to Amy and Alice for all of their feedback.

Table of Contents

1 Chapter One: Introduction 12
1.1 Chapter overview 12
1.2 Background and rationale 12
1.2.1 Researcher's personal interest 13
1.3 Research aims and questions 14
1.3.1 Research aims 14
1.3.2 Research questions 14
1.4 Structure of the thesis 15
2 Chapter Two: Background and national context 16
2.1 Chapter overview 16
2.2 Inclusion 16
2.3 Exclusion and alternative provision 18
2.3.1 Defining school exclusion 18
2.3.2 School exclusions in context 19
2.3.3 Defining alternative provision and PRUs 20
2.3.4 Who experiences school exclusion and alternative provision? 20
2.4 National context of PRU provision 22
2.4.1 The purpose of PRUs 22
2.4.2 PRU standards 22
2.4.3 PRU outcomes 24
2.5 Local context of PRU provision 27
2.6 The importance of pupil views and perceptions 28
2.7 Primary caregiver views 30
2.8 Chapter summary 31
3 Chapter Three: Literature Review 33
3.1 Chapter overview 33
3.2 Literature search 33
3.3 Perceptions of pupils with social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs 34
3.4 Perceptions of pupils in PRUs 35
3.5 Perceptions of pupils in primary PRUs 37
3.6 Psychological concept: School belonging 38
3.7 Psychological concept: Attribution theory 39
3.8 Perceptions of primary caregivers in PRUs 41

3.9 Relevance to educational psychology practice 41
3.10 Chapter summary 42
4 Chapter 4: Methodology 43
4.1 Chapter overview 43
4.2 Methodological approach 43
4.3 Research design 44
4.3.1 Case study research 45
4.3.2 Generalisability in case study research 46
4.3.3 Description of the case study 46
4.4 Participants and recruitment 47
4.4.1 Participants 47
4.4.2 Pupil descriptions 48
4.4.3 Sampling 49
4.4.4 Recruitment 50
4.5 Data collection 51
4.5.1 Methods of data collection 51
4.5.1.1 Semi-structured interviews 52
4.5.1.2 'Task-centred' activities and Personal Construct Psychology 53
4.5.2 Procedure for data collection 55
4.5.2.1 Interviews with primary caregivers and staff 55
4.5.2.2 Interviews with pupils 55
4.5.2.3 Follow-up interviews with pupils 56
4.6 Ethical considerations 57
4.6.1 Informed consent and the right to withdraw 57
4.6.2 Confidentiality and data protection 58
4.6.3 Participant wellbeing 59
4.6.4 Power in relationships 59
4.7 Trustworthiness 60
4.7.1 Reflexivity 61
4.7.2 Pilot 62
4.8 Analytic approach: Thematic analysis 62
4.9 Chapter summary 64
5 Chapter 5: Findings 65
5.1 Chapter overview 65
5.2 Introduction 65

5.3 Theme One: School belonging.....67
5.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Connection 67
5.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Enjoying school 68
5.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Being happy..... 69
5.3.4 Sub-theme 4: Previous negative experiences in mainstream 69
5.3.5 Sub-theme 5: Disconnect..... 70
5.4 Theme Two: Social and emotional skills.....71
5.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Emotional regulation..... 71
5.4.2 Sub-theme 2: 'Life skills' 73
5.5 Theme Three: Reintegration.....74
5.5.1 Sub-theme 1: Expectations of mainstream 74
5.5.2 Sub-theme 2: Successful reintegration 75
5.5.3 Sub-theme 3: Dependence on mainstream..... 77
5.5.4 Sub-theme 4: Out-of-borough funding 77
5.5.5 Sub-theme 5: Cycle of reintegration..... 78
5.5.6 Sub-theme 6: Alternative provision 79
5.6 Theme Four: Staff skills.....80
5.6.1 Sub-theme 1: Developing pupils' self-regulation 81
5.6.2 Sub-theme 2: Expertise..... 82
5.6.3 Sub-theme 3: Time 83
5.6.4 Sub-theme 4: Flexibility..... 84
5.6.5 Sub-theme 5: Pupil needs are viewed holistically 84
5.6.6 Sub-theme 6: Encouragement not to give up..... 85
5.7 Theme Five: Relationships.....85
5.7.1 Sub-theme 1: Pupils and staff..... 86
5.7.2 Sub-theme 2: Pupils and pupils 87
5.7.3 Sub-theme 3: Staff and family..... 89
5.7.4 Sub-theme 4: Staff and staff 90
5.8 Theme Six: Learning environment.....92
5.8.1 Sub-theme 1: Academic success..... 92
5.8.2 Sub-theme 2: Class size 94
5.8.3 Sub-theme 3: School timings 95
5.8.4 Sub-theme 4: Staff shortages 96
5.8.5 Sub-theme 5: Physical limits..... 96
5.9 Theme Seven: Priorities of the senior leadership team.....97

5.9.1 Sub-theme 1: Differing views 98
5.9.2 Sub-theme 2: Focus on data 98
5.9.3 Sub-theme 3: Curriculum changes 99
5.9.4 Sub-theme 4: Changes in management 99
5.10 Chapter summary 100
6 Chapter 6: Discussion and conclusions 101
6.1 Chapter overview 101
6.2 Summary of research aims and questions 101
6.3 Research question one 102
6.3.1 Key findings 102
6.3.2 Sense of school belonging 103
6.3.3 Social and emotional skill development 105
6.3.4 Reintegration 105
6.4 Research question two 106
6.4.1 Key findings 106
6.4.2 Relationships 107
6.5 Research question three 108
6.5.1 Key findings 108
6.5.2 The role of attribution theory 109
6.5.3 Attitude of mainstream schools towards inclusion 110
6.6 Research question four 111
6.7 Strengths and limitations of the study 112
6.8 Implications for practice 115
6.9 Next steps, feedback and areas for further research 117
6.9.1 Next steps 117
6.9.2 Feedback to participants 118
6.9.3 Areas for further research 118
6.10 Conclusions 119
7 References 121
Appendix A School Invitation Email 140
Appendix B Staff Information Sheet 141
Appendix C Staff Consent Form 143
Appendix D Primary Caregiver Coffee Morning Flyer 144
Appendix E Primary Caregiver Information Sheet 145
Appendix F Primary Caregiver Consent Form 147

Appendix G Pupil Information Sheet 148
Appendix H Pupil Assent Form 149
Appendix I Primary Caregiver Interview Schedule 150
Appendix J Staff Interview Schedule 151
Appendix K Pupil Interview Schedule 152
Appendix L Ethical Approval Email.....153
Appendix M Excerpt of Coded Transcript.....154
Appendix N Example of Thematic Development 157
Appendix O Excerpt of Researcher's Reflective Diary.....160
Appendix P Description of Thematic Analysis Phases.....161

List of Figures:

Figure 1 - A nested model of inclusion (Riviere, 2016). 17
Figure 2 - Thematic map 66
Figure 3 - Thematic map of theme one.....67
Figure 4 - Thematic map of theme two 71
Figure 5 - Thematic map of theme three 74
Figure 6 - Thematic map of theme four 80
Figure 7 - Thematic map of theme five 85
Figure 8 - Thematic map of theme six 92
Figure 9 - Thematic map of theme seven 97

List of Tables:

Table 1 - Strategies to address issues of trustworthiness 60
Table 2 - Participant group who commented on each sub-theme 67
Table 3 - Participant group who commented on each sub-theme 71
Table 4 - Participant group who commented on each sub-theme 74
Table 5 - Participant group who commented on each sub-theme 81
Table 6 - Participant group who commented on each sub-theme 86
Table 7 - Participant group who commented on each sub-theme 92
Table 8 - Participant group who commented on each sub-theme 97
Table 9 - Implications for practice..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

List of abbreviations:

AD/HD	Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder
EHCP	Education, Health, and Care Plan
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
SEMH	Social, emotional, and mental health
SEN	Special educational needs
SEND	Special educational needs and disability
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

1 Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Chapter overview

This chapter begins by providing a brief overview of the background and rationale to this study and by exploring how my personal interest in the field has fed into this rationale (1.2). Following this, the research aims and questions are addressed (1.3) and the structure of the remaining chapters in the study is outlined (1.4). Subsequent chapters explore the context of school exclusions and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) in more detail, alongside research in this field.

1.2 Background and rationale

Research has argued that the UK is not yet able to offer an inclusive education that works for all pupils (McCluskey, Riddell, & Weedon, 2015), as the most recent government figures indicate that 7,720 pupils were permanently excluded from mainstream education in the year 2016/17 (DfE, 2018d). Permanent exclusions rose by 40% between 2013 and 2016, and it is of particular concern that the representation of primary school exclusions within this figure is increasing, with primary-aged pupils representing 15% of the total exclusion population (DfE, 2018d).

When pupils are permanently excluded, they attend an alternative provision, of which Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) are the most frequently used form (Gill, Quilter-Pinner, & Swift, 2017). Over the last decade, the standard of education in PRUs has been questioned (Ofsted, 2016a), which has resulted in government initiatives to improve standards in alternative provision (DfE, 2018a). Research has indicated that pupils who attend PRUs are more likely to experience negative long-term outcomes such as social exclusion (Daniels et al., 2003), time spent in youth offending services (Ministry of Justice, 2014), and difficulty returning to mainstream education on a permanent basis (Office of the Children's Commissioners, 2012). Whilst studies highlight poor outcomes for pupils attending PRUs, there is a paucity of research which explores the perceptions of the pupils, primary caregivers, and staff who experience alternative provision (Hart, 2013). Of the existing research which does explore participants'

perceptions, it is often the views of professionals in these settings that are taken into account, rather than the pupils and primary caregivers themselves (Norwich et al., 2006). Pupils have a right to express their views and for these views to be acknowledged, as stated in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989). With this in mind, the current research aims to build on the existing limited knowledge of pupil perceptions in alternative provision, alongside the views of their primary caregivers and the staff who support them, in order to contribute to the development of policy and practice within PRUs and improve outcomes for pupils.

1.2.1 Researcher's personal interest

From both a personal and professional perspective, my commitment to undertaking this research originates from a need to challenge practices that may discriminate against children and young people in education. I developed an interest in supporting young people at risk of exclusion during my work in an inner-city secondary school, where I experienced first-hand the difficulties that these pupils were experiencing. Through conversations with these pupils, I recognised the value of seeking and respecting their views regarding their education and understood that this was best done through enabling them to communicate their views to me directly, rather than my acting as an advocate on their behalf. Although this required additional time, by doing so these pupils had the opportunity to reflect on their educational experiences, which they did so passionately and with eloquence. This study intends to promote the views and perceptions of pupils, alongside those of their primary caregivers and staff.

My role as a trainee educational psychologist in a local authority has further developed my commitment to accessing the views and perspectives of pupils. My work in a primary school, considered to have a high rate of exclusions, increased my concern regarding the numbers of pupils nationally, who are being excluded from mainstream schools. Alongside this, in my role as the link educational psychologist for a secondary PRU, I have gained an insight into the views of pupils, their families, and the staff who support them, in relation to their PRU experiences and hopes for the future. Through this work, I have started to become aware of a range of environmental factors, both outside and inside of school, that interact and influence the outcomes of pupils in these settings and

therefore I understand the importance of capturing the views of primary caregivers and staff in the interacting systems surrounding the pupil, alongside those of the pupils themselves.

1.3 Research aims and questions

The following research aims and questions are derived from the existing literature and my personal interests.

1.3.1 Research aims

- To build on the existing limited knowledge of pupil, primary caregiver, and staff perceptions of outcomes in PRUs.
- To generate new knowledge regarding the perceptions of primary-aged pupils, in order to develop a better understanding of this vulnerable group of children.
- To provide pupils and primary caregivers with the opportunity to offer their opinions on their experiences of a primary PRU.
- To provide evidence that can contribute to the development of policy and practice within education provisions, local authorities, and also the wider community, in order to improve outcomes of pupils in alternative provision.
- To inform the practice of educational psychologists, who may be in a position to support pupils and their families in alternative provision settings.

1.3.2 Research questions

In order to address these aims, this study will focus on the primary question: *What are pupil, primary caregiver, and staff perceptions of enablers and barriers to positive outcomes in a primary PRU?*

In order to inform the primary question, the following secondary research questions will be considered from the perspective of pupils, primary caregivers, and staff.

1. *What are perceived to be positive outcomes from attending a primary PRU?*

2. *What are perceived to be enablers to achieving these positive outcomes?*

3. *What are perceived to be barriers to achieving these positive outcomes?*

4. *What implications might there be for the similarities and differences in participant perceptions?*

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This chapter has briefly outlined the background and rationale to this study, which aims to explore the perceptions of pupils, primary caregivers, and staff in relation to positive outcomes in a primary PRU. Chapter two provides a historical and contextual background to school exclusions and PRUs. Chapter three critically reviews the academic literature surrounding perceptions of outcomes in alternative provision and explores the relevance of the literature to educational psychology practice. Chapter four outlines the research design and data collection methods used to address the research aims. The process of thematic analysis is also discussed, alongside ethical considerations. Chapter five details the findings from the data analysis. Finally, chapter six synthesises and interprets the findings in the context of current literature and theoretical views in order to address the research questions. Chapter six also addresses the strengths and limitations of the study and provides recommendations for further research. To conclude, the chapter explores implications for the practice of local authorities, education provisions, teaching staff and educational psychologists.

2 Chapter Two: Background and national context

2.1 Chapter overview

The previous chapter has provided a brief overview of the background and rationale to this study alongside the research aims. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the national context in more detail and to explore key background information surrounding school exclusion and PRUs. It begins by exploring the concept of inclusion and highlights issues surrounding the inclusion of pupils who have been excluded from school and attend alternative provision (2.2). The context in which exclusion and alternative provision are situated is also discussed (2.3). The context of PRUs both nationally (2.4) and locally (2.5) are then outlined in more detail, specifically in relation to the poorer outcomes seen in PRU populations. Finally, the need to gain the views of pupils (2.6) and primary caregivers (2.7) in research is addressed, particularly those who have experienced school exclusion and attendance in a PRU. A chapter summary concludes this chapter (2.8).

2.2 Inclusion

Inclusion is a term that is widely used in educational practice. However, difficulties with providing a definition of the term have been well documented, and much research has argued that there is still no agreed definition (Conner, 2016). In its simplest form, inclusion has been defined as educating pupils with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms (Hodkinson, 2015). However, this definition is based primarily on physical placement and does not address the nuances of the concept. A more multi-faceted definition proposes that four main elements need to be present for a pupil’s successful inclusion in school to exist. These are; presence in school, acceptance by peers and staff, participation in school activities, and good levels of achievement in work and behaviour (Farrell, 2004). This definition was further developed by Riviere (2016), who argued that these elements are not discrete and that they influence one another, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - A nested model of inclusion (Riviere, 2016)

The UK has seen a drive towards inclusive education since the publication of the Warnock Report (DfES, 1978) and subsequent 1981 Education Act, which required all children and young people to be educated in mainstream schools except under specific circumstances. This drive was furthered by the development of global initiatives such as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), which suggested that for a school to be inclusive it is not enough that pupils with special educational needs are physically present in the classroom, but that teachers must also demonstrate inclusive practice in their teaching by ensuring that a “child-centred pedagogy” is used to accommodate the learning needs of all pupils (UNESCO, 1994, p. 8).

The continuing developments within the area of inclusive education are not only reflected in global initiatives but also in UK government policy and legislation, such as the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 and the Equality Act 2010. However, whilst there have been significant and meaningful developments within this area, research has demonstrated that the UK is not yet able to offer an inclusive education that works for all pupils, as a growing number of pupils who are deemed unable to be appropriately supported in mainstream schools are subsequently excluded each year (DfE, 2018d; McCluskey et al., 2015). Pupils with identified special educational needs are represented highly within this population, with the majority of excluded pupils having social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs (DfE, 2018c). Excluding pupils from school is seen to challenge the concept of an inclusive education, which states that all pupils, irrespective of their level of need, should be able to participate in

mainstream school. This is a particularly relevant area to study, as a key role in educational psychology practice is to advocate for the inclusion of children and young people. This chapter will now explore the concept of school exclusion further.

2.3 Exclusion and alternative provision

2.3.1 Defining school exclusion

In the UK, school exclusion refers to the disciplinary act of preventing a child or young person from attending school, either for a fixed period or permanently (Gazeley, 2010). A fixed-term exclusion is the most common form, where a pupil is excluded for a specific number of days, for one or more periods and up to a total of 45 days per academic year. Permanent exclusion refers to an instance where a pupil is removed from the school roll enduringly and is less common than fixed-term exclusion. In the UK, the most commonly cited reason for school exclusion is ‘persistent disruptive behaviour’, followed by ‘physical assault’, and then ‘verbal assault against an adult’. Together, these categories account for seven out of ten permanent exclusions (DfE, 2018d). There are many negative long-term effects that permanent exclusion can have on pupils including; low educational achievement, reduced employment prospects, isolation and social exclusion, poor mental health, and involvement in crime (Lane, Little, Menzies, Lambert, & Wehby, 2010; Ministry of Justice, 2014; Pirrie, Macleod, Cullen, & McCluskey, 2011).

With this in mind, guidance from the Department for Education states that it is the head teacher’s decision whether to permanently exclude a pupil based on their behaviour. However, they state that “permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort, in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy; and where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school” (DfE, 2017a, p.6). This would suggest that permanent exclusion should be employed only by schools when all other intervention has failed. However, in the current education climate, controversy exists around the decision to exclude, as schools are under significant pressure to focus on achieving academic targets set by local authorities. As schools are held to account for levels of academic attainment,

pupils who require a high level of attention and resource, and those who are not seen as conforming to school behaviour norms, can be viewed as ‘problematic’ (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006). In essence, tension exists between providing “an educational policy focused on the greatest good for the greatest number and a policy that puts the interests of the individual as the top priority” (Wakefied, 2004, p.71). In response to this tension many schools now have a ‘zero-tolerance’ behaviour policy, where any infringement of the policy is met with rigid sanctions that often involve exclusion, a policy which does not necessarily serve the individual concerned and which undermines the previously discussed government inclusion agenda. This demonstrates the competing demand placed on schools to advocate for inclusion whilst also raising academic attainment levels across the school (Norwich, 2014).

2.3.2 School exclusions in context

During the 1990s the rate of school exclusions in the UK increased significantly, and it became a national concern and thus a topic of discussion in schools, the media, and for the government (DCSF, 2008; Richardson, 2015). As a response, the government prioritised the development of policies aimed at combating exclusion rates and set up the Social Exclusion Unit in 1997, a body designed to reduce levels of school exclusion and truancy (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004). As a result of these government actions, official figures demonstrated that the number of permanent exclusions reduced by nearly half between 2006/7 and 2012/13 (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018).

However, issues with accepting the credibility of these government statistics have been acknowledged widely in literature (Gazeley, 2010; Hallam & Rogers, 2008), as whilst statistics have indicated a decline in the number of permanent exclusions since the 1990s, they have also shown an increase in the number of pupils attending alternative provisions (DfE, 2017b). Research has stated that the difference in figures between permanent exclusions and pupils attending alternative provision results from an increase in pupils being moved between education settings as a result of ‘unofficial exclusions’ that are not officially regulated or captured by national statistics (Gill et al., 2017). These ‘unofficial exclusions’ can take the form of a referral, whereby a pupil remains on the school roll of their mainstream school but is directed to be educated at an alternative

provision off-site (Ogg & Kalil, 2010) or a ‘managed move’, whereby a pupil voluntarily transfers their school roll to another school (Vincent, Harris, Thomson, & Toalster, 2007). ‘Unofficial exclusions’ also include the use of ‘illegal exclusions’, whereby the school may encourage or pressure primary caregivers to take their child out of school (Gill et al., 2017). Research states that it is not clear to what degree the reductions observed in the level of school exclusions is offset by a rise in ‘unofficial exclusions’ (Office of the Children’s Commissioner, 2013), making it difficult to recognise the true number of pupils experiencing school exclusion. Even with this lack of clarity around exclusion figures, recent government statistics suggest there has been a rise in exclusions, with figures indicating a 40% increase in school exclusions since 2013 (DfE, 2018d).

2.3.3 Defining alternative provision and PRUs

Following a permanent exclusion, the local authority has a statutory responsibility to secure educational provision for the pupil (DfE, 2017a). This education takes the form of alternative provision, which is defined as any educational setting that caters for pupils other than mainstream or special schools (DCSF, 2008). Alternative provision can take many forms including state-maintained settings such as Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), as well as independent and non-registered schools, voluntary projects, and vocational learning settings (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018). PRUs are the most frequently used form of alternative provision in the UK (McCluskey et al., 2015). Ofsted defines PRUs as

> Short stay centres for pupils who are educated other than at maintained or special schools, and they vary considerably in size and function. They admit pupils with behavioural difficulties and others who can be identified as vulnerable because of their health or social and emotional difficulties. (Ofsted, 2007, p.4)

Given that this research is to be conducted within a local authority context, a focus on the experience of those attending an alternative provision maintained by the local authority would, therefore, seem most appropriate.

2.3.4 Who experiences school exclusion and alternative provision?

Data indicate that particular groups of pupils are at significantly higher risk of school exclusion, and subsequent attendance in alternative provision, than others (Gill et al., 2017). These include; ethnic minorities, pupils eligible for free school

meals, pupils who experience identified mental health difficulties, those in care, and boys, who are over three times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than girls. Pupils with an identified special educational need are also over-represented in the exclusion data, as they account for almost 50% of all pupils who are permanently excluded but only represent 14.4% of the total school population (DfE, 2018c). Of pupils accessing alternative provision, 77.1% have an identified special educational need and pupils who have social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs as their main presenting need are represented within this figure very highly (DfE, 2018c). The term SEMH, conceptualised in the most recent Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice, is used to describe

> A wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive, or disturbing behaviour. These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders, or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. (DfE/DoH, 2015, p.98)

Previous terms used to conceptualise this group of children and young people include ‘emotional and behavioural difficulties’ and ‘social, emotional and behavioural difficulties’. The removal of the word ‘behaviour’ from these terms suggests that behavioural difficulties are now viewed as symptomatic of underlying needs and are seen as a communication of these needs, rather than a special educational need in itself. By removing the term behaviour, a greater acknowledgement has been placed on understanding behaviour as related to an interaction between psychological and ecological factors (Jalali & Morgan, 2017). However, research has argued that these developments have elicited insufficient change in how pupils’ behaviour is understood in practice (Norwich & Eaton, 2015), as viewed in the high number of pupils with SEMH needs being excluded from school. The over-representation of vulnerable cohorts within these exclusion statistics has been linked to the pressure on schools to perform academically, suggesting that the focus on raising academic attainment may be taking precedence over pastoral care (Ellis & Tod, 2014).

Whilst exclusions from secondary school make up the majority of permanent exclusions, more recently there has been an increase in primary school exclusions. Pupils who are permanently excluded from primary school represent 15% of the total population of excluded pupils currently (DfE, 2018d), a figure which is particularly concerning as research has indicated that these pupils are likely to experience bleak prospects from being excluded from mainstream education at such a young age (Parsons, Godfrey, Howlett, Hayden, & Martin, 2001). The need to explore the perceptions of those who have experienced school exclusion and attendance in alternative provision would, therefore, seem highly justified.

2.4 National context of PRU provision

2.4.1 The purpose of PRUs

PRUs typically educate pupils who are at risk of exclusion, or who have been temporarily or permanently excluded from mainstream school. In 2017, there were 22,000 pupils on roll in alternative provisions in the UK, and 16,000 of these were in PRUs (DfE, 2017b). As outlined in the Ofsted definition (section 2.3.3), PRUs vary in their function considerably, depending on the needs of the pupils they serve. As a result, there is no fixed model or framework on which PRUs are run nationally, nor a template for good practice (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018). However, there are many commonalities that they share. For example, Ofsted highlights that the primary objective of PRUs is to provide short-term educational provision, in order to enable the eventual goal of reintegration into mainstream schooling (Ofsted, 2007). The term ‘reintegrate’, by definition, is to “restore to unity” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2019) which suggests a process of restoration leading to positive outcomes. In relation to school exclusions, reintegration has been defined in the existing literature as “efforts made by local authorities, schools, and other partners to return pupils who are absent, excluded, or otherwise missing from mainstream education provision” (DfES, 2004, p.5) and will be the definition used in this study.

2.4.2 PRU standards

It has been argued that PRUs are better able to meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people than mainstream schools, by providing a flexible

education that takes into account the individual needs of the pupils (De Jong & Griffiths, 2006). Much research has highlighted the positive effect that attending a PRU can have on children and young people. Gutherson, Davies, and Duszkiewicz (2011) conducted a systematic review of 199 international studies on alternative provision and reported that positive outcomes from effective alternative provision included improvements in pupils' motivation, behaviour, and self-esteem. Furthermore, they argued that effective alternative provision is characterised by being person-centred, flexible, and by providing learning delivered by skilled staff who build trusting relationships with their pupils. However, despite the evidence that effective alternative provision can lead to positive outcomes for pupils, in reality, concern has long been expressed in UK government reports regarding pupils' educational experiences in PRUs. In Ofsted's first inspection report in 1995, concern was expressed over the quality of educational provision in PRUs (Ofsted, 1995). This concern was reiterated in the government's 2008 White Paper 'Back on Track', designed to remodel alternative provision, which highlighted that PRUs had continued to fail to provide adequate standards of education required to meet the needs of a vulnerable population (DCSF, 2008). Moreover, recent government reports have concluded that alternative providers are still not implementing the individualised approach that is required to meet the needs of this vulnerable population (see, e.g. Taylor, 2012). Specifically, the following issues were highlighted as concerns in relation to PRU standards; behaviour management, low expectations, poor educational standards, and a lack of strategies for reintegration (Ofsted, 2016a).

In response to these concerns regarding standards in alternative provision, the government released the White Paper 'Educational Excellence Everywhere' (DfE, 2016a), which recognised that whilst some alternative providers are outstanding in their practice, many are not (although it also noted that owing to the diversity of alternative provision, understanding and measuring their performance is difficult). National data indicate that the quality and availability of alternative provision varies across the country hugely. For instance, in 11 local authorities in the UK there are no alternative provisions that have been rated 'good', and in several of these local authorities all the alternative provision has been rated 'inadequate' (Ofsted, 2016b). Consequently, there exists a large number of pupils in the UK who have no access to good quality alternative provision (Gill et al., 2017).

As a result of these concerns, the White Paper (DfE, 2016a) set out a government commitment to reforming alternative provision in order to deliver better outcomes for these pupils. This included a reduction in the proportion of young people who fail to enter post-GCSE education, employment, or training. It aimed to do this by stating that mainstream schools must remain accountable for the education of their pupils who attend alternative provision. The document stressed the importance of understanding 'what works' for each pupil, by considering their individual needs, and is a clear government recognition that outcomes for pupils educated outside of mainstream schools are poorer than those of their mainstream peers, a central issue for PRUs. More recent government initiatives include the introduction of a four million pound 'alternative provision fund', which will be used to develop projects that support excluded pupils' reintegration to mainstream education. Furthermore, a formal review of exclusion practices and alternative provision is underway currently (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018). These initiatives highlight the need for a deeper understanding of the multi-faceted experiences of school exclusion and attendance in alternative provision, and the concern of poor standards in PRUs creates an ongoing need for further research which explores the directions for improvement in these settings. It is the intention of this research to add to the evidence base in the area. By exploring what participants perceive to be enablers and barriers to the achievement of positive outcomes, the current study addresses the need to consider the individual needs of pupils, as highlighted in recent government reports (Taylor, 2012).

2.4.3 PRU outcomes

Whilst very little national data have been collected on pupils in alternative provision, data that do exist have highlighted several negative long-term outcomes for this population. For instance, only 1.4% of pupils in alternative provision achieve five or more A* to C grade GCSEs compared to 53.4% of their peers in mainstream school. Moreover, 44% of pupils leaving alternative provision failed to enter education, employment, or training six months after finishing their GCSEs, compared to only 6% leaving mainstream schools (DfE, 2018b). Negative long-term social outcomes for these pupils include poor mental health and later involvement in crime (Ministry of Justice, 2014; Parker, Paget, Ford, & Gwernan-Jones, 2016). These outcomes, however, are judged against

mainstream performance measures and fail to take into consideration the circumstances that have led pupils to be educated in alternative provision and the challenges that they face. These circumstances and challenges include arriving mid-way through the school year, having a history of academic difficulties, and having experienced erratic school attendance (Jalali & Morgan, 2017). Furthermore, pupils who attend PRUs often have disrupted educational pathways, and PRUs are designed to be transient educational settings. With these factors in mind, it appears that significant challenge exists in attempting to measure outcomes for pupils who experience attendance in PRUs (Pirrie et al., 2011). Whilst government literature has maintained that alternative provision should be judged against mainstream education (DfE, 2017), direct comparisons between these groups may not be appropriate. Research argues that in reality, these pupils will be working towards additional goals which may be taken for granted in mainstream education, such as socialising with peers and travelling to school independently (Putwain, Nicholson, & Edwards, 2016), which are more difficult to quantify and measure than academic targets. It is therefore key that research explores the perceptions of those who experience attendance in a PRU, in order to establish what they view as a positive outcome from attending a PRU.

There is a particular dearth of research surrounding pupil outcomes in primary PRUs, which is a concern given the vulnerability of pupils who are excluded at a younger age. One study that has looked at the long-term outcomes of primary exclusion is that by Parsons et al. (2001). The study followed 726 pupils who had been excluded from primary school, over a five year period. They found that at the end of this period only 35% of pupils had remained in mainstream schooling. This finding is further supported by research which has shown that often pupils who attend alternative provision following an exclusion do not reengage with mainstream education fully before they reach school leaving age (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2012). Instead, they become involved in a "revolving door effect" of multiple exclusions and unsuccessful reintegration between mainstream and alternative provision throughout their education (Pillay, Dunbar-Krige, & Mostert, 2013, p. 311). Findings from Parsons et al.'s (2001) original study supports the concept of a 'revolving door' effect as they found that 79% of the pupils in their study received a further fixed-term or permanent exclusion during the five year period. This problematic pattern of exclusion and

unsuccessful reintegration puts these vulnerable pupils at a significant disadvantage in relation to their academic attainment and future life opportunities and challenges the objective of PRUs to support the long-term inclusion of this population in mainstream education (Ofsted, 2007). Although these patterns have been noted in research, the possible explanations behind the trend remain unclear (Evans & Lunt, 2002; Pillay et al., 2013).

As documented in this chapter, previous literature has frequently used the term ‘outcome’ to highlight both positive and negative consequences of pupils attending alternative provision. There has, however, been no discussion in research on the definition of what constitutes a positive or negative outcome for these children and young people. Research has instead focused on measurable outcomes which relate to pupils’ academic attainment (Taylor, 2012), reintegration (Pillay et al., 2013), and long-term life trajectories (Ministry of Justice, 2014). Within the field of research that does focus on participant perceptions, few studies have asked participants what they deem to be a positive or negative outcome of pupils attending a PRU. Research that does explore perceptions of outcomes has highlighted the fact that different groups of participants have different views on PRUs. In a recent Ofsted report from the PRU where the research takes place, which will be explored in more depth in the following section (2.5), it was highlighted that Ofsted perceived a positive outcome to be that the pupils make progress in literacy and numeracy to support their reintegration into mainstream. In the same report, however, primary caregivers described how they considered their child feeling secure and happy in their education to be a positive outcome. This fits with research conducted by an independent think tank, which states that

> The work of an alternative provision school, then, is much more complex than simply imparting knowledge. It involves rebuilding the emotional damage of exclusion; developing trusting relationships often with young people who have had few trusted adults in their lives; and attempting to catch up learners who are often far behind their peers. (Gill et al., 2017, p.34)

Differences appear to exist between individuals in the understanding of what a positive outcome might be from a pupil attending an alternative provision. The

current study aims to acknowledge and explore the different perspectives of pupils, primary caregivers, and staff regarding what a positive outcome may be and the factors that help and hinder this. Through seeking the perceptions of pupils and primary caregivers, this research aims to gather the views of a relatively unheard population who experience PRU provision.

2.5 Local context of PRU provision

The local authority in which this research takes place is considered to have a high rate of school exclusions, and in 2016/17 it was one of three boroughs deemed to have the highest percentage of primary school exclusions in Greater London (DfE, 2018d). Within the local authority, there is a consortium of three PRUs which provide education for children and young people who have been excluded from school, have medical needs, or are otherwise unable to attend a mainstream or special school. These three PRUs are split over four sites; a secondary site, a smaller Key Stage 3 satellite centre for pupils with complex social and emotional needs, a primary site, and a medical site.

The mission statement of the consortium of PRUs is similar to that of many other PRUs in the UK. It states that their main aim is to provide short-term intervention designed to facilitate reintegration to mainstream as soon as possible. There are a number of subsidiary aims within the mission statement that focus on the achievement of quantifiable outcomes. One of these aims is to prepare pupils for further education, employment, or training by raising their achievement levels (with a focus on literacy and maths) so that they successfully reintegrate to mainstream. The mission statement also addresses social aspects of pupils' development, including establishing a positive relationship with learning.

The primary PRU site where this research takes place last underwent a full Ofsted inspection in 2013 and was rated as 'good' in all areas. The Ofsted report noted that the staff were skilled in teaching and managing the behaviours of the pupils, and as a result the pupils had made good progress in literacy and numeracy. As part of the inspection, primary caregivers were invited to share their views via a postal questionnaire. Whilst Ofsted reported that only a small number of primary caregivers replied, those who did return the questionnaire

discussed how their child felt secure and happy at school. Several of the pupils at the PRU are on the roll of both their mainstream school and the PRU, with the intention of returning to full-time mainstream education when they are able to. This research has come at a pertinent time for the PRU, as its current agenda is focused on reviewing their practice regarding the support of pupils' social, emotional, and mental health needs. An aim of this research is to provide a deeper understanding of the perceptions of both the pupils and their primary caregivers, in order to inform decisions regarding future policy and practice in the PRU, as advocated for by Kelly and Norwich (2004).

2.6 The importance of pupil views and perceptions

Giving children and young people the opportunity to express their views is now well established in legislation and guidance, such as Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003) and the Children and Families Act. An underpinning principle of the SEND Code of Practice (DfE/DoH, 2015) is that the views of the child should be sought and taken into account. Furthermore, the Code states that local authorities have a duty to ensure that children are involved in decisions regarding their educational provision and future outcomes. The belief that pupils have a right to have their views heard underpins much of what is argued in the inclusion agenda (section 2.2). This understanding is a response to Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UNICEF, 1989), which emphasises the rights of children to express their views in matters affecting them and for these views to be acknowledged. The term 'pupil voice' is widely used in literature and policy to describe a child's right to express their views and be listened to, as outlined in the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989). However, researchers have argued that umbrella terms such as this, and others including 'the voice of the child' and 'giving voice', have the potential to diminish the effect of Article 12. For example, Wolk (1998) argues that all individuals have a voice and, therefore, this is not something that can be given. With this in mind, the study will refer to participants' views, perceptions, and experiences.

The importance of listening to pupil views is also reflected in developments in research, as there has been a shift towards viewing children and young people as active participants in the research process (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008).

Seeking the views of this population in relation to their education has been argued to be a powerful way of challenging assumptions (Munn & Lloyd, 2005) and can lead to an increased sense of agency and motivation in pupils (Fielding & Bragg, 2003). Moreover, Sellman (2009) found that considering the views of pupils in school can lead to an increased sense of belonging; a concept that is associated with a range of positive outcomes (see section 3.6). Not only is this of benefit to pupils, but the insights that they provide into their educational experiences have also highlighted a range of issues within the school system (Robinson, 2014). As outlined in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE/DoH, 2015), listening to children and young people continues to be a key function of the role of educational psychologists and through this they are able to advocate for the inclusive education of children and young people, so as to provide them with the opportunity to express their views. This is achieved by using creative enabling strategies that allow children and young people to share their experiences. For example, educational psychologists are adept in using techniques such as Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1955) and solution-focused approaches (De Shazer, 1985) in order to gain an in-depth understanding of children and young peoples' views and core constructs.

Specifically, within the exclusion and alternative provision literature, there are a number of studies which aim to incorporate the views of pupils (Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Trotman, Tucker, & Martyn, 2014). However, despite these contributions, there is a dearth of literature considering the perceptions of primary-aged pupils in PRUs (Jalali & Morgan, 2017), and it continues to be the views of adult professionals which influence decisions made regarding their education (Norwich et al., 2006). This is a particular concern as research has shown that the views of pupils and teachers differ about similar features of the experience of education (Wood, 2003). As Lloyd-Smith and Tarr (2000) argue, "The meanings pupils attach to their experiences are not necessarily the meanings that their teachers or parents would ascribe; the subcultures that children inhabit in classrooms or schools are not always visible or accessible to adults" (p.61). The current research, therefore, intends to explore the perceptions of a relatively unheard population. By gaining the perceptions of pupils, as well as primary caregivers and staff, the research aims to add a richness and depth to the data. This is not intended to corroborate perspectives, but instead to enrich

the understanding of a complex phenomenon by viewing events from different and multiple perspectives.

Gathering the views of pupils does not come without its barriers, particularly pupils in the excluded population who may experience difficulties expressing their perceptions. Specifically, these difficulties are perceived to lie in children's communication skills, the imbalanced power relations that lie between adults and children and the age appropriateness of the interview setting in relation to their developmental level (Christensen & James, 2008; Holland, Renold, Ross, & Hillman, 2010; Scott, 2008). However, research has consistently shown that when consulted about their views, children and young people who have been excluded from school and who experience alternative provision are able to reflect on their educational experiences with significant insight and understanding (Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Munn & Lloyd, 2005). Through this, seeking the views and perceptions of pupils is a key way in which education settings can reflect on their practice and plan for improvement (Hamill & Boyd, 2002). This is particularly pertinent for the current research, where participants' perceptions are being gathered with the aim of provoking positive change within the PRU setting. In order to gather the perspectives of children and young people in a meaningful yet sensitive way, engaging and age-appropriate data collection methods should be used to elicit these views (O'Connor, Hopkinson, Burton, & Torstenson, 2011). Clarke, Boorman and Nind (2011) focused on eliciting the views of excluded pupils by using a variety of interactive tools including verbal, digital, and visual methods. Other methods of eliciting pupil views include art activities, the 'life grid' tool, and role play (O'Connor et al., 2011). Researchers have argued that these 'conversational crutches' are essential in supporting pupils to engage in participatory research (Shaw, Brady, & Davey, 2011). The current study will explore ways in which tools and resources such as these can be used with pupils, in section 4.5.1.2.

2.7 Primary caregiver views

Pupils may not always be cared for by their biological parents and therefore, in this study, the term 'primary caregiver' is used to describe an adult who has the main legal responsibility for the pupil. Despite the fact that primary caregivers are

seen as playing a valuable role in their child's education, their views are rarely heard in literature (Worcester, Nesman, Raffaele-Mendez, & Keller, 2008). Research has shown that causal factors in pupil exclusions and attendance in PRUs involve an interplay of family and societal influences (Parker et al., 2016), therefore, understanding the experiences of primary caregivers is important. Seeking the views of primary caregivers is integral to the role of educational psychologists, who work closely with primary caregivers in order to examine the systemic factors that contribute to their child's presenting needs.

A limited number of previous studies have sought the views of primary caregivers; however, they have often focused on the experience of their child's exclusion (Smith, 2009) rather than of their attendance in alternative provision. Parker et al. (2016) used semi-structured interviews to explore the perceptions of 35 primary caregivers regarding their experiences of their child being excluded from primary school. They found that primary caregivers were highly aware of their children's needs in the school environment, but they did not always feel listened to. Findings from this study highlighted the unique views that primary caregivers could provide in relation to the identification and support of their child's needs. The open-ended nature of the questions was a strength of the study as it allowed primary caregivers to discuss their perceptions without being constrained by the researcher. Parker et al. (2016) noted that a limitation to their research was the fact that only the views of primary caregivers were sought and gaining the perceptions of both primary caregivers and pupils would have enabled a more detailed exploration of the phenomenon of school exclusion. By gathering data from multiple perspectives, the current study aims to enrich the understanding of the complex phenomenon of PRUs.

2.8 Chapter summary

This chapter has served to outline key background and contextual information regarding school exclusion and alternative provision. It has highlighted how the current government pressure on schools to raise academic attainment across the setting is at odds with the concept of inclusion and has resulted in many vulnerable pupils, typically those with social, emotional, and mental health needs, being excluded from school. These populations, who then attend alternative

provision of which PRUs are the most common form, are known to go on to have poorer academic and social outcomes. In line with this, this chapter has outlined the importance of accessing the views of these pupils and their primary caregivers in research, and the current study aligns itself with the field of research which aims to support pupils to express their opinions. Whilst statistics on the demographics of these pupils, and their outcomes, are useful to this field of understanding, they cannot provide a deeper understanding of the perceptions that these pupils hold of their experiences. This research study aims to explore these perceptions and shed new light on the experience of attendance in a primary PRU. The following chapter will review pertinent literature regarding perceptions of outcomes in alternative provision.

3 Chapter Three: Literature Review

3.1 Chapter overview

The previous chapter provided background information on this field of study by outlining the context of school exclusions and PRUs. This chapter aims to critically review pertinent research regarding perceptions of outcomes in alternative provision and begins by describing the strategies utilised to access the relevant literature (3.2). Research regarding perceptions of outcomes for pupils with social, emotional, and mental health needs is then explored (3.3). Following this, the chapter critically reviews research relating to pupil perceptions of outcomes in PRUs (3.4) and highlights the paucity of research into the perceptions of primary-aged pupils (3.5). Research has previously focused on the psychological concepts of school belonging and attributional styles as being significant in understanding the experience of attendance in alternative provision and so these are explored in section (3.6) and (3.7) respectively. The limited research into the perceptions of primary caregivers in research is also addressed (3.8). Finally, the relevance of this research to educational psychology practice is explored (3.9). A chapter summary concludes this chapter (3.10).

3.2 Literature search

A literature search was conducted using the following bibliographic databases to identify published research and articles that relate to perceptions of outcomes in alternative provision: EBSCOHost, PROQUEST, PsychINFO and Google Scholar. The following are examples of some of the search terms that were used in various combinations: ‘alternative provision’, ‘Pupil Referral Unit’, ‘PRU’, ‘outcome’, ‘positive outcome’, and ‘pupil voice’. The literature searches were conducted multiple times throughout the research period, to ensure that the literature which was reviewed remained up to date. The following inclusion criteria were used in this literature search:

- Research conducted in the UK.
- Research from peer-reviewed articles.
- Research conducted after 1994 (as it was in 1994 that the government reconceptualised the aim of PRUs by introducing ‘off-site’ provision and

focusing on providing short-term support with the goal of effective reintegration).

- Research focusing on participants' experiences of school exclusion and/or attendance in alternative provision (those considered participants were; pupils, primary caregivers, and staff).

The literature was not reviewed systematically, as it has been argued that this is not considered an essential pursuit in small scale research such as this (Robson, 2011). Research that was identified as fitting the above criteria, and being most relevant to the current study, was then critically reviewed, and the choice of methodology and subsequent contribution to the evidence base was considered.

3.3 Perceptions of pupils with social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs

The literature search revealed a body of research which explores perceptions of outcomes for pupils with SEMH needs, in mainstream schools and specialist SEMH schools (Polat & Farrell, 2002; Sellman, 2009; Wise & Upton, 1998). These studies are relevant to the current research as many pupils who attend PRUs have identified SEMH needs (see section 2.3.4). One study is that by Hamill and Boyd (2002), who conducted a relatively large-scale qualitative piece of research, using interview data to explore the perceptions of 45 pupils with SEMH needs over 11 mainstream secondary schools. Themes that emerged regarding pupil perceptions of enablers and barriers to the achievement of positive outcomes related to; the curriculum, staff relationships, and methods of discipline. More recently, Harriss, Barlow and Moli (2008) conducted semi-structured interviews with five primary-aged pupils attending a specialist SEMH residential school, alongside primary caregivers and staff, in order to explore the benefits of attendance. The positive outcomes perceived by the pupils related to improvements in pupils' emotional and behavioural development, self-esteem, behaviour at home and relationships with others. It is interesting to note that pupil perceptions of positive outcomes in this study do not match with the government's focus on alternative provision, which is to improve outcomes relating to academic achievement and future education and employment (DfE, 2016a). This indicates a need for further research that explores the views of

pupils, in order to challenge assumptions about what is considered important for them.

Whilst it is positive to note that Harriss et al.'s (2008) study sought to gather the perceptions of primary-aged children, their methods of participant recruitment can be questioned. Their research states that pupils were selected, in part, "on the basis of their perceived ability to respond in an interview situation" (p.34). This perspective challenges the principles of research that aims to listen to the views of pupils and undermines the notion that all children and young people have a right to be heard (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008). Hamill and Boyd (2002) sum up this notion by stating that "if we are serious about ensuring young people exercise their right to express themselves in relation to matters that have a significant effect on their lives, we must ensure this applies to all young people" (p. 112). This statement reinforces the idea that all pupils should have the opportunity to have their views heard in research, including those who may need additional support to do so. The current research aims to do this by providing a range of tools to access the views of pupils, as discussed in the methodology chapter (section 4.5.1.2). Whilst both Hamil and Boyd (2002) and Harriss et al.'s (2008) studies illustrate findings that are of interest to the current research for comparative purposes, attendance in a PRU is a unique social phenomenon and so requires a specific focus. This chapter will now explore research pertaining to perceptions of outcomes in a PRU setting.

3.4 Perceptions of pupils in PRUs

Whilst a body of literature has explored perceptions of outcomes for pupils with social, emotional, and mental health needs across a range of educational provision (Sellman, 2009), very little research has explored the perceptions of pupils who attend PRUs in relation to what they perceived to be a positive outcome of their attendance (Yell, Meadows, Drasgow, & Shriner, 2009). As stated previously, PRUs fulfil a specialist educational role of short-term provision with the aim of reintegration (Ofsted, 2007). As a result, whilst it is useful to compare findings from the studies addressed in the previous section (3.3), the aims of the current study relate specifically to PRUs. The shortage of research into pupil perceptions of outcomes in PRUs is of concern given the fact that a

significant proportion of children and young people in the UK are educated in PRUs (McCluskey et al., 2015) and that research has shown that their outcomes are poorer than those of their mainstream peers (Parsons et al., 2001). The current research therefore intends to add to the limited evidence base regarding what pupils perceive to be a positive outcome in a primary PRU. It is hoped that findings will shed light on pupils' beliefs regarding their education, alongside those of their primary caregivers and the staff who support them and, therefore, indicate ways in which policy and practice may support this vulnerable group of pupils better.

One piece of research that does explore pupil perceptions in PRUs is that by Hill (1997), who conducted a qualitative study using interview and survey data from five male pupils attending a secondary PRU alongside interview data from staff. Whilst some caution has to be taken when viewing these results, as they represent practice from over 20 years ago, the findings are still of relevance. Pupils in the study identified enablers to their achievement of positive outcomes as having; positive relationships with staff, smaller class sizes that allowed for more staff attention, and an individualised curriculum. The professional expertise of the teachers was also identified as an enabler. Hill (1997) found that getting used to new boundaries in the PRU was a perceived barrier to positive outcomes.

Despite the age of Hill's (1997) study, many of the findings continue to resonate with themes outlined in more up to date research. Michael and Frederickson (2013) conducted a study which sought the views of young people in relation to their perceptions of enablers and barriers to positive outcomes in two secondary PRUs. Data were collected through interviews with 16 pupils, which is thought of as a particularly robust size for qualitative research of this kind (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). They found similar enablers to positive outcomes as Hill's (1997) study, specifically; positive relationships with teachers, peers and family, a relevant and personalised curriculum, smaller class sizes and individualised learning environments. A perceived barrier to the achievement of positive outcomes was identified as unfair discipline, however the pupils also acknowledged that their own disruptive behaviour was a barrier. This finding is explored further in relation to the concept of attributions in section 3.7.

Michael and Frederickson's study (2013), alongside earlier research by Hill (1997), is less relevant to the current research aims as they explore the perceptions of secondary-aged pupils in PRUs. There continues to exist very little research which explores the perceptions of primary-aged pupils in alternative provision. This is relevant as some research has indicated that pupil perceptions change with age, as their level of maturity develops and they become more able to understand, interpret and integrate feedback from their environment (Wigfield et al., 2015).

3.5 Perceptions of pupils in primary PRUs

As has been stated in the current study, there exists a dearth of research which has captured the perceptions of primary-aged pupils in PRUs. One study which aimed to fill this gap was that by Hart (2013), who sought the views of both pupils and staff regarding their perceptions of the factors that help pupils to achieve positive social and academic outcomes in a PRU. They collected interview data from six pupils aged 9 to 13, and four staff members. Findings revealed that both staff and pupils shared many of the same perceptions, particularly regarding the need for positive relationships within the setting. The importance of relationships in participant perceptions regarding positive outcomes appears to be a common finding of research in this field and relates to the theory of attachment, which will be explored further in section 3.6. The similarities in perceptions of staff and pupils in Hart's (2013) research suggests that the staff were attuned to the needs of the pupils they supported, which was key to their ability to positively facilitate the PRU experience for these pupils. Unlike research capturing the views of participants which has been discussed previously (see e.g. Michael & Frederickson, 2013), Hart (2013) used a top-down approach to data collection where a framework derived from previous research was used to develop the interview schedule and analyse the data to construct themes. New and unique themes, therefore, did not have the opportunity to be developed through the analysis. This could be considered a limitation of the study, as it goes against the emancipatory nature of research that enables the views of participants to be heard.

Jalali and Morgan (2017) also conducted research which aimed to address the gap in literature regarding pupil perceptions in primary PRUs. Their research sought to explore the views of primary-aged PRU pupils, in order to ascertain whether they differed to secondary-aged PRU pupils. Data were collected through 13 interviews with both primary and secondary-aged pupils across three PRUs regarding their educational experiences. By comparing pupil views, the research aimed to identify whether perceptions changed as the pupils grew older. Unlike previous research in this area (e.g. Folmer et al., 2008), they found similarities between the groups for perceptions of supportive factors and external attributions. However, they did find differences in perceptions of reintegration, as primary-aged pupils felt a sense of belonging towards their mainstream school, whereas secondary-aged pupils did not. There were also differences of perceptions found in environmental factors, with secondary-aged pupils expressing a much greater awareness of the effect that both family and teacher relationships had on them. This suggests that pupils' perceptions of their experiences in PRUs are likely to change as they grow older, and so research which explores the perceptions of primary-aged pupils, such as the current study, is required.

3.6 Psychological concept: School belonging

A sense of school belonging has been defined as "The extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others […] in the school social environment" (Goodenow & Grady, 1993, p.60-61). Previous research has found that pupils perceive a sense of school belonging to be a positive outcome from attending a PRU (Jalali & Morgan, 2017). When exploring participant perceptions in research, it is important to consider the psychological concepts that drive them, and so this chapter will now explore the theory of school belonging in more detail.

Baumeister and Leary (1995) posit that all humans have an inherent and universal need to belong and connect with others, through the formation of social bonds, and fulfilling this need has significant positive consequences on individuals' thoughts and behaviours. In relation to education, feeling connected to school and experiencing a sense of belonging in this setting is recognised as a

construct that covers a range of pupils' perceptions about their relationship with school (Libbey, 2004). Specifically, research has suggested that school belonging relates to pupils' feelings of commitment, self-reported happiness and relationships with others (Brown & Evans, 2002; Ozer, Price Wolf, & Kong, 2008). A positive sense of school belonging is associated with a range of positive academic and social outcomes for pupils (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010), and studies have established it as a protective factor against future mental health difficulties (Shochet, Dadds, Ham, & Montague, 2006).

Research indicates that relationships play a key part in individuals' sense of belonging, and having positive relationships with others in school has been shown to enhance pupils' sense of belonging (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004). This can be explained through attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988), which asserts that children have an instinctive need to develop positive relationships with attuned adults, who provide secure bases from which they feel able to take risks and explore new ideas. Whilst relationships with peers in school has been shown to play a significant part in pupils' developing a sense of school belonging (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010), research has indicated that it is the relationship between pupils and staff that is the strongest predictor of pupils feeling connected to an education setting (Drolet, Arcand, Ducharme, & Leblanc, 2013). Therefore, in schools, positive staff relationships can act as secure bases for pupils where they feel emotionally secure enough to engage with academic challenges in their learning environment (Bartick-Ericson, 2006). Research has found that pupils in PRUs often arrive disengaged from education and without a sense of school belonging because of the relational challenges they have experienced with adults in these settings (Cullen & Monroe, 2010). This can contribute to negative school relationships, which increases the likelihood of exclusion (Harriss et al., 2008). When exploring perceptions of outcomes in alternative provision, research should acknowledge the effect that relationships have on pupils' sense of school belonging, as this has implications for their future outcomes.

3.7 Psychological concept: Attribution theory

Attribution theory has been identified by previous research as relevant to pupils who attend alternative provision (Rendall & Stuart, 2005; Michael & Frederickson,

2013), and will therefore now be explored. Attribution theory (Weiner, 1985) examines how individuals explain the causes of events and behaviour, which relates to their level of motivation. The theory posits that individuals make attributions along three causal dimensions; stability (whether the cause of the event or behaviour can change over time), controllability (whether the cause is controllable or not), and locus of control (whether the cause lies internally or externally to the individual).

In relation to the dimension of locus of control, attribution theory states that individuals who are described as having an external attribution style typically attribute their behaviour and its consequences to external factors, such as the behaviour of others, their environment, or luck and fate. In contrast, individuals who display an internal attribution style attribute their behaviour and experiences to controllable internal factors (Weiner, 1985). When considering attribution theory in relation to pupils who have experienced school exclusion, research indicates that this population typically attribute their difficulties to uncontrollable aspects such as inaccessibility to the curriculum, displaying an external attribution style (Rendall & Stuart, 2005; Solomon & Rogers, 2001). Furthermore, Jalali and Morgan (2017) found that both primary and secondary-aged PRU pupils attributed their difficulties to external factors such as being targeted by peers and unfairly blamed by teachers, highlighting a lack of perceived responsibility for their behaviours. However, in contrast to this, the secondary-aged pupils in Michael and Frederickson's (2013) study exhibited internal attributions as they identified themselves as enablers to positive outcomes through descriptions of their self-motivation and self-belief, as well as identifying their own disruptive behaviour as a barrier to success. The limited research in this area appears inconclusive and therefore in the current study it will be important to consider the role of attribution theory when reflecting on the findings as part of the discussion. Having an internal attribution style is considered to be a protective factor for positive outcomes for pupils in education (McSherry, 2017), and therefore education settings should prioritise the development of this in pupils.

3.8 Perceptions of primary caregivers in PRUs

Research has demonstrated that pupils' experiences in PRUs are influenced by their family context (Jalali & Morgan, 2017) and McDonald and Thomas (2003) believe that listening to the experiences of primary caregivers is essential to research in this field of study, as they are "integral partners in the process" of exclusion and attendance in alternative provision (p.108). However, the views of primary caregivers in PRUs often remain unheard in research, despite the fact that they are seen as playing a valued role as the 'expert' in their child's life (Worcester et al., 2008).

Those studies that do seek the views of primary caregivers often focus on the process of their child's exclusion rather than their experiences within alternative provision. For example, Parker et al.'s (2016) study, which has previously been addressed (see section 2.7), found that primary caregivers acknowledged the significant effect that exclusion had on the family life outside of the child's education, specifically in relation to the financial and practical implications. There are no published studies that have explored both primary caregiver and pupil perceptions in PRUs. A limitation of seeking just one perspective in research is that it only provides a partial view of the phenomenon at hand. By gathering data from more than one source, the current study attempts to explore similarities and differences in the perceptions of participants, in order to provide a more rich view of the PRU as a social phenomenon. By comparing multiple perspectives of the same phenomenon, the likelihood of the findings being trustworthy is also increased (Silverman, 2004). Previous research in the field has highlighted the need to capture the views of the primary caregivers and families of the pupils who attend PRUs (Michael & Frederickson, 2013), and this research aims to fill this gap.

3.9 Relevance to educational psychology practice

A key role of educational psychologists is to promote inclusive practices in education and ensure equal access to education for all pupils. One way that educational psychologists aim to do this is by limiting the effects of barriers to learning. As a result of this role, educational psychologists have been argued to

be in a suitable position to support pupils excluded from school (Kelly, Woolfson, & Boyle, 2008).

Eliciting the views of pupils is not without challenge, but educational psychologists are well placed to contribute to the exploration of these views as the inclusion of pupil participation now underpins current approaches in educational psychology practice, which is influenced by legislative directions outlined in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE/DoH, 2015). Research has also stated that educational psychologists are uniquely placed to support schools in implementing participatory practices within school as they are able to work at a systemic level (Norwich et al., 2006). Educational psychologists have skills in using a range of methods to elicit the views and perceptions of pupils, including by being curious practitioners who are open to differences in opinion (Norwich et al., 2006). Educational psychologists are also skilled in facilitating discussions with primary caregivers in school, to ensure that their views are heard (Kelly et al., 2008). Through listening to the views of pupils, as well as those of primary caregivers and staff, the current research intends to provide a deeper understanding of the different opinions that may emerge through an exploration of what a positive outcome may be within a primary PRU.

3.10 Chapter summary

This chapter has critically examined pertinent research into perceptions of outcomes in alternative provision. It has highlighted the shortage of research that aims to elicit the views of pupils and primary caregivers in primary PRUs. This is a concern as the proportion of primary-aged pupils in exclusion statistics continues to rise, and this population is highlighted as having poor social, emotional, and academic outcomes (Parsons et al., 2001). This study intends to gain an understanding of this vulnerable population of pupils by exploring their perceptions, alongside the perceptions of their primary caregivers and the staff who support them, in relation to positive outcomes. By eliciting the views of pupils through the use of creative enabling tools, this research aims to provide “a glimpse of the lives behind the statistics” (Munn & Lloyd, 2005, p.211). The following chapter will outline the methodology of this research.

4 Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Chapter overview

The previous chapters reviewed the context of PRUs and relevant literature pertaining to perceptions of outcomes. This led to the development of research aims designed to address gaps that emerged in the literature. The intention of this chapter is to outline the methodology used in the research. It begins by presenting an outline of the interpretivist research paradigm which underpins this study and how this paradigm allows for the investigation of perceptions of lived experiences (4.2). Following this, a critical description of the case study design used in this research is provided (4.3). A description of the participants is then offered, alongside methods of recruitment (4.4). The methods and procedures used to collect the data are then explored (4.5). Specifically, the use of Personal Construct Psychology as an approach to inform the tools used to facilitate discussion with the pupils, as part of their interviews, is discussed. This is followed by an exploration of ethical considerations (4.6) and trustworthiness in research (4.7). Finally, the method of data analysis chosen to interpret the findings, thematic analysis, is addressed (4.8). A chapter summary concludes this chapter (4.9).

4.2 Methodological approach

A research paradigm refers to the beliefs, assumptions, values, and practices that a researcher holds, otherwise known as their philosophical world view (Willig, 2007). The research paradigm is key to an individual's approach to research and is influenced by the following questions; "What is the nature of reality?" (The ontological question), "What is the nature of knowledge?" (The epistemological question), and therefore "What specific devices can be used to discover knowledge?" (How the methods are chosen) (Mertens, 2009). This world view will affect the researcher's attitude towards the research, and, in turn, the methods used. Traditionally, research has focused on the collection of quantitative data that follows the positivist paradigm that there is a single objective reality which can be measured (Willig, 2008). In social sciences research, however, it is often

felt that positivism is not suitable for capturing the rich meanings of complex real-world contexts (Bryman, 2012).

In contrast to positivism is the research paradigm of interpretivism, which states that rather than there being one known reality, there are instead multiple subjective realities. As a result, reality is based on interpretations of individuals' lived experiences (Robson, 2011). Interpretivism posits that reality is created through an individual's experiences and interactions, which are unique to them and therefore cannot be categorised. The current study acknowledges that participants' lived experiences of PRUs are unique and so is focused on exploring their individual views and the reality that they interpret from their unique experiences (Creswell, 2009). The interpretivist paradigm fits well with qualitative research as it allows for the investigation of people's perceptions of their lived experiences (Willig, 2007). Through viewing reality as being based on individual lived experiences, I have reflected on how participants' views and their understanding of meaning has affected the research process. This is addressed in the adoption of a reflexive approach, which is discussed in detail in section 4.7.1.

4.3 Research design

Qualitative research aims to explore phenomena through the perspective of participants (Firestone, 1987) and fits with the interpretivist view that social reality is maintained through the lived experiences of individuals. It is actively involved in trying to observe and interpret people's perceptions of phenomena, the meanings they have constructed, and how they have understood phenomena (Robson, 2011). Through this, qualitative research produces data that are rich and which go beyond surface level descriptions to offer a more thorough explanation of a topic, thereby creating a more in-depth understanding. A central aim of this research is to explore participants' perceptions of positive outcomes within a PRU setting. Therefore, a research design which allows for the generation of rich and descriptive accounts seems most appropriate. Qualitative research also, crucially, acknowledges the influence of the researcher's own perspectives upon the nature of the research, the relationship with participants, and the final interpretation of data (Banister, 2011). This has been addressed through a reflexive approach.

In line with the qualitative nature of this research an inductive approach was taken, where theory is generated from data rather than tested by it (Bryman, 2012). Inductive approaches allow for the pursuit of new knowledge rather than applying preconceived theories (Smith & Osborne, 2003). The intention of the research was not to test hypotheses but to develop an understanding of perceptions within a primary PRU. This approach facilitated an exploration of the experiences of participants through a 'bottom-up' approach, where themes were drawn from the data itself.

There are several other research approaches that fit within qualitative inquiry that were considered during the development of this research. Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was considered as a methodology for this research as it empowers the views of those whose accounts can be marginalised (Willig, 2001). IPA focuses on the individual subjective experiences of each participant, in order to represent the meanings that they give to these experiences (Collins & Nicolson, 2002). As a result of this, it has been argued that the in-depth focus on a small number of participants comes at the expense of breadth of analysis, which can create a wider understanding of the phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2013). With this in mind, it was felt that developing a wider understanding through inferring meaning from a larger number of participants would address the research questions more appropriately.

4.3.1 Case study research

This research follows a qualitative design that adopts a case study approach. Gillham (2000, p.1) defines a case as “A unit of human activity embedded in a real-world context”. This ‘unit of human activity’ can be an individual, group, organisation, or situation (Robson, 2011). A case study design is considered an appropriate method when research questions “require an extensive and in-depth description of some social phenomenon” (Yin, 2004, p.4). This research intends to explore the social phenomenon of the experiences of a primary PRU in a single case, that of the PRU. This was selected over a multiple-case design as it was felt that by allowing the time to focus on one education setting, a more rich account and more in-depth description of the phenomenon would be produced.

The PRU was selected as the single case setting in question as the intention of this study was to explore in detail the complex social phenomenon of attendance in a primary PRU, as outlined by the research questions. Through this, sources of information were provided through the perceptions of pupils, primary caregivers, and staff within the setting (Thomas, 2015). Through gathering the perspectives of several groups of participants, this research intended to develop an enriched and multi-faceted understanding of experiences within one context, that of a primary PRU (Yardley, 2000). It is understood that knowledge discovered from single case studies can inform future professional practice and the development of policy (Simons, 2009). This research aims to provide recommendations for the case setting in question, that of the PRU, whilst continuing to recognise that the accounts of each participant group are individual and personal.

4.3.2 Generalisability in case study research

A concept that has been highlighted as a limitation to case study research is that of generalisability. Specifically, it has been suggested that a case study is context-specific and thus is limited in the extent to which it represents examples beyond the immediate research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). However, Yin (2009) asserts that case study research is not designed to generalise to wider populations but to build theoretical premises. A case study design aims to build on theories through analytical generalisation and does not seek to apply knowledge to populations through statistical findings. This research aims to realise this, by ensuring that insights drawn from the data regarding perceptions of outcomes in the context of one primary PRU can be applied in similar contexts, which may contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon.

4.3.3 Description of the case study

It is the intention of case study research to provide a detailed description of participant experiences within a unique context, and so it is vital that a comprehensive description of the context is first provided (Yin, 2009). The case in question is an inner-city London primary PRU. An initial description of the setting has been provided in section 2.5 of the introduction chapter, including information on a recent Ofsted report. The PRU was selected as an opportunistic case study, which arose from my involvement in a piece of casework within the school, through my role as a trainee educational psychologist in the local authority. My

prior involvement meant that connections with staff within the school had previously been made, which was considered an advantage to this selection type as it facilitated the organisational matters of the data collection. However, a recognised disadvantage to this selection type is the potential of bias to occur as a result of my prior involvement with the PRU (Robson, 2011). This limitation was addressed through researcher reflexivity, as highlighted in section 4.7.1.

When data collection began, the PRU had 16 pupils on roll from Year 2 to Year 6. Four pupils were in Key Stage 1, and 12 pupils were in Key Stage 2. The pupil population changed throughout the data collection period, as pupils arrived at the PRU and others were reintegrated back into mainstream school or alternative provision. The pupil population of the PRU is culturally and socially diverse, with over 80% of the pupils being from minority ethnic groups and 93% of the pupils receiving pupil premium funding. These figures represent national data regarding pupils who attend alternative provision (Gill et al., 2017; see section 2.3.2). These figures are also representative of the local authority in which the PRU is situated, which is an ethnically diverse borough that has a significantly high level of child poverty (Ministry of Housing, Communities, & Local Government, 2015). Over 50% of pupils in the borough's primary schools are eligible for pupil premium funding, and nearly one third have an identified special educational need (Education Funding Agency, 2015). Within the PRU there are 16 members of staff, made up of the senior leadership team, teachers, and teaching assistants.

4.4 Participants and recruitment

4.4.1 Participants

Four pupils from the PRU participated in the research, all of whom were males in Year 3 to Year 5 (aged between 7 and 11 years). Two of the participants identified as 'White British' and two as 'White and Black Caribbean'. Two had diagnoses of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD), and one had an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP). All the pupil participants had been permanently excluded from their mainstream primary school and had arrived at the PRU between six months and two years prior.

Four female primary caregivers were interviewed as part of the research. Three of the primary caregivers were related to the pupils in the study, and one primary caregiver was related to a pupil in the PRU who did not choose to take part in the study. Three were birth mothers, and one was a family member who had taken up guardianship of the pupil within the past year. Both male and female primary caregivers were invited to take part in the research, however those who chose to take part were all female. Five staff members participated in the research. They were made up of three class teachers, one teaching assistant and one head of learning. Pseudonyms were given to all participants, and the role of the staff members was not linked to these pseudonyms, in order to further protect their identity.

4.4.2 Pupil descriptions

Short descriptions of the pupils, at the time of the interview, have been provided below, as a way of offering some context. As one aim of this research is to develop an understanding of a vulnerable group of pupils by gaining their views, it is important that their individual perceptions are not lost through data analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). These descriptions intend to illustrate the pupils as ‘whole beings’.

James

James is a nine-year-old ‘White and Black Caribbean’ male. He is in Year 4. James lives at home with his mother, Katy, who was also interviewed. James arrived at the PRU two years ago, after being permanently excluded from his mainstream primary school. Since starting at the PRU he has received a diagnosis of AD/HD and has an EHCP.

Darren

Darren is a seven-year-old ‘White British’ male. He is in Year 3. Darren is living at home with his new-born brother and mother, Rheanne, who was also interviewed. Darren arrived at the PRU six months ago after being permanently excluded from his mainstream primary school. His primary need is identified as social, emotional, and mental health. He does not have an EHCP.

Cory

Cory is an eight-year-old ‘White and Black-Caribbean’ male. He is in Year 3. Cory lives at home with his mother and is an only child. He has a diagnosis of AD/HD and sensory processing needs. He does not have an EHCP. Cory arrived at the PRU a year and a half ago, after being permanently excluded from his mainstream primary school.

Ryan

Ryan is an eleven-year-old ‘White British’ male who is in Year 5. He is the oldest pupil in the study and is the second oldest pupil in the PRU. Ryan lives at home with his older brother and mother, who did not choose to take part in the research. Ryan arrived at the PRU six months ago after being permanently excluded from his mainstream primary school. He does not have an EHCP.

4.4.3 Sampling

In total, a range of sampling techniques were deployed. Initially, participant selection was conducted using a purposive sampling technique, whereby participants are selected in terms of their relevance to the research question, as recommended for qualitative research (Maxwell, 2006). Therefore, in the current study, every pupil attending the PRU, their primary caregivers, and staff were considered appropriate for the research study. Participants were selected on the basis that they were able to provide a unique perspective on the phenomenon of attendance in a PRU, in relation to their lived experiences. Through this, they were able to provide data for analysis which were “information rich” (Patton, 2002, p.230).

Due to low participant response rates through my initial recruitment strategy (see recruitment selection below, section 4.4.4), additional participants were selected through a convenience sampling strategy whereby primary caregivers were approached at the school gates. This sampling strategy allowed for a quick and simple way of recruiting participants; however, a disadvantage of this method is that the sample may not be an accurate representation of the population (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). This is discussed further as a potential limitation in section 6.7.

4.4.4 Recruitment

Participants were recruited for the research through the following process:

- The school's executive head teacher was contacted via email (see Appendix A) and a preliminary meeting was held, to discuss the research and to invite the PRU to take part.

- Following a positive response from this meeting, a second meeting took place with the head of centre and the senior leadership team for the primary PRU, to discuss the logistical aspects of data collection and recruitment.

- I then attended a morning briefing with the primary PRU staff team to introduce myself, explain the purpose of the research, and invite all staff members to take part. Staff information sheets (Appendix B) and consent forms (Appendix C) were then disseminated, and consent forms were returned.

- Next, I spent a morning in the PRU introducing myself to pupils and helping staff in lessons. This was intended to ensure pupils became familiar with me. It was hoped that providing pupils with an understanding of who I was, before they gave assent, would be an effective way of engaging those who are considered 'hard to reach'. It was also hoped that this familiarity would reduce power imbalances with pupils during data collection and in turn increased their capacity to express their views and ideas. This is addressed further within the participant emotional wellbeing section (4.6.3).

- A coffee morning for primary caregivers was arranged at the school, and primary caregivers were invited to attend through a flyer that was sent home with the pupils (Appendix D). In this session, I intended to explain the study verbally and answer any questions. One primary caregiver attended the coffee morning and expressed that she would like to take part in the research. In order to recruit further participants, I spent an additional week approaching all of the primary caregivers who dropped their child off

at school in the morning or who collected them in the afternoon. Through this convenience sampling method, I spoke to five primary caregivers and invited them to take part in the research study.

- These five primary caregivers were given an information sheet (Appendix E) and the research was explained to them verbally. The primary caregiver then decided if they consented to; themselves taking part, their child taking part, or both themselves and their child taking part (Appendix F). Three of these primary caregivers consented to both themselves and their child taking part, and one consented to only their child taking part.

- Once the pupils had been identified by their primary caregivers consenting to them taking part (in the above step), the research was explained to these five pupils individually and they were provided with an accessible and age-appropriate pupil information sheet (Appendix G). They were then able to decide if they would like to take part. Finally, their assent was gained (both verbally and in writing, see Appendix H). Four pupils gave their assent to taking part in the research.

4.5 Data collection

4.5.1 Methods of data collection

One-to-one interviews were chosen as a method of eliciting participants' rich experiences as they allow for rapport to be established and are suited to discussions involving topics that are personal and potentially sensitive (Smith et al., 2009). Focus groups were considered as a way of exploring shared representations in participants. However, owing to the personal and potentially sensitive nature of the phenomenon at hand, that of experiences in a PRU, it was decided that individual interviews would best allow participants to share their views openly. For primary caregivers and staff, data were collected through semi-structured interviews. For pupils, data were collected through interviews that used 'task-centred' activities based on Personal Construct Psychology to facilitate discussion. Having discussions with pupils, primary caregivers, and staff, and gaining their views through conversation, is a key role of educational

psychologists. Therefore, interviews were deemed an appropriate method of data collection.

The addition of a questionnaire as a quantitative measure was considered during the development of the research. However, given the complex nature of perceptions regarding PRU experiences, it was felt that data collected through a questionnaire would not add to the rich picture of information that could be gathered through the interviews. Alongside this, it was felt that pupils would be less inclined to complete written questionnaires than engage in discussions. This could be owing to a range of reasons including; learning needs, attention difficulties, low confidence in completing ‘academic based’ tasks, or distrust in adults whom they do not have the opportunity to interact with and so consider to be unfamiliar.

4.5.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interview is considered a powerful tool that enables the elicitation of individual’s lived experiences and construction of meaning in a natural setting (Kvale, 2007). In this sense, it fits well with the theoretical assumptions of interpretivism (see section 4.2) as it allows participants to express their own perceptions of phenomena. The semi-structured nature of the interview allows for a flexible and adaptive method of enquiry, in which the interviewer determines the themes of the discussion, and the interviewee brings the perspectives they hold on these themes (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Within the current study, the primary caregiver and staff interview schedules (Appendix I and Appendix J) consisted of a range of open-ended questions which intended to encourage flexibility and depth of response (Robson, 2011). The interview schedules were constructed based on previous literature regarding perceptions of outcomes in PRUs and the research aims and questions. The non-directive nature of the interview schedule allowed participants to talk about issues such as; perceptions on the role of the PRU and what might be considered a positive outcome, barriers and enablers to these outcomes, and the future. Through the use of semi-structured interviews, I was able to encourage participants to provide more detail than their initial responses where appropriate, for example by saying “Can you tell me a bit more about that?” in order to ensure that a shared understanding was achieved (Robson, 2011). It is important to note, however,

that as interviews produce such rich data, it is a method that can be time-consuming to transcribe and analyse, and therefore sample sizes are often smaller in this kind of research than with quantitative research (Kvale, 2007). This fits with the aims of the current study; to provide an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of a unique group of participants, whose population is relatively small nationally.

4.5.1.2 'Task-centred' activities and Personal Construct Psychology

For the pupil interviews, a range of data collection tools were offered to pupils as a way of facilitating discussion regarding their experiences in the PRU (see Appendix K for the pupil interview schedule). Research indicates that using concrete resources in interviews can make them an enjoyable experience for pupils and enables them to provide more of an insight into their experiences (Winstone, Huntington, Kyrou, & Millward, 2014). Alongside this, research has suggested that pupils who are considered to be vulnerable can find the pressure of one-to-one conversations and sustained eye contact difficult, and so 'task-centred' activities such as those offered, are preferred (Harden, Scott, Backett-Milburn, & Jackson, 2000). The tools offered were; drawing resources (pens, papers, chalk), the 'ideal school' activity, and the 'life grid' activity. Pupils were offered the choice of which tool they would like to engage with at the beginning of each interview.

The 'life grid' and 'ideal school' activities are resources based on Personal Construct Psychology (PCP; Kelly, 1955), an approach which posits that individuals develop personal core constructs as internal ideas of reality, in order to understand the world around them. These constructs are developed through people's individual experiences, which result in them viewing the world in their own particular form (Maxwell, 2006). The PCP approach allows participants' constructs to be explored and within this provide a way for participants to express their views that is not influenced by the researcher's world view (Beaver, 1996). This approach fits well with the interpretivist view that "events are only meaningful in relation to the ways they are constructed by individuals" (Shivlock, 2014, p. 123). In qualitative research such as this, PCP techniques can provide a useful structure to explore participants' interpretations of their lived experiences. PCP resources are used in the everyday work of educational psychologists

extensively, as a non-directive method of increasing the participation of pupils in their own assessments (Gersch, 1996), in line with the SEND Code of Practice (DfE/DoH, 2015). Therefore, as a trainee educational psychologist, I have experience and skills of using these tools with children and young people.

The ‘life grid’ is a PCP tool used to gain individual’s views and is useful in engaging participants and supporting them to talk about their experiences (Jalali & Morgan, 2017). It has also been shown to increase participants’ sense of control (Parry, Thomson, & Fowkes, 1999). Within this research, the ‘life grid’ was offered to the pupils as a tool to; facilitate discussion and aid engagement (Thomson et al., 2002). The ‘ideal school’ technique has been adapted by Williams and Hanke (2007) from a PCP approach developed by Moran (2001). It empowers children to become actively involved in expressing their views and attempts to “understand the child’s unique perspective on life through the careful use of questions and sensitive note of the child’s answers” (Moran, 2001, p.600).

Both the ‘ideal school’ activity and the drawing resources offered pupils the opportunity to engage in drawing as part of the interview, if they chose to. Offering pupils the familiar task of drawing was intended to help them feel comfortable (Parkinson, 2001) and studies have advocated for the use of drawing tasks in research with children and young people, as the nature of drawing helps pupils to take their time when responding to the interviewer (Einarsdóttir, Dockett, & Perry, 2009). As research suggests, “Drawing can provide a focus that enables children to interact on their own terms – for example, by not necessarily maintaining eye contact with an adult, by having something to do when interacting with others and by controlling the discussion” (Einarsdóttir et al., 2009, p.229).

Other methods of data collection for the pupils were considered, such as photo elicitation (Whiting, 2015) and interviews which incorporate a series of activities (Winstone et al., 2014). However, these were not deemed appropriate as they would require pupils to undertake activities prior to the interview and are thus dependent on support from the school for the pupils to take time out of their lessons. It was therefore decided that this would not be a logistically appropriate

method given the timeframe of the research and the availability of the school staff in the PRU.

4.5.2 Procedure for data collection

4.5.2.1 Interviews with primary caregivers and staff

The interviews took place over three weeks in the summer term of 2018, at dates and times suitable to the participants. The interviews did not have a time limit and lasted from 25 to 45 minutes. On average, the primary caregiver interviews lasted for 28 minutes, and the staff interviews lasted for 29 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded using a digital audio recorder. Primary caregivers were invited to choose where the interview took place; either in their home, in the school, or in the educational psychology service office within the local authority. All the primary caregivers chose to conduct the interview in the school, either after dropping their child off in the morning or before picking them up in the afternoon. As part of the primary caregiver interviews, demographic information regarding their child was gathered. Staff interviews took place at a time during the working day that was convenient for them. All staff chose for this to be either before or after the school day. The interviews for both primary caregivers and staff were conducted in a quiet room in the PRU, which had been made available for the interview process. Following each interview, the audio recording was transcribed and used as data.

In line with the interpretivist framing of this study, I used the interviews as an opportunity to understand what words and phrases participants were using to reflect on their experiences of the PRU. I intended to get as close to participants' own language as possible by using the same phrases and words during the interview, as they were deemed to be meaningful and accessible to them. For example, one primary caregiver discussed their child's future in terms of 'achieving his dreams', which was a phrase I then adopted during the remainder of the interview, when exploring hopes for his future.

4.5.2.2 Interviews with pupils

The pupil interviews were conducted in a quiet room in the PRU, which was familiar to the pupils, at a suitable time during the school day that had been pre-arranged with the class teacher. The pupil interviews lasted for an average of 33

minutes, which included a rapport building game (see Appendix K for a description of this activity). The pupils were reminded by their class teacher about the interview in the days coming up to the date, in order to prepare them. As the pupils are considered a vulnerable group, and I was not able to develop a long-term relationship with them, they were offered the opportunity to have a class teaching assistant present during the interview if they wished. Two of the four pupils chose to have this staff member with them. Having a staff member present had both benefits and costs, which are discussed further in section 6.7 of the discussion chapter. The interviews began by engaging pupils in a simple warm-up game to build rapport. In the interviews where the pupil had asked for a class teaching assistant to be present, this staff member also took part in the activity. After the warm-up activity had been completed, the staff member present did not speak and instead sat and observed.

It was important that the pupils had ownership over the interview and therefore at the start they were introduced to the drawing resources, the ‘life grid’ activity, and ‘ideal school’ activity. Pupils were invited to choose which activity they would like to engage with. All four pupils chose to complete the ‘life grid’ activity. As the interview progressed, three of the four pupils disengaged from the ‘life grid’ activity and instead chose to access the drawing resources whilst we talked. The pupils were encouraged to engage in whichever activity they would like to. It was possible that they did not enjoy the restrictive nature of the ‘life grid’ and preferred to do something more distracting whilst they were talking, as advocated by Harden et al., (2000). Many of the pupils enjoyed negotiating their time, for example one pupil informed me that he would be happy to talk for five minutes longer if we could then play a game of cards at the end of the session. All the interviews were audio recorded using a digital audio recorder. Following the transcription of the audio recordings, the verbatim transcripts were then used as data.

4.5.2.3 Follow-up interviews with pupils

Following the initial period of data collection in the summer term of 2018, I decided that it would be beneficial to conduct follow-up interviews with the pupils as an additional opportunity to gather their views. It was hoped that, as the pupils

were familiar with me and the interview process, they would feel more comfortable and would be able to add to the data gathered previously.

I visited the school in the autumn term 2018. At this time, two of the pupils had remained on the school roll and two of the pupils had reintegrated to mainstream schools. The two pupils who had remained on the school roll were invited to take part in the interview again. The same consent procedure was completed, as described in section 4.4.4. The interview took place in the same manner as described in section 4.5.2.2. As before, the pupils were offered the opportunity to have a staff member in the interview and one pupil chose this option. At the beginning of the interview, I explained to the pupils that this was another opportunity to discuss what was talked about in the previous interview. The pupils were presented with the 'life grid' activity that they had begun to complete in their initial interview, and I used this as a tool to confirm what the participants had discussed with me. The pupils were also offered the same drawing resources as the initial interview, of which they both chose to engage with again. During the interview, I used the interview schedule to cover the same area of discussion as the first interview. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in the same manner and their data were included in the analysis.

4.6 Ethical considerations

For this research, ethical approval was granted by the Ethics Committee at UCL Institute of Education on the 14th of March 2018 (see Appendix L). The research adheres to the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2009), which was used to inform the methodology.

4.6.1 Informed consent and the right to withdraw

Informed consent was obtained from the primary caregivers and staff prior to data collection, and assent was gained from the pupils. Participants were informed fully of the purpose and nature of the research through an information sheet which highlighted key issues regarding the right to withdraw, confidentiality, anonymity, and how the findings would be disseminated (see Appendix B, Appendix E, and Appendix G). The language used in the participant forms was designed to be accessible, free from jargon, and adapted to the relevant

participant group. Pupils were only approached once verbal and written consent had been provided by their primary caregiver. They were provided with a pupil information sheet and the research was explained to them verbally before their assent was sought. Pupils were reminded that their participation remained optional and they had the right to withdraw at any time without consequence.

4.6.2 Confidentiality and data protection

In line with British Psychological Society ethical guidelines (BPS, 2014), participants' confidentiality was assured by ensuring that information they provided was not identifiable as theirs. This was achieved by anonymising the transcripts used for data analysis by replacing any information that could identify participants with pseudonyms. This included names, school names, place names, and other identifying features. Participants were made aware that confidentiality (i.e. anonymity of identities) would only be breached if there were concerns relating to safety. Only an excerpt from a transcript is presented within the appendices (Appendix M), to further protect the identity of the participants. Furthermore, the drawings and 'life grids' completed as part of the pupil interviews are not included in the appendices, as research has indicated that personal drawings are more difficult to anonymise than other forms of data (Levin, 1995), and verbal assent was not gained from the pupils for their drawings produced in the interviews to be presented within the research.

Confidentiality and anonymity are complex concepts, and in research where participants are members of a small community, such as the PRU, they require sensitive thought (Williams & Robson, 2004). With this in mind, it was agreed during the initial meeting with the PRU's executive head teacher that findings would be presented to participants and PRU staff without any participant quotes. How anonymity was described to participants was also thought out, and I explained to participants (both verbally and in writing) that every effort would be made to ensure that no individual was identifiable. Participants were made aware of data protection matters in the information sheet, and this information was relayed to them prior to the commencement of the interview verbally. Hard copies of the signed consent forms were kept in a locked cupboard, and audio data collected through the interviews were stored in password-protected data files. All

data will be destroyed once the research period has ended, as stipulated in the participant information sheets.

4.6.3 Participant wellbeing

As a researcher, I recognise that I have a responsibility to safeguard the interests of participants and ensure that their emotional wellbeing is not affected by taking part in the research adversely (Fox, Martin, & Green, 2007). Given the vulnerability of many of the participants in this study and the fact that some of the discussion topics were potentially emotive, measures were taken to ensure the protection of each participant's wellbeing. For example, it was agreed with the school that should any pupils become distressed during the interviews, a familiar adult would be on hand to support. During the interviews, a conscious effort was made to create an informal and relaxed atmosphere, where the participants understood that they were under no pressure to respond if they did not want to. As a result of this, I felt that all participants were able to talk about their experiences openly.

4.6.4 Power in relationships

Throughout the data collection, I was aware that my role, race, gender, and background could influence the balance of power with participants. With this in mind, sensitivity to power imbalances was taken into consideration and I prioritised the development of a warm and respectful relationship with all participants from the outset. For example, consent was seen as an evolving process where participants were given ongoing opportunities to agree to continue or withdraw (Hill, 2005). This was designed to promote control within the participants during the interviews. Acknowledging the potential power imbalances was particularly significant during the pupil interviews, where I reflected on how to limit the effect of power imbalances in order to ensure that the pupils felt comfortable to express their perceptions. This was achieved by explaining the role of a researcher and how this differs from a school staff member of (Mayall, 2008). At the beginning of each interview, I also highlighted that the purpose was for the participant to share their views and experiences, which were valued highly. Through this, the participants were positioned as the 'expert' within the research process (Graue, Walsh, & Ceglowski, 1998).

4.7 Trustworthiness

In traditional quantitative research methods, issues of reliability and validity are terms that must be addressed. These constructs, however, come from a positivist view of knowledge typically. This view does not fit with qualitative research, where researchers understand that participants have different and equally valid perspectives on reality (Yardley, 2000). It has been asserted that trustworthiness is a concept that must be established in qualitative research, so as to feel confident in the truth of findings and to persuade readers that the ideas presented are worthy of engagement (Robson, 2011). Table 1 illustrates the strategies adopted in order to enhance the trustworthiness of the current research study (Robson, 2011).

Table 1 - *Strategies to address issues of trustworthiness*

Prolonged involvement	I had multiple contacts with the PRU and spent several weeks in there collecting data. This served to build trust with the participants and thus I was able to check for misinformation which stemmed from any distortions I had introduced (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Peer debrief	I used a fellow trainee educational psychologist as a ‘critical friend’ to facilitate my reflective capacity through discussions of the emerging data analysis. A ‘critical friend’ has been defined as “A trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critiques of a person’s work as a friend” (Costa & Kallick, 1993, p. 50). I used this opportunity to look beyond my perspective, to challenge

	my assumptions and to reflect on what I had noted critically.
Negative case analysis	I searched for exceptions to confute any emerging theories explicitly throughout the data analysis process, in order to provide a realistic view of the phenomenon under study, as not all evidence is either positive or negative. For example, I included the sub-theme of 'disconnect' in the 'sense of belonging' theme, to highlight examples of when pupils had conflicting internal views on their sense of belonging to mainstream education.
Audit trail	I ensured that the study was transparent and clear to follow, through maintaining an observable chain of evidence known as a paper trail. A paper trail provides evidence linking raw data to the findings and conclusions reached. Within this study, the paper trail includes an excerpt of a coded transcript (Appendix M) and an example of the thematic development (Appendix N).

4.7.1 Reflexivity

When conducting qualitative research, it is understood that the researcher brings their own background, values and views to the research topic, which in turn influences decisions made and shapes the research (Creswell, 2009). This is not a limitation necessarily; however it must be acknowledged. This can be done through being reflexive, whereby the researcher reflects on the knowledge they produce and their role in producing the knowledge critically (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Reflexivity is an essential feature of establishing transparency in

qualitative research (Kornbluh, 2015) and is key to research that holds an interpretivist paradigm. In order to maintain reflexivity within this research, a reflective diary was used throughout the recruitment phase and after every interview (see Appendix O for an excerpt). The diary included information on my initial views of the participants, how my interactions with participants affected the collection of data, participant responses to the interview process and their level of engagement, and any non-verbal information gathered. Through this, I was able to check and note my active role in the research process consistently.

4.7.2 Pilot

Prior to the data collection stage of the research, the interview schedules were piloted, in order to evaluate and refine both the questions and process. The schedules were piloted on one pupil, one primary caregiver and one staff member. The aim of the pilot was to ensure that there was no ambiguity in the interview questions, that they related to the research questions, and that they allowed for flexible responses. I also reflected on whether the delivery method was appropriate and accessible. Robson (2011) asserts that within qualitative research, it is often difficult to gain access to participants and to develop trust and therefore data that have been collected as part of a pilot can be incorporated within the study itself. As no changes were made to the interview schedules based on the piloting, these participants and their data were included in the analysis.

4.8 Analytic approach: Thematic analysis

Once the data had been collected and transcribed, they were analysed thematically. Thematic analysis (TA) is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns of meaning within data, otherwise known as themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013).TA is a flexible approach, capable of providing “a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.78). It was deemed appropriate to the current study as TA is not bound to a particular theoretical perspective and so it suited to the interpretivist research paradigm adopted in this research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, it must be noted that TA is limited as the sense of contradictions or continuity found within each interview are not captured (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The research followed Braun and Clarke's

(2006) six-phase guidelines to TA, which involves familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes and reviewing them, and defining and naming themes (see Appendix P for a full description of the analysis steps taken).

Other data analysis approaches were considered for this research, such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA, as described in section 4.3, focuses on the individual experiences of a small number of participants, in order to represent the meanings that they each give to these experiences (Collins & Nicolson, 2002). It has been argued that providing an idiographic focus on the perceptions of each participant empowers the views of those whose accounts can be marginalised (Willig, 2001), however it was felt that this would not be an appropriate approach for this study as the intention was not to explore the views of a homogenous sample, but to infer patterns of meaning across a wider range of participants, to better understand the complex social phenomenon of attendance in a PRU, as outlined by the research questions in section 1.3.2.

The codes within the data were constructed at a semantic level, drawn from participants' language and their explicit meanings of the data. However, it must be acknowledged that some interpretation of the data was necessary in order to consider participants' broader meanings and interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The themes within the data were constructed using an inductive approach, where data were coded without trying to fit into pre-existing theoretical perspectives or coding frameworks. Through this, the analysis can be described as being data-driven, where constructed themes are closely linked to the data itself (Patton, 2002). However, it must be acknowledged that TA cannot take place in a theoretical vacuum without any influence of the researcher's perspective. Therefore, my active engagement in the analytical process through developing and refining the themes will have had a deductive influence on the data analysis. In order to avoid narrowing the interpretation of participants' experiences and to allow themes to be drawn from the interview data itself, the research questions were not referred to during the analysis phase. As a result, they are not referred to in the findings chapter (chapter 5). The research questions are addressed in the discussion chapter (chapter 6).

4.9 Chapter summary

In summary, this chapter aimed to provide an outline of the methodology used in this study. It began by introducing the research paradigm adopted and examining the case study design critically. Participant recruitment and data collection methods and processes were then addressed, followed by ethical considerations and issues relating to trustworthiness. The following chapter will present the findings of the thematic data analysis.

5 Chapter 5: Findings

5.1 Chapter overview

The previous chapter has outlined the methodology used in this research. The following chapter presents the findings generated by thematic analysis of the participant interviews. The presentation of the findings is outlined initially (5.2), followed by a description of each theme and sub-theme alongside quotations from the data (5.3 - 5.9). The chapter concludes with a summary (5.10). Theoretical considerations arising from the findings, including how the findings fit with existing research, are addressed in the discussion chapter (chapter 6).

5.2 Introduction

Thematic analysis of the data allowed for the construction of themes and sub-themes. The research questions were not referred to during data analysis or as part of the write-up of this chapter in order to maintain an inductive approach where the nature of the research is exploratory, and the emphasis is placed on participants' constructions of their experiences rather than being framed by the research questions. The research questions are addressed as part of the discussion chapter (6), where previous literature is explored in relation to the findings. Figure 2 provides an overview of the constructed themes to aid orientation.

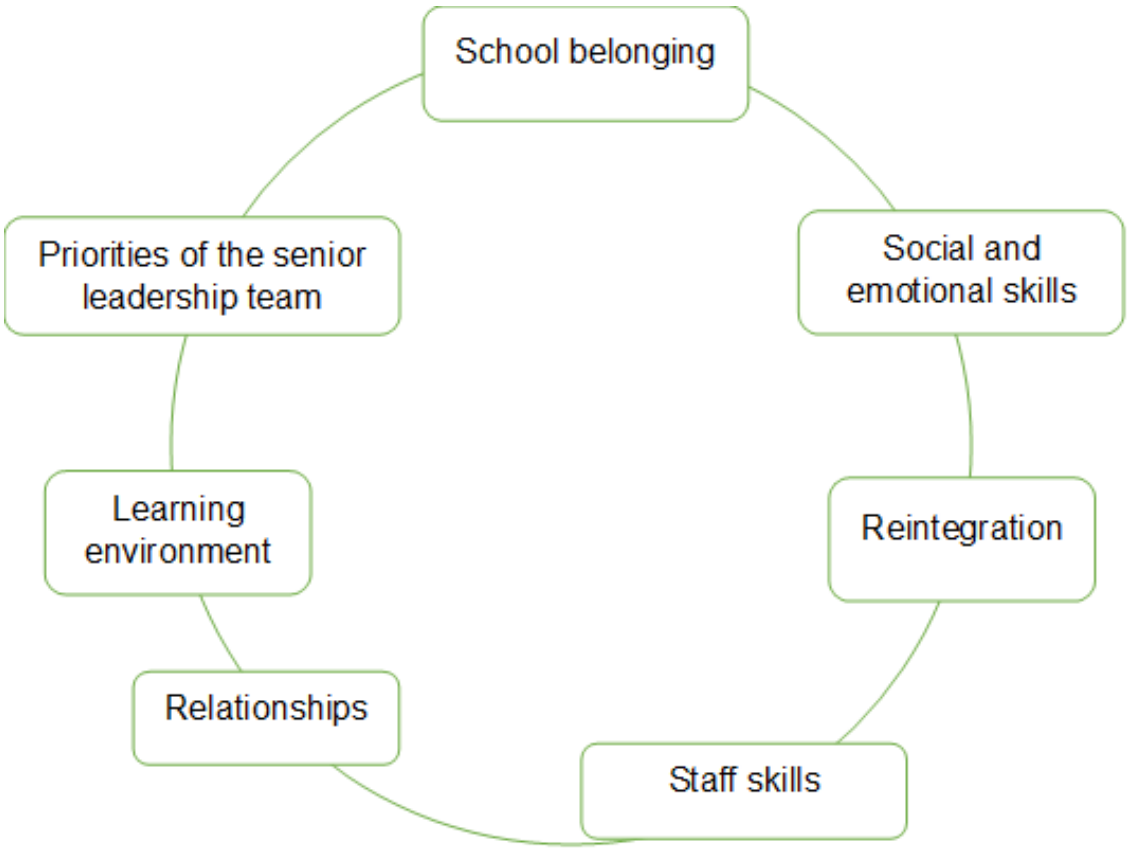

Figure 2 - Thematic map

As the process of data collection and analysis was subjective, where my judgement as a researcher was required to identify parts of the data which I felt were significant to participants, I have chosen not to report frequency counts in this research. This is advocated for by Braun and Clarke (2013), who suggest that robust qualitative research requires the researcher to recognise when quotations add value to the research questions and recommend that reporting on numbers of participants who discuss similar topics, lends itself more to quantitative research paradigms. With this in mind, themes were chosen for their richness of data, rather than because of a specific frequency that they represented.

In this chapter, each sub-theme is supported by illustrative quotations from the data. Several of the pupil quotations also include the question that I asked, to provide a context to the quotation when needed. Where this occurs the term ‘researcher’ is indicated in parenthesis and my speech has been written in bold.

5.3 Theme One: School belonging

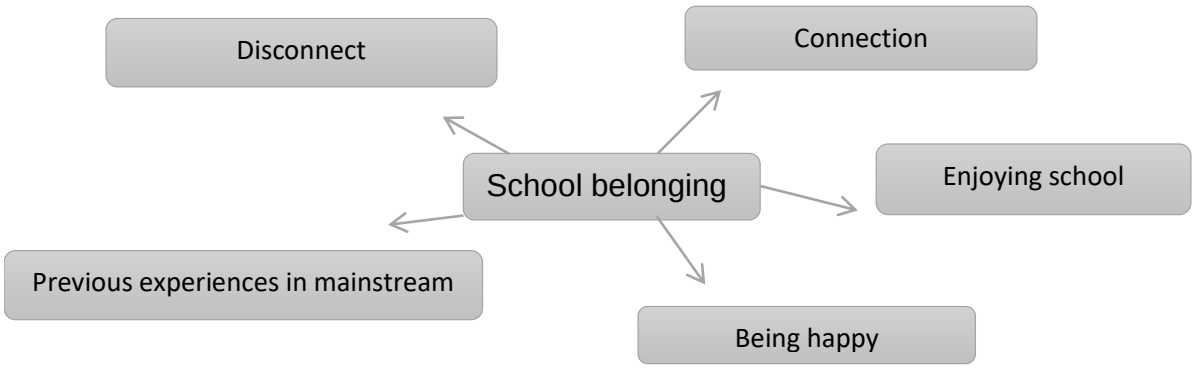

Figure 3 - Thematic map of theme one

This theme refers to the views of pupils and primary caregivers, who felt that the pupils developing a sense of school belonging was a positive outcome from attending the PRU. Pupils and primary caregivers discussed constructs that evoked feelings of belonging to a school and to their education. The theme is made up of five sub-themes. Table 2 indicates that this theme was discussed primarily by pupils, but that primary caregivers also commented on several of the sub-themes. Staff did not discuss this theme.

Table 2 - *Participant group who commented on each sub-theme*

Sub-theme	Participant group who discussed sub-theme		
	Pupils	**Primary caregivers**	**Staff**
Connection	X	X	
Enjoying school	X	X	
Being happy		X	
Previous experiences in mainstream	X		
Disconnect	X		

5.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Connection

This sub-theme reflects feelings of connection towards the PRU, expressed by pupils and primary caregivers. James, a pupil, reflected on how his diagnosis of attention deficit/hyperactive disorder (AD/HD) had affected his feelings of ‘fitting in’ at the PRU positively.

> *Here most kids have AD/HD… this is an anger issues school as well, and I've got a really bad temper. All the other schools I've been to... the kids don't have AD/HD, and when I went to [previous school] I was the only kid in the school who had AD/HD* (James, pupil).

Primary caregivers also reflected on how they felt that the pupils were part of a group and belonged in the school, rather than being deemed outsiders or cut off from a group.

> *For him I feel that he feels he fits in, yeah, instead of being compared to a class of thirty kids that you know he's the one that stands out* (Rheanne, primary caregiver).

They talked about the pupils being described as the 'naughty one' in class previously and that as a result of now being part of a group, the pupils were more engaged in the school.

> *I think the opportunity to be pupils again and to be a part, not just on the fringe, not just the 'naughty one' in a class, the chance to actually be at school* (Simone, primary caregiver).

5.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Enjoying school

This sub-theme was discussed by pupils and primary caregivers. Pupils spoke about enjoying coming to the PRU.

> *There's nothing not to like…* (Ryan, pupil).

They often compared it to their previous mainstream school, which they reflected on more negatively.

> *Well I thought it was a lot better when I came here... Like it was just better I thought* (Darren, pupil).

> *Yeah it's better… because every school I've been in has been terrible, but this one is much better (*Cory, pupil).

Primary caregivers discussed how the pupils were enjoying coming to school more because of the confidence they had developed in the PRU.

> *You can see it he's more confident, yeah he enjoys it [going to school]* (Rheanne, primary caregiver).

5.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Being happy

Primary caregivers commented on the importance of the pupils being happy and reflected on how they appeared much happier since attending the PRU. They discussed this happiness in relation to receiving a meaningful education.

> *… so whereas they are keeping him happy, keeping him playing, keeping his imagination going, he's kind of levelling off at a more happy standard* (Simone, primary caregiver).

One primary caregiver, Rheanne, referred to the positive effect that her child's improved happiness had on the family context.

> *Obviously he impacts the mood in the family home as would, I've got four kids, as would any of them. So yeah, him being here, he's more happy, he's happier* (Rheanne, primary caregiver).

5.3.4 Sub-theme 4: Previous negative experiences in mainstream

Pupils reflected on their previous experiences in mainstream school in a negative manner, particularly when reflecting on their exclusion.

> *I've been through eight different schools just for getting into fights. I went to this one school and the first day I got there I got permanently excluded… this kid choke holded me and then after I choke holded them* (James, pupil).

James used the phrase "I'm not allowed to go back" several times during his interview.

> *I'm not allowed to go back to [previous school]... that's what the head teacher said* (James, pupil).

Pupils described their previous mainstream schools as 'boring'. They discussed how they felt that the staff did not pay them any attention and the work was too easy for them. Darren described not wanting to return to his previous mainstream school because of this.

> *I don't want to go back to my old school, because there's a football thing where you can go in the football cage, but it's just boring outside of it* (Darren, pupil).

5.3.5 Sub-theme 5: Disconnect

This sub-theme refers to the feelings of disconnect that pupils expressed. Despite reflecting on their experiences in the PRU generally in a positive manner, the pupils spoke about wanting to be in a different setting.

> (Researcher) **What's the best thing to happen from being at this school?** (Pupil)... *Me leaving…* (Ryan, pupil).

They did not talk about wanting to return to their previous mainstream school, although they did view the PRU as a transient setting and expected that they would leave in the near future.

> *I think I've been here for about two years now maybe longer… I'd like to go to a different school now* (James, pupil).

Pupils also had conflicting views of their mainstream school and on several occasions reflected on it within the same sentence both positively and negatively.

> *I had to leave the school... well I wanted to leave the school, I hated it there. Well I had good friends there… I still miss it* (Cory, pupil).

5.4 Theme Two: Social and emotional skills

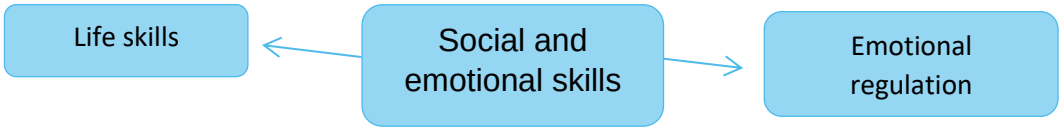

Figure 4 - Thematic map of theme two

This theme refers to participants' views regarding the development of pupils' social and emotional skills, which was seen as a positive outcome from attending the PRU. Specifically, participants discussed developments in the pupils' capacity to self-regulate their emotions and display fewer challenging behaviours as a result, as well as their capacity to develop 'life skills'. Table 3 indicates that this theme was spoken about by staff mostly, although pupils and primary caregivers commented on the importance of emotional regulation.

Table 3 - *Participant group who commented on each sub-theme*

Sub-theme	Participant group who discussed sub-theme		
	Pupils	**Primary caregivers**	**Staff**
Emotional regulation	X	X	X
Life skills			X

5.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Emotional regulation

This sub-theme reflects the perceptions of all three participant groups who felt that since starting at the PRU, the pupils had begun to develop their capacity to regulate their emotions and were displaying fewer challenging behaviours consequently. This was deemed by all participants as a significant difficulty that the pupils had experienced previously.

Pupils referred to their previous behaviours as 'bad' and reflected on how they were now 'good' in the PRU.

> (Researcher) **Has anything got better since starting at (PRU)?** (Pupil) *Me not being bad basically every day* (Darren, pupil)

Primary caregivers discussed how the pupils were better able to compromise with their peers, were less likely to get into conflict as a result, could say when they needed space, and appeared less agitated and irritated. As a result of these developments they were displaying fewer challenging behaviours such as swearing and hitting others. They often compared the pupils' behaviours in the PRU to their behaviours in their previous mainstream school when reflecting on improvements.

> *… he goes to play centre… and they say to me "What on earth have you done with [Cory], he's like a different child". He's so much more calmer, he's able to compromise more with other children, he's not getting into so many fights* (Suzy, primary caregiver).

As well as reflecting on the improvements seen in the pupils' capacity to self-regulate since attending the PRU, primary caregivers discussed this sub-theme in relation to their expectations for further developments in these skills.

> *[Discussing future hopes]… to teach him how to... manage his emotions and his feelings and instead of having outbursts, providing him with knowledge I suppose so he knows how else to deal with it instead of lashing out* (Rheanne, primary caregiver).

Primary caregivers also felt that the reduction in the pupils' challenging behaviours was affecting the family context positively. This was often referred to in relation to whether primary caregivers received phone calls from school when their child had been displaying challenging behaviours.

> *There was times where I had to come from, like I'd drop him off in [borough y] to come back to [borough x]. By the time I got back to [borough x], my phones popping turn off I gotta turn all the way back to come and get him. At the beginning when he first started coming to [PRU] it was like that… but now he's doing a lot better so I can breathe and plan days now… I can go and do shopping!* (Katy, primary caregiver).

Staff reflected on a range of ways in which the pupils have done this, including ‘using their voices’ to express themselves verbally, rather than physically. Staff discussed this positive outcome in relation to their role in providing support.

> …*[they’ve learnt] better coping mechanisms, how to use their voices... you know, to talk about things. And to try and work out what triggers, so they can avoid them or explain “Look this happens, that's how I feel about it”* (John, staff).

5.4.2 Sub-theme 2: ‘Life skills’

This sub-theme refers to the perceptions of staff members, who reflected on how they felt that it was important that the pupils developed social, emotional, and mental health ‘life skills’ that would support them into adulthood and throughout their lives.

> *I want all my children to… understand themselves, love themselves, feel that they are worthy and they’re valued, and they’re special and important… hopefully from that… they can make meaningful connections with other people, and ultimately as they get older, work and build meaningful lives, positive lives whatever that may be. But just positive and meaningful lives for themselves* (Melanie, staff).

These ‘life skills’ included developing; self-esteem, skills in communication, and relationship building as well as practical self-help skills. Staff hoped that by supporting pupils to develop these skills they would ensure that they had the best opportunity to become respected members of their communities as they grew older. They viewed pupils developing these ‘life skills’ as a positive outcome from attending the PRU.

> *I think the purpose is to find a way to manage their difficulties. The thing is it won't just be in school, its life skills as well… anything they learn here, they can take on and hopefully embed it so when they go out into the real world... it's like parenting* (Reece, staff).

5.5 Theme Three: Reintegration

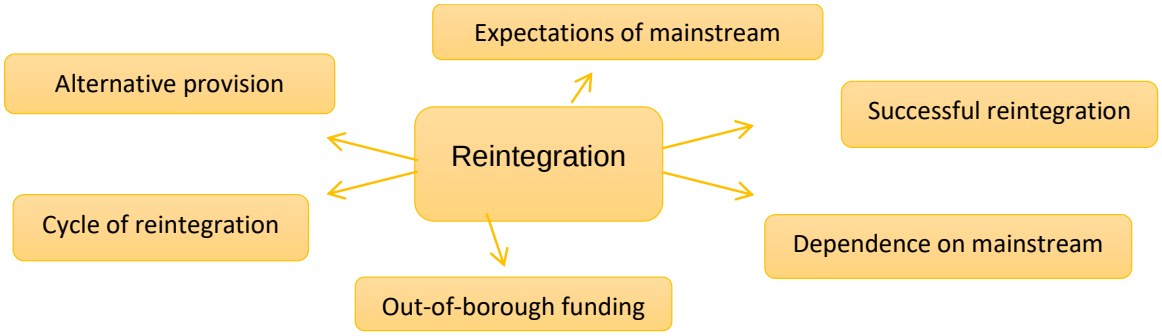

Figure 5 - Thematic map of theme three

This theme refers to participants' views regarding the act of integrating to another educational provision. The theme is made up of six sub-themes. Table 4 indicates that this theme was commented on by primary caregivers and staff mostly, although pupils also discussed their expectation of returning to mainstream education and the actions that they felt would enable a successful reintegration.

Table 4 - *Participant group who commented on each sub-theme*

Sub-theme	Participant group who discussed sub-theme		
	Pupils	**Primary caregivers**	**Staff**
Expectations of mainstream	X	X	X
Successful reintegration	X	X	X
Dependence on mainstream			X
Out-of-borough funding		X	
Cycle of reintegration		X	X
Alternative provision		X	X

5.5.1 Sub-theme 1: Expectations of mainstream

The hope of pupils reintegrating to a mainstream school was commented on by all three participant groups. All of the pupils spoke about wanting to return to a mainstream school and specifically used the word 'mainstream' when describing what school they would like to move to.

> (Researcher) **What else would you like to be doing?** (Pupil) *Be in a different school... mainstream* (Cory, pupil).

Their expectations were that the reintegration would happen in the near future. It was interesting to note that the pupils did not speak about wanting to return to their previous school.

> (Researcher) **What would be the best thing about being here?** (Pupil) *Me going [mainstream primary school]… but I'm going [mainstream primary school] anyway… that'll be Year 5* (James, pupil).

Primary caregivers also felt that reintegration to a mainstream setting would be a positive outcome for the pupils. They reflected on the measures that staff were putting in place to enable this.

> *The fact that he's even just got into a position where they feel like he is ready to integrate back into normal school, for me that's the last hurdle. Once he's in normal school and kind of functioning at just an 'under the radar' level then it's like, yes, now he can just concentrate and then he can do... anything is in his sights* (Simone, primary caregiver).

Staff commented on how the PRU was designed to be a short-term intervention for pupils. They spoke about how the primary aim of the PRU was to facilitate a successful reintegration to mainstream for the pupils. These views are reflected in the PRU's mission statement which is discussed in the introduction chapter (section 2.5).

> *They come to [PRU], as like a little stop, to try and make some strategies and interventions to help manage their behaviour and actually get them back into mainstream school* (Reece, staff).

5.5.2 Sub-theme 2: Successful reintegration

All three participant groups discussed actions that enabled pupils to reintegrate to mainstream education successfully. Pupils felt that staff procedures for supporting them when they transitioned to another setting helped it to become a

successful transition. These procedures included multi-disciplinary meetings, visiting the new setting with the pupil, and discussing the transition in class.

> (Researcher) **And do you think this school can help you get there?**
> (Pupil) *Yeah… because they have meetings, stuff like reintegration, and I would go there [to the new school] with them* (Ryan, pupil).

Primary caregivers and staff also discussed how an enabling factor in the achievement of a successful reintegration was staff from the PRU going with the pupils to their mainstream school.

> *I feel that he would transition better into a mainstream from here, with somebody from here* (Suzy, primary caregiver).

They felt that it was important for the pupils to have a transitional person, in order to ensure the reintegration was successful.

> *I'm working with a child in my class who has got built a relationship with me, so it's obvious I should be the one that should go back to mainstream...* (Reece, staff).

Staff reflected on how they felt that having high expectations of the pupils in relation to their 'behaviour for learning' was an enabling factor in a successful reintegration. It did this by preparing the pupils for different education settings, where there would be more of an emphasis on their learning behaviours and there would be a higher expectation in relation to the academic work they would produce.

> *I think definitely one of the goals here is to set them up for different settings, and to be honest about it and truthful and tell them what it is actually like. It's not all what they want to do all day long, a lot of it they won't want to do it but that it isn't it. Hopefully it sinks in, I don't know* (Leanne, staff).

5.5.3 Sub-theme 3: Dependence on mainstream

Staff discussed how a successful reintegration was dependent on the attitudes that the receiving mainstream school had towards reintegration and inclusion, and this dependence could act as a barrier to a successful reintegration.

> *… it is dependent on the school and the pastoral care at the school* (John, staff).

Melanie, a staff member, spoke about how mainstream schools were under intense government pressure to reach targets and evidence progress, which often came at the expense of the pupils as they were not able to develop their social and emotional skills. She felt that, as a result, pupils with special educational needs (SEN) may not be included in the setting.

> *How do you teach these thirty plus students, get all the data that you have to get so that you can be outstanding, and then you've got the child who is hyperactive or has SEN…* (Melanie, staff).

Melanie also spoke about how she felt that mainstream schools had a lack of knowledge in supporting pupils with special educational needs, which meant that they were not able to include all pupils in the school appropriately. She felt that this stemmed from the lack of training that mainstream staff receive in this area as part of their initial teacher training.

> *Mainstream schools don't actually have the experience and the skill set to work with… they don't understand SEN [special educational needs] kids, they don't get that training* (Melanie, staff).

5.5.4 Sub-theme 4: Out-of-borough funding

Primary caregivers were concerned that the amount of staff support the pupils' received during their reintegration was related to the level of funding that each pupil received based on which borough they lived in.

> *He was getting very anxious about it as well, because I think I was all over the place because no one was giving me any definitive answer about*

> *where he was going in September. It's appalling isn't it… just because you are in another borough...* (Suzy, primary caregiver).

Primary caregivers discussed how they often moved homes across different boroughs, and they were concerned about how this would affect the level of support their child received. Katy, a primary caregiver, spoke about how the staff member supporting her child's reintegration to mainstream was only funded if her child moved to a within-borough mainstream school, which may not be possible for her family.

> *… when he moves, if he goes to a school in [borough] they will go with him, so they will go in with him, but if I have to move out he ain't gonna have that and that's what I don't want, for him to come from this...* (Katy, primary caregiver).

5.5.5 Sub-theme 5: Cycle of reintegration

Both primary caregivers and staff reflected on how they felt that the pupils in the PRU were at risk of entering a cycle of reintegration to mainstream, where they experience unsuccessful reintegration and return to the PRU several times throughout their education.

> *They are hoping to send him back to mainstream, and I'm hoping that he'll be able to hack it now, but it's going to be touch wood…* (Katy, primary caregiver).

They discussed how this was linked to feelings of rejection for the pupils.

> *… the kids that are now being integrated, I have concerns for them, failing and then coming back. And that's horrifying, because they've been here, they've felt the fear already, they've felt the rejection already, they've been put in before they are ready, and they've learnt enough to get through* (Melanie, staff).

5.5.6 Sub-theme 6: Alternative provision

This sub-theme reflects the views of primary caregivers and staff, who felt that pupils who reintegrate to mainstream from the PRU were not entering the most appropriate provision for their needs necessarily.

> *People talk about mainstream ready, but I think a lot of these kids are not fit for mainstream* (Leanne, staff).

Rheanne, a primary caregiver, commented on her hopes that her child, Darren, would attend an alternative provision in the future rather than a mainstream school.

> *As long as he's somewhere where he's happy that's the main thing. I don't think he would cope in a mainstream […] I've heard of another [special] school that some other children from here have gone to, so I think it's about doing research on that, that's better…* (Rheanne, primary caregiver).

Staff members felt that reintegration to mainstream would not necessarily be the most appropriate path for all of the pupils at the PRU. They spoke about how they hoped that the pupils would integrate to an appropriate provision that would meet their needs, whether that be mainstream or an alternative provision.

> *We're able to put a team around the child where we can find a successful pathway. I mean it may not be back to mainstream, it may be to the most suitable provision for them* (Shamima, staff).

Staff members spoke about how the borough was lacking in a range of alternative provisions and therefore pupils who may not be suited to mainstream education continued to be reintegrated to mainstream unsuccessfully.

> *…a lot of these kids are not fit for mainstream. They need an in-between setting, which I think is lacking in this borough especially* (John, staff).

Reece, a staff member, reflected on how he felt that whilst primary caregivers often spoke about wanting their children to reintegrate to mainstream, this may not be what they were feeling necessarily.

> *It will be interesting to find out what the parents think about this school, why their children are here and the end goal, because a lot of the time, I don't think they think "Oh I want my child back in mainstream", but they say it because they think that is the right thing to say, or that's where their child should be. When in actual fact, a lot of the time this is the best place for their children to be* (Reece, staff).

5.6 Theme Four: Staff skills

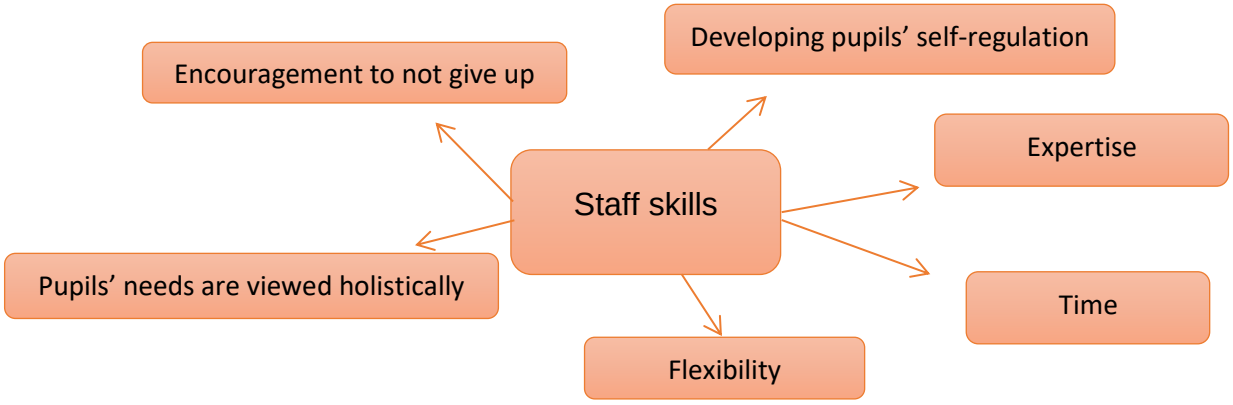

Figure 6 – Thematic map of theme four

Evident in participant accounts was the feeling that the PRU staff embodied a range of skills which supported pupils and their families. This theme is made up of six sub-themes. Table 5 indicates which group of participants commented on each sub-theme. This theme was discussed by primary caregivers and staff mostly, although pupils also commented on the theme in relation to staff members' expertise and skills in regulating their emotions.

Table 5 - *Participant group who commented on each sub-theme*

Sub-theme	Participant group who discussed sub-theme		
	Pupils	**Primary caregivers**	**Staff**
Developing pupils' self-regulation	X	X	X
Expertise	X	X	X
Time		X	X
Flexibility		X	X
Pupils needs are viewed holistically			X
Encouragement to not give up		X	X

5.6.1 Sub-theme 1: Developing pupils' self-regulation

All three participant groups discussed how they felt that staff were skilled in supporting the developing of pupils' emotional regulation skills, by increasing their capacity to self-regulate. Pupils often discussed the practical strategies that staff offered them to support their emotional regulation, such as providing them with comforting objects and using emotions cards.

> *Adults helping me to calm down… they offer me food, offer me time out… helpful stuff* (Cory, pupil).

> *After I can ask them if I want some space, and after they give me a football or something to use to calm down (Darren, pupil).*

Ryan, a pupil, spoke about how this contrasted with the strategies used by staff in his previous mainstream school, where he was excluded as a result of the difficulty he experienced regulating his emotions.

> (Researcher) **Is that different to your old school?** (Pupil) *Yeah there they didn't calm anyone down, they just kicked them out…* (Ryan, pupil).

Primary caregivers reflected on how the PRU staff had a range of strategies they used to support the pupils' emotional expression and regulation. They felt that staff in the PRU reacted in a different manner to staff in mainstream settings.

> *They've set up strategies for [Cory], he's got emotions cards and things like that. I think that's a really good idea, so if he's struggling, he'll hold his cards up in class. So instead of [Cory] shouting out or running around, they're trying to get it so he can tell them himself* (Suzy, primary caregiver).

Staff discussed how supporting pupils to self-regulate their emotions would result in the achievement of a range of positive outcomes for the pupils, including; successful reintegration and the development of 'life skills'. Staff reflected on the practical strategies they offered, which were also mentioned by primary caregivers, such as emotions cards and timeout cards.

> *The strategies that we come up with, like individual strategies for the kids to help manage their emotions and behaviour and things like the time out cards, doing interventions with them and stuff like that, that can help them get back into mainstream and be able to sustain the things that they've learnt here... so we do that quite well* (Reece, staff).

5.6.2 Sub-theme 2: Expertise

All three participant groups discussed how the PRU staff had particular expertise in supporting pupils with social, emotional, and mental health needs. They reflected on how this expertise supported the development of the pupils' self-esteem and emotional regulation, which subsequently reduced the incidence of challenging behaviours.

> *He's able to be better supported with people that have knowledge in... more knowledge than a mainstream, you know, with... troubled kids I suppose, for whatever reasons* (Rheanne, primary caregiver).

Rheanne, a primary caregiver, went on to discuss how she felt that the PRU staff had more expertise in this area than she did as a caregiver.

> *Although I could try really hard, I don't have the knowledge that a teacher does. I've not studied for that amount of time* (Rheanne, primary caregiver).

Staff discussed how the expertise they had developed through the training they had received whilst at the PRU had provided them with the knowledge and skills to support the pupils appropriately.

> *Staff training is key, so we do refresher behaviour management training which I deliver, and we go through the systems and structures. We do safeguarding refreshers as well at the start of term so staff are prepared* (Shamima, staff).

One pupil, James, discussed how staff were skilled in restraining pupils appropriately, when necessary. He reflected on how this meant that pupils were less likely to enter physical conflict with their peers. He felt that staff in his previous mainstream school did not have these skills.

> *When I was at [previous school], when I used to get into a fight the teachers would hold me, but they wouldn't be as… they wouldn't hold me enough* (James, pupil).

5.6.3 Sub-theme 3: Time

Primary caregivers and staff discussed how they felt that the additional time that staff gave to pupils when working with them encouraged the development of positive relationships between staff and pupils.

> *Here… they've got time for him* (Suzy, primary caregiver).

Primary caregivers felt that the staff gave the pupils more time than they had received from staff in mainstream settings previously. This time was provided both at an academic level in relation to their learning and also at a social level.

> *… and people have got more time for him. Whereas in a mainstream it's like "Oh just wait your turn" and that's what he can't do* (Katy, primary caregiver).

Staff spoke about how giving pupils' time allowed them to share their views and succeed in learning.

> *I think because they've got time to be heard* (John, staff).

5.6.4 Sub-theme 4: Flexibility

Primary caregivers and staff spoke about how they felt that staff were flexible in their approach to supporting the pupils and based this approach on the individual needs of the pupils each day.

> *They know how to just see how he is and go like "You alright" and see how he is, and work with it that way, whereas other schools they don't do that* (Katy, primary caregiver).

> *It depends on what the kids need, they might need a place to run around because they're hyper. They might need a quiet place to sit because they've heard yelling all morning, or something's happened the night before…* (Melanie, staff).

One staff member, Leanne, spoke about how the head teacher of the primary PRU encouraged and allowed staff to be flexible in their approach.

> *[Head of centre] is really good at saying, "Actually if they are not managing don't worry about that literacy lesson it doesn't matter". Which is really nice. Whereas you couldn't have done that in mainstream school* (Leanne, staff).

5.6.5 Sub-theme 5: Pupil needs are viewed holistically

Staff members spoke about how they were skilled in viewing the pupils' needs holistically when supporting them, by considering their family context and developmental history.

> *… their parents have problems and… it's impacting heavily on them. They see behaviour that is unacceptable at home through their parents, or they've suffered trauma and it's got to come out somewhere hasn't it* (John, staff).

Staff felt that by acknowledging the effect of the pupils' home life, they were able to provide support which encouraged the development of the pupils' 'life skills', considered to be a positive outcome.

> *… there's some kids here that even struggle to peel an orange or open a packet of crisps because a lot of them are quite reliant on their parents. Because I think a lot of the parents have attachment issues as well, where they just want to keep the kids as kids and it's not helpful for them growing up... they need those life skills* (Reece, staff).

5.6.6 Sub-theme 6: Encouragement not to give up

This sub-theme was discussed by Katy (a primary caregiver) and Melanie (a staff member). They reflected on how staff encouraged the pupils to not give up on themselves, which developed their sense of self-esteem and resilience, and built positive relationships between the staff and pupils in the PRU.

> *They just encourage them…. encourage them more, to do things, not to give up* (Katy, primary caregiver).

> *I want to empower them to know that whatever happens this is their skill set; you have this power. It's so much more of that work… We do a lot of PSHE to build resilience during the day* (Melanie, staff).

5.7 Theme Five: Relationships

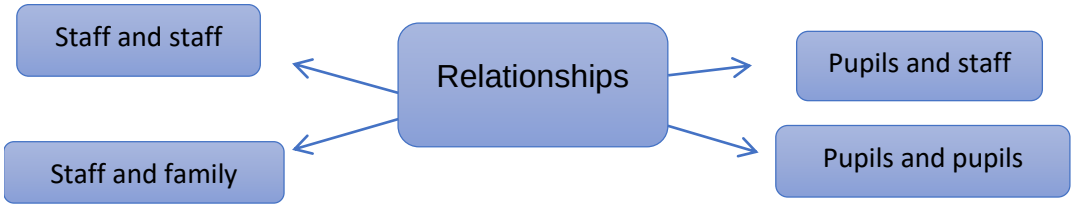

Figure 7 - Thematic map of theme five

This theme reflects the perceptions of participants regarding relationships they had experienced and the importance of these. Relationships with family, primary caregivers, school, staff, and pupils were all discussed. This theme is made up of

four sub-themes. Table 6 indicates which group of participants commented on each sub-theme.

Table 6 - *Participant group who commented on each sub-theme*

Sub-theme	Participant group who discussed sub-theme		
	Pupils	**Primary caregivers**	**Staff**
Pupils and staff	X	X	X
Pupils and pupils	X	X	
Staff and family		X	X
Staff and staff			X

5.7.1 Sub-theme 1: Pupils and staff

The relationships experienced between pupils and staff, both in the PRU and in the pupils' previous mainstream schools, were discussed by all participants. Participants reflected on the positive relationships between pupils and PRU staff, and pupils anticipated that they would miss the staff when they reintegrated to another mainstream education setting.

> (Researcher) **What will you miss about it?** (Pupil) *Teachers … they do everything to help me…* (Ryan, pupil).

Pupils discussed the activities that they did together during the school day, and the positive effect this had on them.

> *Here every kid goes to lunch at the same time and some teachers…* (Researcher) **So you all have lunch together?** (Pupil) *Yeah sometimes, well my teacher does anyway. I think it's way better* (Darren, pupil).

Primary caregivers reflected on how the positive relationships between pupils and PRU staff made the pupils feel supported and trusted, which evoked feelings of belonging to the PRU. Simone, a primary caregiver, spoke about how she felt that the staff knew her child's personality very well and were able to provide tailored support, based on their understanding of his needs.

> *She's very aware, but then even her approach is very much like everybody else's here. It's just targeted on him and it just helps that she knows him really, really well so she can feed back to them what he likes and what he doesn't like and things like that* (Simone, primary caregiver).

Staff reflected on how the positive relationships they had with pupils were not based on academia solely, but that the pupils also felt emotionally valued and that their opinions were valid.

> *I told them that I agreed […]. That helps my kids because they feel heard, they feel respected. The fact that I've agreed with them, the fact that they're not thinking "Oh I'm a kid"* (Melanie, staff).

Staff members discussed how promoting the pupils' opinions not only developed their sense of belonging in the PRU, but it also prepared them to reintegrate to a new setting.

> *The staff are given a lot of time to get to know the kids really well, if you only have six in a class you do generally know them inside out and that allows you to get them ready [for reintegration]* (Leanne, staff).

When reflecting on previous relationships with staff in their mainstream schools, pupils had mixed views. James discussed the positive relationship he had with a teacher in his previous mainstream school. However, Ryan talked about the negative relationships he had with staff in his previous mainstream school and how he did not want to see those individuals again.

> *… not really anyone liked it there, I didn't like it, I don't think anyone liked it… Because the head teacher, she's nasty, she's rude…* (Ryan, pupil).

5.7.2 Sub-theme 2: Pupils and pupils

Both pupils and primary caregivers reflected on the relationships that pupils had experienced with their peers, both in their previous mainstream schools and in the PRU. These relationships were discussed in both a positive and negative manner. Pupils reflected on the positive relationships they had made in the PRU

and how these friendships came with practical benefits such as having more people to play with. They compared these friendships to negative peer relationships that they had experienced in their previous mainstream school.

> *[At my previous school, I felt] sad... because no one really wanted to play with me. But here, more people want to play with me. Because all of us in this school have AD/HD, so it's good* (James, pupil).

One primary caregiver, Simone, spoke about how her child had developed an understanding of the needs of his peers, and through this he was able to interact with others positively.

> *Whereas kids would be reluctant to play with him or they see his behaviour as angry, whereas here they have the holistic approach and the kids know when to back off each other and then they come and support each other… so I think that helps them have those close friendships* (Simone, primary caregiver).

In contrast, pupils also spoke about the negative peer relationships they had experienced in the PRU and the potentially transient nature of these relationships as a result of pupils not attending the PRU long-term.

> *Some of the kids think that they push me around and they tell me to go get a glass of water or something like that. The first time I'll do it for them but then after, if they keep on just telling me and asking me over and over again I won't do it* (James, pupil).

> *I know [pupil] is going soon, so that's good because he is quite moody and fussy* (Darren, pupil).

Pupils also reflected on the positive relationships that they had with pupils in their previous mainstream school, which influenced their perceptions.

> *Well I had good friends there… I still miss it* (Cory, pupil).

Pupils discussed the expectation that they will have more friends when they reintegrate to mainstream school and this was why they wanted to go there.

> *When I go to a mainstream school I'm going to finish school at three thirty, because I'd like to see my friends for a bit longer. Then after I'll have more friends…* (James, pupil).

5.7.3 Sub-theme 3: Staff and family

Both primary caregivers and staff reflected on the importance of having a positive relationship with one another.

> *there's been times when I've had such a hard time with [James] and I'll be there on the phone crying and they've sent someone out to see [James]... and check that I'm all right…* (Katy, primary caregiver).

Primary caregivers felt that staff supported the family by being aware of the effect that the home environment could have on the pupils. They reported how the PRU staff provided practical support, such as arranging logistics for single-primary caregiver families, as well as emotional support. This was often in contrast to their views of staff in mainstream schools.

> *When I had the baby, three weeks old I fell down one step and I broke my ankle and the support I received from the school... they would pick [Darren] up and they would bring him home every day… and if that was the mainstream school I would not have had that support and it would have been sort of tough really so... yeah, I'm very grateful for that* (Rheanne, primary caregiver).

Through the development of this supportive relationship, primary caregivers discussed how they felt that staff listened when they shared information about their children, which then guided the actions of the staff. This developed their confidence as a caregiver and placed them as the 'expert' of their child.

> *Once I said to [PRU staff member] "Stop saying that, just leave him, he'll calm down" they were like "OK" and that's what they've been doing*

> *because he hasn't come home and said anything* (Katy, primary caregiver).

Staff spoke about the importance of primary caregivers feeling supported by the PRU. They promoted this by speaking to primary caregivers daily, acknowledging the vulnerability in some of the families, and considering difficult previous relationships between primary caregivers and schools. Staff felt that by having a good relationship with the families, the primary caregivers would be able to support the pupils appropriately.

> *Parent support is key for us to be able to help these children. We need to get the parents on board, supporting with homework, behaviour strategies at home […]. A lot of our parents have had their own mental health difficulties where we've been able to utilise CAMHS and other people to get them the help they need as well. Which is, in the end, going to help them help their child* (Shamima, staff).

Staff discussed the importance of speaking to primary caregivers daily. They felt that this strategy helped them to support the pupils throughout the school day. The staff discussed how this communication led them to know the families well, which enabled staff to ensure that the primary caregivers felt supported.

> *… here, every day I go outside and speak to the parents and give them a detailed check-in about the day. And also in the morning they can tell us… maybe they haven't slept, didn't want to eat breakfast, that sort of thing. So that's massive, that allows us to support them* (Leanne, staff).

5.7.4 Sub-theme 4: Staff and staff

All staff members spoke about the importance of having positive relationships with each other. They described the staff team as being close-knit and supportive.

> *We're all a team together and I think everyone here is really good at that, so the children see that the staff genuinely get along here, so I think that's quite nice for the children* (Shamima, staff).

They discussed how knowing each other well allowed them to provide each other with the appropriate level of support when working with the pupils. They also discussed how through these positive relationships they were modelling positive social skills to the pupils.

> *Everyone gives each other that time with the children that they need to be with, but at the same time jump in if it's getting too much… It's quite a good example of how to build relationships for them* (Leanne, staff).

Staff reflected on how having a small team meant that they felt comfortable in sharing ideas openly and also challenging each other's views in a constructive manner. They felt that open communication within the team allowed them to support the pupils and families.

> *… just having a really small team I was able to go to [PRU inclusion officer] and say "You need to support [pupil]'s mum, she's really struggling" whereas in a mainstream school you wouldn't have that as much* (Leanne, staff).

One staff member, Shamima, felt that she had not been able to develop a positive relationship with staff from the pupils' excluding mainstream schools, as there was not an opportunity to meet them and share information. She felt that this was a barrier to being able to support the families.

> *… like they only got one kid's file now and he's been here a year. I think there needs to be a better link between the mainstream and the PRU. I think they send them here and it's almost like their responsibility is gone, and that's a barrier to helping the families* (Shamima, staff).

5.8 Theme Six: Learning environment

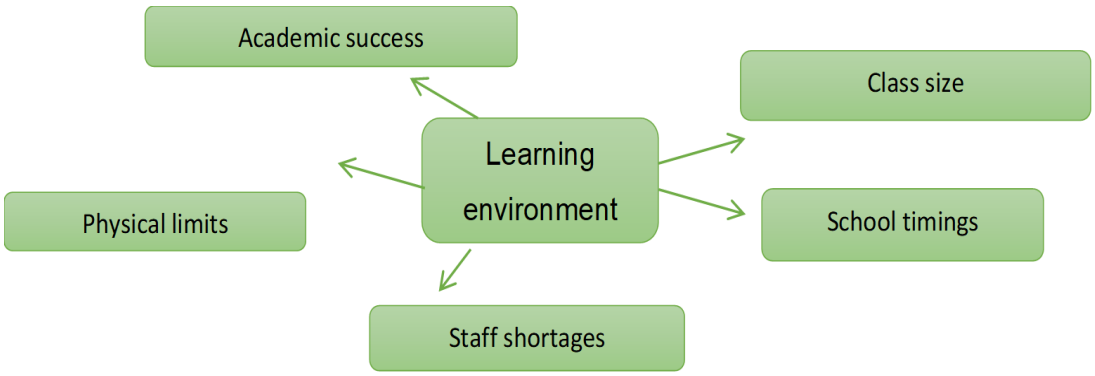

Figure 8 - Thematic map of theme six

This theme refers to the learning environment of the PRU and explores issues regarding the physical PRU environment in relation to learning, as well as the effect of financial cuts on pupils' academic success. The theme is made up of five sub-themes. Table 7 indicates that the participant groups discussed an equal number of sub-themes.

Table 7 - *Participant group who commented on each sub-theme*

Sub-theme	Participant group who discussed sub-theme		
	Pupils	**Primary caregivers**	**Staff**
Academic success	X	X	X
Class size	X	X	
School timings		X	
Staff shortages			X
Physical limits	X		X

5.8.1 Sub-theme 1: Academic success

All three participants groups discussed how the pupils had begun to engage more in their learning since attending the PRU and were making more academic progress.

> *Sometimes he doesn't want to do his homework, but he actually come and do it… and sometimes you've just got to look at him and remember how*

> *far he's come from… yeah he's definitely getting there* (Simone, primary caregiver).

Pupils spoke about a range of academic skills they had developed, proudly. Their sense of achievement in this area was linked to their feelings of belonging.

> *My handwriting… and my reading as well. Because before I wasn't really able to read that well and now when I came to this school, I learnt to read… They teach me different things, some things I already know. I did year five work, I did year six work!* (Ryan, pupil).

Primary caregivers reflected on how the pupils were more willing to engage in the learning since attending the PRU and took more pride in the work they produced. This was, in part, owing to the developments in their academic attainment, as well as their levels of motivation.

> *Writing, he's starting to do his writing now whereas before you'd have no chance with his writing. If he didn't want to do it then he ain't doing it, but now I think because he can read, and he can read what he's writing, he doesn't mind doing it* (Katy, primary caregiver).

> *He's learning, which is fantastic, and he wants to work hard which I never thought I'd see. He's learning, and he wasn't learning before* (Suzy, primary caregiver).

One staff member, Leanne, spoke about the importance she placed on pupils 'behaviour for learning' and how she hoped that a positive outcome would be for the pupils…

> *… to be ready to learn more, to be open about the learning experience. We talk a lot about learning behaviours, what do they look like, even just sitting at a desk properly, the kids just don't know how to do it and they're just lying around the table, feet up on the table, they're just not ready for the learning. So for me that is something that I work quite hard on* (Leanne, staff).

5.8.2 Sub-theme 2: Class size

This sub-theme refers to the views of pupils and primary caregivers regarding class sizes in the PRU. They felt that the smaller class sizes in the PRU were better than mainstream classes as they were quieter which helped to ensure that the pupils were not overloaded with information.

> *What happens when there's more people?... it's almost like it's a bit of an overload for him and he will just…* (Rheanne, primary caregiver).

James, a pupil, preferred having a smaller class size as he received more attention from staff, who had more opportunities to support him. He felt this had a positive effect on his capacity to be part of the lesson.

> *… in [previous school] there used to be twenty-nine other kids, I always used to put my hand up and then after the teachers wouldn't even do anything. They never even picked me they'd always pick someone else, because once everyone got picked five times in one lesson and I only got picked once or no times* (James, pupil).

This perspective was reflected by Simone, a primary caregiver. She felt that fewer pupils in the classroom meant that the pupils received more attention from staff, which they needed to engage in the learning.

> *Because if you're in a class of thirty you have to wait till the teacher gets round to you, and by the time the teachers got round to see [child] he's… I don't know what* (Simone, primary caregiver).

One primary caregiver, Rheanne, reflected on how smaller classes had a positive effect on her child's happiness.

> *[his happiness]… it's a lot to do with the amount of people that is in this school* (Rheanne, primary caregiver).

In contrast, pupils Darren and Ryan spoke about how they felt that there were too many other pupils in the class. Darren felt that this got in the way of his learning as it created an environment that was too noisy for him to concentrate in.

> *Everybody just distracts you, and then when you're counting up in your head, you can't really count because everyone's just counting as well and then it just confuses you* (Darren, pupil).

5.8.3 Sub-theme 3: School timings

Primary caregivers discussed the fact that the shorter length of the school day, in comparison to mainstream schools, had a negative effect on the family dynamic.

> *[having a shorter school day]… it affects the whole family dynamic, because obviously I am a single parent and I'm bringing in the money… so I've got a house to run, a child to clothe and feed. So it has an impact on everything, it's not just [Cory]'s school place at the end of the day, it's the whole*… (Suzy, Primary caregiver).

Primary caregivers discussed how the school timings affected them on Fridays particularly, when school finished at lunchtime. They spoke about how the half day was not preparing the pupils to reintegrate into mainstream successfully, where the school days would be longer.

> *On Friday they have a half day… I find that odd, only because then when the child goes back to normal school it seems longer and it's a bit…* (Simone, primary caregiver).

They discussed these issues in relation to their capacity to work and the salary that they were able to earn, specifically. This resulted in them feeling unsupported.

> *And then on the Friday they finish at 12:15 which is really, really difficult. I've had to give up working Fridays*… (Suzy, primary caregiver).

5.8.4 Sub-theme 4: Staff shortages

Staff members discussed how a lack of funding in the PRU had led to staff shortages, which affected the level of support that the staff were able to provide to the pupils.

> *It's difficult when it comes to staffing and funding to make sure they've got that support. I think more staff really would help!* (Shamima, staff).

Staff spoke about how time constraints existed as a result of a lack of staff, which meant that the pupils were missing out on pastoral support such as preparation for their transition and staff attendance at relevant meetings.

> *More could be done to get teachers or LAs, who are equally as important in the job, to be at those meetings. Because we're with the kids six hours a day, we know the kids. So to me that's a barrier in supporting the families* (Leanne, staff).

One staff member, Shamima, felt that the PRU should recruit a new member of staff to support with pupil transitions and to engage primary caregivers.

… you know if there was an actual parent liaison officer across the college that would be really beneficial (Shamima, staff).

5.8.5 Sub-theme 5: Physical limits

This sub-theme refers to the views of pupils and staff. James, a pupil, felt that in the PRU there was a lack of physical space to run around. He compared this to his previous mainstream school, where he felt that he was able to burn off his energy.

> *There's lots of space just to run around in [previous school] and when I run around out there, I don't lose my energy at all. My energy could last me…* (James, pupil).

Leanne, a primary caregiver, felt that a lack of physical teaching resources in the PRU meant that staff were not able to teach the pupils in a manner that would be

most beneficial to their academic development. She reflected on how it was difficult to engage the pupils in the learning without the appropriate resources and felt that this acted as a barrier to their academic success.

> *Because there are four sites and the finance thing is one hub, they don't know the reality […]. They were saying "Why are you buying weighing scales?" because there's no weighing scales, how are you meant to learn weight without weighing scales. You can't hand these kids a worksheet and say read the scales, it's boring, it's not going to engage them at all* (Leanne, staff).

5.9 Theme Seven: Priorities of the senior leadership team

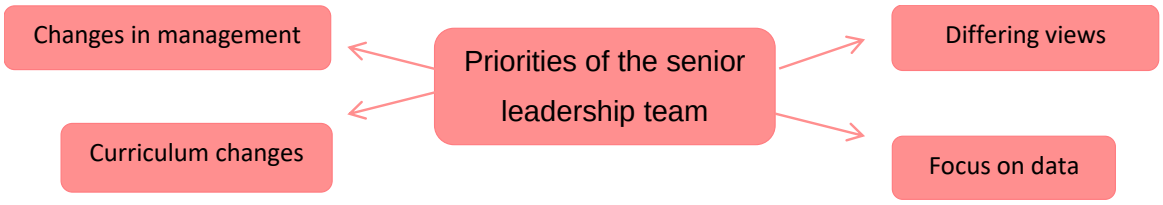

Figure 9 - Thematic map of theme seven

This theme reflects the views of staff members, who felt that the senior leadership team who managed the consortium of PRUs had different priorities to the teaching staff. They often viewed these differing priorities as a barrier to the achievement of positive outcomes for the pupils in the PRU. The theme is made up of four sub-themes. Table 8 indicates that this theme was discussed by one participant group, that of staff members.

Table 8 - *Participant group who commented on each sub-theme*

Sub-theme	Participant group who discussed sub-theme		
	Pupils	**Primary caregivers**	**Staff**
Differing views			X
Focus on data			X
Curriculum changes			X
Changes in management			X

5.9.1 Sub-theme 1: Differing views

Staff members discussed how there were differences of opinion between the PRU teaching team and the senior leadership team (SLT).

> *SLT have their own priorities and aren't in the classroom so don't really know the realities of it. So I hear these things like "They must make five percent progress" and I can't help but think he hasn't sat at a desk independently for weeks… What can I do you know? The fact that he's in a classroom is a miracle for some of these kids* (Leanne, staff).

These included contrasting views on issues such as progress, reintegration, priority placed on teaching 'life skills', and the availability of resources.

> *I think certain people are fixated on progress and mainstream but… we're here to educate don't get me wrong, but not solely on academic things. They have to accept that it's an SEN school in all but name. There needs to be more PSHE, more social and emotional learning in place. The children can learn techniques in resilience and model it and work with it, because that's what's going to help them more than catching up on what they've lost academically. That side of it is what they really need. That's what they tend to be missing, I think* (John, staff).

5.9.2 Sub-theme 2: Focus on data

Staff discussed how there had been a recent focus from the senior leadership team on staff evidencing the pupils' academic progress through data and reports. Staff felt that the academic progress which the pupils were expected to be making was in line with expectations of pupils in mainstream schools, which was not attainable.

> *We cannot run this school as a mainstream school and still expect them to thrive and progress the way that you want them to. It feels like the soul of the school and the needs of the children have now come second place to data and curriculum* (Melanie, staff).

Staff felt that this focus came at the expense of being able to support the development of the pupils' social, emotional, and mental health skills. Staff spoke about how the focus on producing data on academic progress meant that the pupils were reintegrating to mainstream without having developed their social and emotional skills, which meant that the transition was less likely to be successful and they would thus enter a cycle of reintegration.

> *… it was all about… data progress, data progress, how are we going to get more learning outcomes met… it was very curriculum driven. All the things we were doing to meet their emotional behavioural has been wiped out […] If you can help them to get centred every day, and when they're not managing, if you can help them to become self-sufficient at self-regulation, that's what's going to help them succeed and not come back. Not meeting outcomes…* (John, staff).

5.9.3 Sub-theme 3: Curriculum changes

Staff members discussed how the recent changes that had been made to the curriculum in the PRU were a barrier to the achievement of positive outcomes for the pupils.

> *The whole timetable was changed, all BFL [behaviour for learning] was taken out for academic intervention. In the afternoon we used to have choosing, now it's literally curriculum all the way through […]. You're not giving the kids what they need… they'll manage but it's not the life-long resilience skills they need…* (Melanie, staff).

5.9.4 Sub-theme 4: Changes in management

Melanie, a staff member, spoke about how staff in the senior leadership team who had joined the PRU recently were acting as a barrier to being able to provide the support that she deemed was appropriate for the pupils. She felt these new staff members had different attitudes to the teaching staff in the PRU, as their previous experiences of education had been in mainstream settings only.

> *The object of why we're a PRU is to get the kids back to mainstream. But how people see that happening, or how they do that has changed… […]*

> *Yeah there's been a massive change this year... vision, ethos, understanding, is different for us this year… everybody whose come in this year has come from mainstream…* (Melanie, staff).

5.10 Chapter summary

The data analysed as part of this study have highlighted a number of pertinent themes in relation to the perceptions of pupils, primary caregivers, and staff who have experienced attendance in a PRU. The following chapter will explore these themes in relation to the research aims and research questions outlined in section 1.3.

6 Chapter 6: Discussion and conclusions

6.1 Chapter overview

The previous chapter presented the findings from the data analysis in relation to the themes and sub-themes drawn from the data. This chapter synthesises and interprets the findings in the context of current literature and theoretical views in order to address the research questions outlined in section 1.3.2. It begins by providing a summary of the research purpose and aims presented in the introduction chapter (6.2), followed by a consideration of how the findings relate to each research question and how they are conceptualised within theoretical frameworks (6.3-6.6). Through this, the findings are compared to pertinent research literature in order to explore ways in which the study contributes to this field of research. Following this, the chapter addresses the study's strengths and areas for development (6.7) and considers research implications for the practice of local authorities, education provisions, teaching staff and educational psychologists (6.8). Next steps and potential areas for further research are then explored (6.9), followed by concluding comments (6.10).

6.2 Summary of research aims and questions

This is an exploratory piece of research that aims to develop a better understanding of perceptions within a primary PRU, an area which has rarely been addressed by previous research. Typically, research regarding alternative provision has focused on the perceptions of professionals in these settings, rather than of the pupils. Research that has sought to gather the views of children and young people has tended to focus on secondary-aged pupils (Michael & Frederickson, 2013), rather than primary-aged pupils who are a population whose views are rarely heard. National data indicate that exclusions from primary school are increasing (DfE, 2018c). The intention of this study was to add to the existing limited research on perceptions of outcomes in a primary PRU, in order to develop a better understanding of this particularly vulnerable group of children who are known to have poor outcomes (Parsons et al., 2001). In order to address these aims, the following research questions were considered from the perspectives of pupils, primary caregivers, and staff.

1. *What are perceived to be positive outcomes from attending a primary PRU?*

2. *What are perceived to be enablers to achieving these positive outcomes?*

3. *What are perceived to be barriers to achieving these positive outcomes?*

4. *What implications might there be for the similarities and differences in participant perceptions?*

This chapter will now explore the findings of this study, outlined in chapter 6 in relation to each research question.

6.3 Research question one

What are perceived to be positive outcomes from attending a primary PRU?

6.3.1 Key findings

Pupils, primary caregivers, and staff in the study all spoke about the positive effect of the PRU so far, as well as their hopes for the future where positive outcomes of pupils attending the PRU were concerned. The participant groups (pupils, primary caregivers, and staff) discussed similar themes when reflecting on positive outcomes, but to different extents, in line with previous research (Hart, 2013). In relation to positive outcomes, pupils spoke mostly about the importance of **feeling a sense of belonging** in the PRU and 'fitting in', while primary caregivers mostly commented on the value of pupils **developing social and emotional skills,** in order to be able to regulate their behaviour in the current context. The staff spoke most often about **successful reintegration to mainstream** being a positive outcome for pupils (in line with the PRU's mission statement and Ofsted's primary objective of PRUs (Ofsted, 2007)). Staff also spoke about the importance of pupils **developing 'life skills'** which would support them beyond their education, in line with previous research (Hart, 2013). These 'life skills' included developing self-esteem and skills in communication as well as practical self-help skills. It was interesting to note that **academic success** in the PRU was spoken about as a positive outcome much more rarely by the

participant groups than other positive outcomes. This is in contrast to Ofsted's recent report on the PRU, which prioritised progress in literacy and numeracy as a positive outcome for pupils (see section 2.4.3). The remit of this research was to focus on the factors considered to be most relevant to each research question (based on the views of the participants), and these will now be explained in more detail. For this research question, the positive outcomes of 'developing a sense of school belonging', 'developing social and emotional skills', and 'successful reintegration' were deemed to be the most pertinent themes to emerge from the findings and so will now be addressed in more detail, with reference to previous literature.

6.3.2 Sense of school belonging

Developing a sense of school belonging has been identified in previous research as a positive outcome from attending a PRU (Jalali & Morgan, 2017), and is associated with a range of positive academic and social outcomes for pupils in education more generally (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010). In the current study, pupils and primary caregivers reflected on the importance of pupils feeling connected to the PRU as a positive outcome. They spoke about the importance of pupils 'fitting in', being accepted, feeling happy, and enjoying coming to school; all components of the psychological concept of school belonging (Brown & Evans, 2002; see section 3.6). This view of school belonging is connected to Riviere's (2016) model of inclusion, outlined in section 2.2, which states that in order for pupils to be successfully included in an educational provision they need to experience acceptance amongst staff and peers. Furthermore, it has been suggested that there is a growing body of research which states that school belonging is a central characteristic of successful school inclusion (Frederickson, Simmonds, Evans, & Soulsby, 2007). For example, the inclusive ethos of a school has been reported to have a positive effect on both pupils' social relationships and their sense of belonging (Midgen, Theodoratou, Newbury & Leonard, 2019). This links to the views of participants in the current study, that the attitudes of staff in mainstream schools towards inclusion can act as a barrier to successful reintegration (section 6.5.3). With this in mind, schools would benefit from support to implement an attitudinal shift in thinking, in order to ensure that all pupils experience acceptance in mainstream education. This should be a priority area for further development and has implications for the

ways in which educational psychologists evidence their key role of promoting inclusive practices in education and ensuring equal access to education for all pupils (see implications, section 6.8). One way in which this can be achieved is through prioritising the development of positive relationships in education settings (see relationships as an enabler to the achievement of positive outcomes, section 6.4.2).

With this in mind, it was interesting to note that a subtheme drawn from the pupil interviews was that of ‘disconnect’ (section 5.3.5), where pupils spoke about their sense of connectedness to the PRU alongside their hopes of returning of mainstream, suggesting that they continued to experience a connection towards mainstream education as well. This finding has implications for supporting school reintegration, by prioritising staff understanding and skills in promoting pupils’ connections and relationships with the adults and peers around them, to increase their sense of school belonging and thus ensure they experience an inclusive education (see implications for further discussion in this area, section 6.8). It was positive to note that pupils in the current study continued to experience a desire to return to mainstream, as previous research involving secondary-aged pupils has not found this (Jalali & Morgan, 2017), suggesting that younger pupils are less disaffected by education and thus there a benefits of intervening at an early stage to support pupils to experience a sense of school belonging at a preventative level (see section 6.3.4 for a further discussion of this area).

In the context of the current study, pupils often compared their positive experiences of belonging in the PRU to their negative experiences of belonging in their previous mainstream school. Research suggests that a lack of school belonging is closely associated with challenging behaviours in the classroom (Osterman, 2000) and ‘persistent disruptive behaviour’ is the most commonly cited reason for school exclusion (DfE, 2018c). With this in mind, it was positive to note that pupils in the current study reflected on how they continued to feel connected to mainstream education in general, as demonstrated by their desire to reintegrate to mainstream school.

6.3.3 Social and emotional skill development

In this study, pupils, primary caregivers, and staff all considered that a positive outcome would be for pupils to develop skills in emotional self-regulation, which they felt would reduce their challenging behaviours. Previous research has also identified pupils' increased capacity to regulate their emotions as a positive outcome of attending a PRU (Harriss et al., 2008). Participants in the current study reflected on how this outcome had already partly been achieved from attending the PRU, and how they hoped that these skills would be developed further. This is reflected in the views of Darren and his primary caregiver. Darren commented on how he was 'good' in the PRU, whereas in his previous school he had been 'bad'. Darren's primary caregiver, Rheanne, had the same view and added that she hoped he would continue to develop these skills so that he would be able to control his emotions and not have outbursts. The view that pupils developing social and emotional skills was a positive outcome of attending the PRU is linked to the concept of inclusion. Participants perceived developments in the pupils' social and emotional skills to be linked to a reduction in their challenging behaviours, and subsequently essential to their successful inclusion in mainstream education, as supported by previous research (Lawrence, 2011).

6.3.4 Reintegration

Whilst the themes 'developing a sense of school belonging' and 'developing social and emotional skills' were considered by participants to be positive outcomes of attending the PRU in themselves, these outcomes also both had a role in enabling the positive outcome of successful reintegration. It is a notable feature of this study that all three participant groups saw reintegration as a positive outcome of the pupils attending the PRU. Staff specifically spoke about the short-term nature of the PRU as an intervention, supporting previous research and the aim of PRUs nationally, as well as the PRU's mission statement (Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Ofsted, 2007). A striking element of many of the interviews with pupils was their desire to return to mainstream education, although not to their previous mainstream school. This desire may exist because pupils view their previous negative experiences of education specifically to 'within school' rather than to 'within all mainstream schools'. Previous research has found that this was not the case for secondary-aged pupils in PRUs, who reported that they did not want to return to mainstream education (Jalali &

Morgan, 2017). Jalali and Morgan (2017) found that secondary-aged pupils were more likely than primary-aged pupils to experience a lack of school belonging towards mainstream education, owing to feelings of failure and inadequacy when comparing themselves to their peers in mainstream. This suggests that younger pupils are less disaffected by education and there are potential benefits from intervening at an early stage to support these pupils. Whilst primary caregivers did view reintegration as a positive outcome for the pupils, they also shared concerns about the pupils entering a 'cycle of reintegration' between mainstream and alternative provision which is explored further in section 5.5.5. These concerns are reflected in research, which indicates that pupils who attend PRUs often do not return to mainstream education on a long-term basis (Parsons et al., 2001). The current study has indicated that participants perceive reintegration to be a positive outcome for pupils and therefore this should continue to be a key priority for PRUs.

6.4 Research question two

What are perceived to be enablers to achieving these positive outcomes?

6.4.1 Key findings

A number of enablers were identified by participants as factors that helped pupils to achieve the positive outcomes outlined in research question one. For pupils and primary caregivers, the most commonly discussed enabler was the **skills and expertise of the staff**, whom they felt supported pupils to develop skills in emotional regulation which would prepare them for a successful reintegration to mainstream, supporting previous research (Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Staff also spoke about how their skills enabled pupils to develop 'life skills', deemed to be a positive outcome for pupils. The value of **positive relationships** appeared to be the cornerstone of discussions held with participants when reflecting on factors that enabled pupils to achieve positive outcomes. This supports extensive previous research highlighting the significance of relationships in alternative provision (Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Staff mostly discussed the importance of the positive relationships they had developed with pupils and each other in the PRU (Hill, 1997), which they felt enabled pupils to not only develop a sense of belonging in

the PRU but then to reintegrate to mainstream successfully. Pupils and primary caregivers both discussed the importance of the **learning environment** as an enabling factor, also identified in previous research (Michael & Frederickson, 2013). When discussing the learning environment as an enabling factor, pupils and primary caregivers spoke specifically about how having smaller class sizes meant that pupils received more attention from the staff which enabled them to make progress with their learning. Small class sizes have also been shown in previous research to enable the development of trusting relationships with staff (Lehr & Lange, 2003). As the importance of developing positive relationships came out of discussions with participants as a pertinent theme, this enabler will be explored in more detail.

6.4.2 Relationships

Participants in the current study discussed relationships as a key enabler to the positive outcome of pupils developing a sense of school belonging, reflecting the innate human desire to belong through the formation of social bonds (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Primary caregivers reflected on how positive pupil-staff relationships made the pupils feel supported and trusted, which enhanced feelings of connection to the PRU. Pupils also identified the importance of positive relationships with staff and felt that this helped them to regulate their emotions and subsequently reduce their challenging behaviours, which was identified by participants as a positive outcome. When discussing positive staff relationships, pupils reflected on the skills embodied by the staff including their flexibility and expertise. Previous research supports this finding and suggests that staff support is related to positive effects on pupils' emotional adjustment, self-esteem and engagement in education (Thuen & Bru, 2009). Pupils also identified that the positive relationships they had with staff made a successful reintegration more likely, supporting previous research (Daniels, 2011; Lown, 2005).

These perceptions contrast with pupil views regarding relationships with staff in their previous mainstream schools, which were often described negatively. Research has proposed that a lack of positive relationships with staff in school can lead to a rejection of the school's values, leading to negative attitudes towards staff and problems adjusting to school (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This indicates that as part of pupils' reintegration, emphasis should be placed on the

development of positive relationships with staff in the new setting. This may be achieved by using the strong bonds experienced between PRU staff and pupils as a means through which new relationships in mainstream can be developed (see implications section 6.8).

A novel enabler identified within this study was the importance of positive relationships between the PRU staff and the family. Primary caregivers reflected on how they felt listened to by the PRU staff, an experience which increased their confidence in being the ‘expert’ on their child and had a positive effect on the family dynamic. This was in contrast to their experiences with staff in their child’s previous mainstream school. The importance of fostering this relationship has been reflected on by staff in previous research (Hart, 2013), however very few studies have explored this relationship from the perspective of primary caregivers. Research has indicated that these positive relationships are key to pupils’ education, as primary caregiver engagement in schooling is known to positively influence pupil achievement (Harris & Goodall, 2008) and so should be fostered in education settings.

6.5 Research question three

What are perceived to be barriers to achieving these positive outcomes?

6.5.1 Key findings

When reflecting on factors considered to be barriers to the achievement of positive outcomes, pupils spoke about their **negative experiences in mainstream school and their exclusion** as being a barrier to successful reintegration (Hart, 2013). Primary caregivers reflected on how these experiences led to pupils feeling dismissed by their previous mainstream school, supporting the view that school exclusion is “the most explicit form of rejection” by the education system (Munn & Lloyd, 2005, p.205). These negative experiences in their previous mainstream school, and subsequent feelings of rejection, are understood to have an adverse effect on pupils’ self-esteem which is associated with the success of their reintegration from alternative provision (Lawrence, 2011).

Staff talked often about barriers to positive outcomes in the PRU. One of these barriers was the **different views held by the senior leadership team (SLT) and the PRU staff** regarding the aims of the PRU. Staff felt that the SLT's focus on the curriculum and data progress came at the expense of the pupils' social and emotional skill development, which all participant groups identified as being linked to successful reintegration. Staff also spoke about the **views and attitudes of mainstream schools towards inclusion** as being a barrier to successful reintegration. This is reflected in research which argues that reintegration is only likely to be successful when the mainstream school is highly inclusive and has sufficient awareness of the needs of the pupils being reintegrated (Lawrence, 2011).

Aspects of the **learning environment** was a common theme discussed by all participant groups in relation to barriers to positive outcomes. Primary caregivers spoke about the **shorter length of the school day** and the negative effect that this had on their caregiving abilities, in line with previous research (Parker et al., 2016). Many of the issues discussed as barriers to positive outcomes in relation to the learning environment stemmed from concerns over **a lack of funding in the PRU**. Staff spoke about staff shortages as a barrier to being able to support a successful reintegration, which is a concern reflected in the alternative provision sector more widely (Thomson & Pennacchia, 2014). Primary caregivers also shared concerns over the level of staff support their child would receive for their reintegration, which was dependent on which borough they lived in (section 5.5.4). The issues described above by participants, which they felt resulted from a lack of funding in the PRU, are novel barriers identified in this area of research.

6.5.2 The role of attribution theory

It is a notable feature of the current study that pupils and primary caregivers did not consider their own actions and behaviours as either enablers or barriers to positive outcomes. This may highlight a lack of perceived responsibility for their behaviours, which could be considered a barrier to positive outcomes such as a successful reintegration and suggests that this group of pupils may display an external attribution style. This contrasts with the perceptions of secondary-aged pupils in Michael and Frederickson's (2013) research, who identified themselves

as an enabler to positive outcomes through their self-motivation and also as a barrier through their lack of self-discipline.

However, more generally, previous research has indicated that pupils who experience school exclusion and attend alternative provision have external attribution styles (Solomon & Rogers, 2001), which appears congruent with findings from the current study. Jalali and Morgan (2017) found that both primary and secondary-aged PRU pupils attributed their difficulties to external factors such as being targeted by peers and unfairly blamed by teachers (illustrating a lack of responsibility for their behaviour). This is similar to pupils in the current study who identified factors in their learning environment such as the physical space as a barrier to positive outcomes. The findings from the current study add to the limited previous research on the attribution styles of primary-aged PRU pupils and suggest that external attributions may exist from a young age in this population. Previous research indicates that having an internal attribution style is a factor that positively contributes to pupils remaining in education following attendance in a PRU (Daniels et al., 2003). Findings from the current study raise the issue of how pupils with external attribution styles are expected to manage when their environment changes as they enter mainstream provision, if their causal attributions have not, which is linked to the concern of primary caregivers and staff, that pupils may enter a cycle of reintegration. It is therefore key that pupils in this population are supported to develop internal attributions.

6.5.3 Attitude of mainstream schools towards inclusion

Participants reported several barriers to the success of reintegration, which was deemed to be a positive outcome. In general, these barriers focused on the perceived attitudes and actions of the mainstream school, as reflected in previous research (DfES, 2004). Staff felt that mainstream schools were under intense government pressure to reach targets and as a result were not able to provide an inclusive education for these pupils. This concern is reiterated in research, which states that successful reintegration is uncommon as the mainstream education environment is not set up to provide an inclusive education for these pupils (Thomas, 2015). Thomas (2015) argues that the term ‘reintegration’ should instead be coined ‘re-inclusion’, in order to illustrate a willingness of the mainstream school to accommodate these pupils, which is an essential precursor

to successful reintegration. In line with this, the ‘Education Excellence Everywhere’ White Paper (DfE, 2016a) highlights the need for mainstream schools to remain accountable for the education of the pupils who attend alternative provision from their setting. In the current study, however, the views of PRU staff were that this was not happening in practice, as they reflected on how they felt that mainstream schools devolved themselves of responsibility for pupils when they attended the PRU. PRU staff were also concerned that mainstream school teachers had not received adequate training in special educational needs and so they did not have the capacity to include these pupils in the classroom successfully. These concerns are reflected in a large-scale survey of the views of mainstream teachers (ATL, 2013).

6.6 Research question four

What implications might there be for the similarities and differences in participant perceptions?

In general, pupils, primary caregivers, and staff spoke about similar themes when reflecting on experiences in the PRU, suggesting that the primary caregivers and staff in this study are attuned to the needs of the pupils (Hart, 2013). This shared understanding is positive to note, particularly as staff are key facilitators of the PRU experience for pupils. Pertinent themes shared by all participant groups related to relationships, reintegration, the learning environment, and how staff are equipped in helping pupils to develop a range of social and emotional skills. What differed in these perceptions was the degree of importance which each group placed on each theme. In practice, this implies that where discrepancies exist between the priorities of pupils, primary caregivers, and staff, these should be recognised and made explicit in order for there to be a shared understanding of the perspectives of one another. With regard to research, these differences highlight the need to gather multiple perspectives from a range of participants when exploring a social phenomenon, in order to gather a rich picture of what helps and hinders the achievement of positive outcomes in PRUs.

In the current study, relationships appeared to be the cornerstone of discussions held by all three participant groups. The similarities in participants’ views

regarding the importance of developing relationships with one another in the PRU, and how these relationships enhance outcomes academically and socially, suggests that the development of positive relationships in education settings should be a priority. Pupils spoke about the importance of developing a sense of belonging to their education setting and how they felt connected to the PRU. They talked about enjoying coming to the PRU and feeling that they 'fit in', but also wanting ultimately to reintegrate to another mainstream school. Primary caregivers prioritised this sense of belonging less than the pupils, and the staff did not discuss this at all. This suggests that developing a sense of school belonging is a concept that is particularly important to pupils, and it will be important that pupils are explicitly supported to develop this connection. Suggested strategies of how this can be done are highlighted in the implications for practice section (6.8). This also has implications for the way in which support is provided in relation to pupils' successful reintegration.

6.7 Strengths and limitations of the study

The main strength of this study is that it took place in a primary PRU and focused on a vulnerable group of pupils and primary caregivers who were provided with the opportunity for their views to be heard. The importance of providing this opportunity has been advocated for by extensive previous research (Wise & Upton, 1998; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008). Gathering and comparing the views of three different participant groups (pupils, primary caregivers, and staff) produced a rich picture of perceptions of positive outcomes. The inclusion of all three participant groups in the data collection and analysis allowed for similarities and differences of opinion to be highlighted across the participant groups. Previous researchers, such as Jalali and Morgan (2017), have suggested this as an area for future research, demonstrating the importance of gathering multiple viewpoints in research.

An additional strength of this study is that it gathered the views of a younger age group than previous studies, thereby providing a unique contribution to the literature by highlighting some of the experiences found in a primary PRU and providing encouragement for future studies to explore the views of this age group. By offering pupils a variety of resources to gather their views (see section

4.5.1.2), this study has provided information on the types of data collection tools that pupils prefer to engage with and respond well to. This information can be used to inform future research when considering the most appropriate tools that enable pupils to express and communicate their views. These tools enabled pupils to choose how they wish to communicate in research. For example, pupils responded well to having an activity to focus their attention on during the interview, which was something that they had ownership over.

In retrospect, however, this study may have benefited from utilising a larger pilot sample, in order to develop a deeper understanding of the most appropriate tools to elicit pupils' views before the data collection stage fully commenced. This could have led to a greater insight into the pupils' thoughts and opinions, as part of the interview process, and added to the richness and depth of the qualitative data. For example, it was interesting to note that the pupils all initially chose to engage in the 'life grid' activity, and it was felt that this may have been due to the fact that this activity did not require them to engage in any drawing or writing if they did not wish to. This was in contrast to the 'ideal school' activity where they would be required to draw. It was felt that this may have been due to the revealing nature of being asked to draw or write, which may be linked to low levels of confidence. However, as the interview progressed many of the pupils chose to disengage from the 'life grid' activity and instead preferred to access the drawing resources whilst we talked. It was possible that they did not enjoy the restrictive nature of the 'life grid' activity and preferred to engage in a task that was more distracting whilst they talked. Whilst it was decided that focus groups would not have been an appropriate method of data collection for the pupils owing to the personal and sensitive nature of the topic (see further discussion in section 4.5.1), upon reflection the pupils may have responded well to having familiar peers present in the interview. Focus groups have been suggested as replicating natural and familiar forms of communication for pupils when they talk together with their peers (Gibson, 2012) and may be considered in future research.

In relation to accessing pupil views, having a staff member present in the pupil interviews could be conceived as a limitation to the current research. It could be argued that the pupils would not have felt able to provide honest opinions about the PRU when being observed by staff, a concept known as social desirability

bias (Nederhof, 1985). However, this must be weighed up against the benefits of having a staff member present, of which there were many. For example, having a staff member present appeared to encourage the pupils to relax and feel comfortable to interact with a relatively unfamiliar adult, so they were more able to express their views. Moreover, the pupils were offered the choice of having the staff member there and for those that chose it, it would be against the ethos of this research to not act upon their decision.

When reflecting on the views of participants more generally, I was aware that the convenience sampling strategy utilised in this study to recruit primary caregivers (section 4.4.3) may not have produced a sample what was accurately reflected the PRU population. Primary caregivers who took part in the study were those who took their children to school and who consented to taking part. This may suggest that they were more engaged in the PRU than the primary caregivers who did not take their children to school themselves and so did not meet me during the participant recruitment phase (see section 4.4.4), or those who did not consent to taking part. Future research would benefit from exploring additional ways of engaging primary caregivers who are considered ‘hard to reach’, in order to gain their perceptions. For example, I may have benefitted from liaising with the school regarding any school events in which all primary caregivers are required to attend, where I could have introduced myself and the research to all primary caregivers. Spending additional time at the school gates, over a period of more than one week, may have also increased the likelihood of meeting with primary caregivers who come to the school less often.

This research employed a single case study design, and it can be argued that the limitation of this research design, alongside having a relatively small sample size, is the lack of generalisability to a wider population. This study took place in one PRU and so findings should be considered in relation to the specific context. However, I argue that findings can also be conceptualised in terms of their theoretical transferability, as supported by research (Yin, 2009), where insights drawn from the results can be applied in similar contexts which may contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon and this population. Through this, the enablers and barriers constructed by participants in this study can be informative for other PRU settings.

6.8 Implications for practice

In considering the implications of this research, I analysed the findings addressed in the discussion chapter by asking the following questions: What is the implication of this finding? For whom? How can it be addressed? In doing so, implications were identified that may contribute to the practice of local authorities, education provisions, teaching staff and also paraprofessionals including educational psychologists.

An aim of this research was to provide evidence that could contribute to the development of policy and practice within local authorities, education provisions and the wider community in order to promote positive outcomes for pupils in alternative provision. As highlighted in this study, this can be achieved by providing an education environment that is inclusive for all pupils (Hodkinson, 2015). All participants viewed successful reintegration to be a positive outcome of pupils attending alternative provision, which fits with a key role of educational psychologists; to promote inclusive practices in education and ensure equal access to education for all children and young people. One way in which this can be achieved is through educational psychologists supporting mainstream schools to implement more inclusive practices for pupils with additional needs, for example through using an ecological perspective and placing emphasis on early intervention and prevention. By ensuring mainstream schools remain inclusive, this will increase the likelihood of reintegration being successful (Clarke & Jenner, 2006). It is through supporting an attitudinal shift in the views of mainstream schools towards inclusion that the likelihood of a successful reintegration will be increased. Ways in which this can be done should focus on the development of positive relationships, relating to the acceptance of these pupils in mainstream settings.

The finding that participants perceive reintegration to be a positive outcome also has implications for the way in which local authorities can encourage mainstream schools to hold more responsibility for pupils that attend alternative provision from their setting, in order to promote alternative provision as a setting adjacent to mainstream settings and demonstrate a sense of shared responsibility from the perspectives of pupils, so that pupils continue to experience a sense of belonging

towards mainstream (Lawrence, 2011). This has also been outlined as a recommendation for practice in a recent Government review on exclusions in the UK (Timpson, 2018).

Participants identified pupils developing a sense of connection and belonging to education as a positive outcome from attending the PRU. There are several ways in which educational psychologists are well placed to promote the development of belonging in educational settings at a systemic level, for example through offering training to schools and paraprofessionals on features of school belonging, alongside initiatives to implement outcomes from the training. An emphasis should be placed on ensuring pupils are accepted in their educational settings; a key tenant of the model of inclusion outlined in section 2.2 (Riviere, 2016). This can be achieved by promoting a shift in the attitudes of mainstream staff, to ensure a willingness exists in the accommodation of all pupils (Thomas, 2015).

In order to develop pupils' sense of belonging in education, participants in the current study highlighted positive relationships to be a key enabler. This is supported by extensive previous research which priorities the development of positive relationships as an element that defines school belonging (St-Amand, Girard, & Smith, 2017). This includes relationships involving pupils, staff, and also primary caregivers. One way in which schools are able to promote the development of positive relationships between staff and pupils is by increasing staff capacity to engage in attuned relationships by offering training to encourage the development of positive staff-pupil relationships, for instance through principles of attunement using the evidence-based intervention of Video Interaction Guidance (Kennedy, Landor, & Todd, 2010). Staff should also adopt teaching strategies that encourage positive social relationships amongst peers, for example through teamwork and cooperative learning tasks. This will promote pupils' positive relationships with each other. Mainstream schools may also wish to use the strong relationships between PRU staff and pupils as a means through which new relationships can be developed with staff in mainstream settings. Finally, staff in school could promote the development of positive relationships between teaching staff and primary caregivers, as parental engagement in their child's education has also been indicated as key to a successful reintegration (Parker et al., 2016).

Whilst educational psychologist are well equipped to provide systemic support in promoting a sense of pupils' belonging in education, they can also provide support at the group level, for example by introducing specific social competence interventions with groups of pupils which formally address skills such as cooperative play and social problem-solving, in order for pupils to develop positive peer relationships, an element that defines school belonging. This could be implemented through the Circle of Friends intervention (Newton & Wilson, 1999).

The current study indicates that whilst participants held very similar views of the PRU, what differed was the degree of importance placed on these views. Local authorities would benefit from ensuring that the unique views of pupils in alternative provision, alongside those of their primary caregivers, are captured and acknowledged, in line with the SEND Code of Practice (DfE/DoH, 2015). For example, this could be through regular forums and workshops and these views could be used to inform borough-wide policy through the Local Offer. This will promote a greater co-negation of pupil needs and how these needs can be best met. Furthermore, educational psychologists are well placed to facilitate the use of person-centred planning tools, such as MAPS (making action plans), to ensure pupils' views are part of any decision-making processes regarding their future education and reintegration. Other ways of ensuring that pupil views are accessed is through the use of 'task-centred' tools, as utilised in the current study. Educational psychologists could offer staff training on the use of 'task-centred' tools with pupils, based on Personal Construct Psychology (section 4.5.1.2), as a way of facilitating discussions with pupils regarding their experiences in education and how these experiences can be improved.

6.9 Next steps, feedback, and areas for further research

6.9.1 Next steps

This research will be presented to peers and tutors at UCL Institute of Education, in order to share good practice. Alongside this, the research will be entered for publication in an academic journal, with the support of academic supervisors. This will serve to ensure that the research findings are disseminated widely. In the borough where the research takes place, the findings will be presented to

staff in Children's Services. Following from this, discussions will be planned regarding how the study findings can be implemented at a borough-wide level, in order to improve outcomes for pupils who attend PRUs, alongside those who are at risk of exclusion. This is in line with the borough's key focus, of reducing school exclusion levels.

6.9.2 Feedback to participants

Feedback to research participants and dissemination of the research to PRU staff is considered a key element of the research process, in line with the emphasis placed on gathering the views of those considered vulnerable. With this in mind, a presentation of the findings will be arranged at the PRU for the summer term of 2019. Pupils and primary caregivers who took part in the study will be invited to attend via letter. Staff who took part in the study will be invited to the presentation, alongside the senior management team and the PRU's link educational psychologist, as a way of beginning a conversation regarding how the findings may influence policy and practice in this setting.

6.9.3 Areas for further research

This study has identified perceptions of enablers and barriers to positive outcomes of pupils attending a primary PRU. Whilst it has been exploratory in its nature, there continues to be several areas which would benefit from further enquiry, such as:

- Capturing quantifiable measures of pupils' long-term outcomes such as the proportion of successful reintegration journeys to mainstream education, alongside participant perceptions, therefore utilising a mixed-methods approach as advocated for in research (Creswell, 2009).
- Exploring the perceptions of pupils who have experienced a fixed-term move to the PRU, as opposed to a permanent exclusion. This would serve to establish whether perceptions of positive outcomes, such as developing a sense of school belonging, differ between these groups of pupils.
- Finally, digital technologies that emphasise the use of visuals have been identified by pupils as preferred tools to use when gathering their views (Kaplan, 2008) and so future research may wish to incorporate this as a choice of methodology when conducting research with this population.

6.10 Conclusions

There have been very few studies which have explored the perceptions of primary-aged pupils in alternative provision. This exploratory study has provided a unique contribution to the field of literature on perceptions of outcomes in PRUs, by exploring the perceptions of primary-aged pupils alongside their primary caregivers and the staff who support them. Through gathering the views of these participants in relation to their perceptions of outcomes, alongside enablers and barriers, this research has delivered new insight into a vulnerable group of children who are known to have poorer outcomes (Parsons et al., 2001).

Findings from this study indicate that education settings would benefit from prioritising the development of pupils' sense of school belonging and emotional regulation skills, identified by participant as being positive outcomes of attending the PRU. Closely related to the success of these outcomes is successful reintegration, which was considered by all participants to be a positive outcome, in line with Ofsted's primary objective of PRUs (Ofsted, 2007). Participants identified the importance of positive relationships as a key enabling factor in the achievement of positive outcomes, and the implications section (6.8) has highlighted a number of ways in which local authorities and education settings can promote the development of positive relationships amongst peers and also with staff. Educational psychologists, as practitioners who often work closely with PRU populations and who have a key role in advocating for the inclusion of vulnerable pupils, are especially well placed to provide support in this area.

A wide range of views were sought in the current study from the perspectives of pupils, primary caregivers, and staff. The discrepancies that came out in the priorities placed by each participant group highlight the need for all views to be recognised and made explicit when exploring a social phenomenon, in order for a shared understanding of the perspectives of one another to be developed. Through this study, gathering the perceptions of a range of participants has produced a rich picture of what helps and hinders the achievement of positive outcomes in PRUs. Ultimately, future action taken as a result of this research should ensure that pupils are active participants in the planning, implementation and evaluation of their own educational experiences (Hamill & Boyd, 2002),

particularly regarding their reintegration. The current study holds the view that listening to pupils should not be a passive activity and that children and young people should be able to influence change by reporting their experiences; therefore, the pupil views gathered in this study should be used to shape the future development of alternative provision.

7 References

Ainscow, M., Booth, T., & Dyson, A. (2006). Inclusion and the standards agenda: Negotiating policy pressures in England. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 10(4-5),* 295-308.

ATL (Association of Teachers and Lecturers). (2013). *Disruptive behaviour in schools and colleges rises alongside increase in children with behavioural and mental health problems.* Retrieved from https://www.atl.org.uk/Images/disruptive-behaviour-on-rise.pdf.

Banister, P. (2011). *Qualitative methods in psychology: A research guide.* UK: McGraw-Hill Education.

Bartick-Ericson, C. (2006). Attachment security and the school experience for emotionally disturbed adolescents in special education. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 11(1)*, 49-60.

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin, 117(3),* 497-529.

Beaver, R. (1996). *Educational psychology casework: A practice guide.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Bowlby, J. (1988). *A secure base: Parents-child attachment and healthy human development.* London: Routledge.

BPS (British Psychological Society). (2009). *Code of ethics and conduct. Guidance published by the ethical committee of the British Psychological Society*. Leicester: British Psychological Society.

BPS (British Psychological Society). (2014). *Code of human research ethics.* Leicester: British Psychological Society.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3,* 77-101.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013*). Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners.* London: Sage Publications.

Brown, A., & Evans, P. (2002). Extracurricular activity and ethnicity: Creating greater school connection among diverse student populations. *Urban Education, 37,* 41-48.

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Christensen, P., & James, A. (2008). Childhood diversity and commonality: Some methodological insight. In P. Christensen & A. James (Eds.), *Research with children: Perspectives and practices* (pp. 156-172). Oxon: Routledge Publishers.

Clarke, G., Boorman, G., & Nind, M. (2011). If they don't listen I shout, and when I shout they listen: Hearing the voices of girls with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. *British Educational Research Journal, 37(5),* 765-780.

Clarke, S., & Jenner, S. (2006). The Psychology of delivering a psychological service: Self-organised learning as a model for consultation. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 22(3).* 185-197.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education.* New York: Routledge.

Collins, K., & Nicolson, P. (2002). The meaning of 'satisfaction' for people with dermatological problems: Re-assessing approaches to qualitative health psychology research. *Journal of Health Psychology,* 7(5), 615-629.

Conner, L. (2016). Reflections on inclusion: How far have we come since Warnock and Salamanca? *Research in Teacher Education, 6(1),* 18-23.

Costa, A. L., & Kallick, B. (1993). Through the lens of a critical friend. *Educational Leadership, 51(2),* 49-51.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Cullen, K., & Monroe, J. (2010). Using positive relationships to engage the disengaged: An educational psychologist-initiated project involving professional sports input to a pupil referral unit. *Educational and Child Psychology, 27(1),* 64-78.

Daniels, H., Cole, T., Sellman, E., Sutton, J., Visser, J., & Bedward, J. (2003). *Study of young people permanently excluded from school* (Research Report No 405). London: DfES.

DCSF (Department for Children, Schools, and Families). (2008). *Back On Track: a strategy for modernising alternative provision for young people (White Paper).* London: Crown Copyright.

De Jong, T., & Griffiths, C. (2006). The role of alternative education programs in meeting the needs of adolescent students with challenging behaviour: Characteristics of best practice. *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 16(1),* 29-40.

De Shazer, S. (1985). *Keys to solution in brief therapy*. New York: Norton.

DfE (Department for Education). (2016a). *Educational Excellence Everywhere (White Paper).* London: DfE.

DfE (Department for Education). (2017a). *Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England: Statutory guidance for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion.* London: DfE.

DfE (Department for Education). (2017b). *Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2017.* London: DfE.

DfE (Department for Education). (2018a). *Creating opportunity for all: Our vision for alternative provision.* London: DfE.

DfE (Department for Education). (2018b). *Destinations of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 pupils: 2016/7.* London: DfE.

DfE (Department for Education). (2018c). *National statistics: Special educational needs in England: January 2018.* UK: National Statistics.

DfE (Department for Education). (2018d). *Permanent and fixed-period exclusions in England: 2016 to 2017.* UK: National Statistics.

DfE/DoH (Department for Education/Department of Health). (2015). *Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years.* London: HMSO.

DfES (Department of Education and Science). (1978). *Special educational needs. Report of the committee of enquiry into the education of handicapped children and young people (Warnock report).* London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

DfES (Department for Education and Skills). (2003). *Every child matters.* London: HMSO.

DfES (Department for Education and Skills). (2004). *The reintegration of children absent, excluded or missing from school.* London: HMSO.

Drolet, M., Arcand, I., Ducharme, D., & Leblanc, R. (2013). The sense of school belonging and implementation of a prevention program: Toward healthier interpersonal relationships among early adolescents*. Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 30(6),* 535-551.

Dweck, C. S. (1975). The role of expectations and attributions in the alleviation of learned helplessness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 31(4),* 674.

Education Funding Agency. (2015). *Pupil premium: Funding allocations 2015 to 2016.* Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-2015-to-2016-allocations

Einarsdottir, J., Dockett, S., & Perry, B. (2009). Making meaning: Children's perspectives expressed through drawings. *Early Child Development and Care, 179*(2), 217-232.

Ellis, S., & Tod, J. (2014). Special educational needs and inclusion: Reflection, renewal and reality. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs, 14(3),* 205-210.

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., Alkassim, R. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 5(1),* 1-4.

Evans, J., & Lunt, I. (2002). Inclusive education: Are there limits? *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 17(1),* 1-14.

Farrell, P. (2004). School psychologists: Making inclusion a reality for all. *School Psychology International, 25(1),* 5-19.

Fielding, M., & Bragg, S. G. (2003). *Students as researchers: Making a difference.* Cambridge: Pearson Publishing.

Firestone, W. (1987). Meaning in method: The rhetoric of quantitative and qualitative research. *Educational Researcher, 16(7),* 16-21.

Folmer, A. S., Cole, D. A., Sigal, A. B., Benbow, L. D., Satterwhite, L. F., Swygert, K. E., & Ciesla, J. A. (2008). Age-related changes in children's understanding of effort and ability: Implications for attribution theory and motivation. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 99(2),* 114-134.

Fox, M., Martin, P., & Green, G. (2007). *Doing practitioner research.* London: Sage Publications.

Frederickson, N., Simmonds, E., Evans, L. & Soulsby, C. (2007). Accessing the social and affective outcomes of inclusion. *British Journal of Special Education, 34(2),* 105-115.

Furrer, C., & Skinner, E. (2003). Sense of relatedness as a factor in children's academic engagement and performance. Journal of Educational Psychology, 95(1), 148-162.

Gazeley, L. (2010). The role of school exclusion processes in the re-production of social and educational disadvantage. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 58(3),* 293-309.

Gersch, I. S. (1996). Involving children in assessment: Creating a listening ethos. *Educational and Child Psychology, 13(2),* 31-40.

Gibson, J. E. (2012). Interviews and focus groups with children: Methods that match children's developing competencies. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 4,* 148-159.

Gill, K., Quilter-Pinner, H., & Swift, D. (2017). *Making the difference: Breaking the link between school exclusion and social exclusion.* London: Institute of Public Policy Research.

Gillham, B. (2000). *Case study research methods.* London: Continuum.

Goodenow, C., & Grady, K. E. (1993). The relationship of school belonging and friends' values to academic motivation among urban adolescent students. *Journal of Experimental Education, 62,* 60-71.

Graue, M. E., Walsh, D. J., & Ceglowski, D. (1998). *Studying children in context: Theories, methods, and ethics.* London: Sage Publications.

Guest, G., Bunce A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods, 18(1),* 59-82.

Gutherson, P., Davies, H., & Duszkiewicz, T. (2011). *Achieving successful outcomes through alternative education provision: An international literature review.* Berkshire: CfBT Education Trust.

Hallam, S., & Rogers, L. (2008). *Improving behaviour and attendance at school.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Hamill, P., & Boyd, B. (2002). Equality, fairness and rights: The young person's voice. *British Journal of Special Education, 29(3),* 111-117.

Harden, J., Scott, S., Backett-Milburn, K., & Jackson, S. (2000). Can't talk, won't talk? Methodological issues in researching children. *Sociological Research Online, 5(2),* 1-12.

Harriss, L., Barlow, J., & Moli, P. (2008). Specialist residential education for children with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties: Pupils, parents and staff perspectives. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 13(10),* 31-47.

Harris, A., & Goodall, J. (2008). Do parents know they matter? Engaging all parents in learning. *Educational Research, 50(3),* 277-289.

Hart, N. (2013). What helps children in a pupil referral unit (PRU)?: An exploration into the potential protective factors of a PRU as identified by children and staff. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 18(2),* 196-212.

Hill, R. (1997). Pupil referral units: Are they effective in helping schools work with children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties? *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 2(1),* 28-36.

Hill, M. (2005). Ethical considerations in researching children's experiences. In S. Greene & D. Hogan (Eds.), *Researching children's experience: method's and approaches* (pp. 61-86). London: Sage Publications.

Hodkinson, A. (2015). *Key issues in special educational needs and inclusion*. London: Sage Publications.

Holland, S., Renold, E., Ross, N. J., & Hillman, A. (2010). Power, agency and participatory agendas: A critical exploration of young people's engagement in participative qualitative research. *Childhood, 17(3),* 360-375.

House of Commons Education Committee. (2018). *Forgotten children: Alternative provision and the scandal of ever-increasing exclusions.* Retrieved from https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmeduc/342/342.pdf

IOE & NFER (Institute of Education and National Foundation for Educational Research). (2014). *School exclusion trial evaluation: Research report.* London: DfE.

Jalali, R., & Morgan, G. (2017). ‘They won’t let me back.’ Comparing student perceptions across primary and secondary pupil referral units (PRUs*). Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 23(1),* 55-68.

Kaplan, I. (2008). Being ‘seen’ being ‘heard’: Engaging with students on the margins in education through participatory photography. In P. Thomson (Eds.,) *Doing visual research with children and young people* (pp.175-191). London: Routledge.

Kelly, G. A. (1955). *The psychology of personal constructs.* New York: Norton.

Kelly, N., & Norwich, B. (2004). Pupils’ perceptions of self and labels: Moderate LDs in mainstream and special schools. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 74*, 411-435.

Kelly, B., Woolfson, L., & Boyle, J. (2008). *Frameworks for practice in educational psychology: A textbook for trainees.* London: Jessica Kingsley.

Kennedy, J., & Kennedy, C. (2004). Attachment theory: Implications for school psychology. *Psychology in the Schools, 41(2),* 247-259.

Kennedy, H., Landor, M., & Todd, L. (2010). Video Interaction Guidance as a method to promote secure attachment. *Educational and Child Psychology, 27(3),* 59.

Kornbluh, M. (2015). Combatting challenges to establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 12(4),* 397-414.

Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews.* London: Sage Publications.

Lane, K. L., Little, A., Menzies, H., Lambert, W., & Wehby, J. (2010). A comparison of students with behaviour challenges educated in suburban and rural settings: Academic, social and behavioural outcomes. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioural Disorders, 18,* 131-148.

Lawrence, N. (2011). What makes for a successful reintegration from a pupil referral unit to mainstream education? An applied research project. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 27(3),* 213-226.

Lehr, C. A., & Lange, C. M. (2003). Alternative schools serving students with and without disabilities: What are the current issues and challenges? *Preventing School Failure, 47(2),* 59-65.

Levin, I. (1995) Children's perceptions of their family. In J. Brannen & M. O'Brien (Eds.), *Childhood and parenthood*. Proceedings of ISA Committee for Family Research Conference on Children and Families. London: UCL Institute of Education.

Libbey, H. (2004). Measuring student relationships to school: Attachment, bonding, connectedness, and engagement. *Journal of School Health, 74(7),* 274.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Lindlof, T., & Taylor, B. (2002). *Qualitative communication research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Lloyd-Smith, M., & Tarr, J. (2000). Researching children's perspectives: A sociological dimension. In A. Lewis & G. Lindsey (Eds.), *Researching children's perspectives* (pp. 59-70). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Lown, J. (2005). Including the excluded: Participant perceptions. *Educational and Child Psychology, 22(3),* 45-57.

Maguire, M., Macrae, S., & Milbourne, L. (2003). Early interventions: Preventing school exclusions in the primary setting. *Westminster Studies in Education, 26(1),* 45-62.

Maxwell, T. (2006). Researching into some primary school children's views about school: Using personal construct psychology in practice with children on the special needs register. *Pastoral Care in Education, 24(1),* 20-26.

Mayall, B. (2008). Conversations with children: Working with generational issues. In P. Christensen & A. James (Eds.), *Research with children: Perspectives and practices* (pp. 125-140). London: Routledge.

McCluskey, G., Riddell, S., & Weedon, E. (2015). Children's rights, school exclusion and alternative educational provision. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 19(6),* 595-607.

McDonald, T., & Thomas, G. (2003). Parents' reflections on their children being excluded. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 8(2),* 108-119.

McLaughlin, C., & Clarke, B. (2010). Relational matters: A review of the impact of school experience on mental health in early adolescence. *Educational and Child Psychology, 27(1),* 91-103.

McSherry, J. (2017). *Learning support units: Principles, practice and evaluation*. London: Routledge.

Mertens, D. (2009). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods* (3rd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Michael, S., & Frederickson, N. (2013). Improving pupil referral unit outcomes: Pupil perspectives. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 18(4),* 407-422.

Midgen, T., Theodoratou, T., Newbury, K., & Leonard, M. (2019). 'School for Everyone': An exploration of children and young people's perceptions of belonging. *Educational and Child Psychology, 36(2),* 9-23.

Ministry of Housing, Communities, & Local Government. (2015). *English indices of deprivation.* Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/465791/English_indices_of_deprivation_2015_statistical_release.pdf

Ministry of Justice. (2014)*. Transforming youth custody government response to the consultation.* London: Ministry of Justice.

Moran, H. (2001). Who do you think you are? Drawing the ideal self: A technique to explore a child's sense of self. *Clinical Psychology and Psychiatry, 6,* 599-604.

Munn, P., & Lloyd, G. (2005). Exclusion and excluded pupils. *British Educational Research Journal, 31(2)*, 205-221.

Nederhof, A. J. (1985). Methods of coping with social desirability bias: A review. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 15(3)*, 263-280.

Newton, C., & Wilson, D. (1999). *Circles of Friends.* Dunstable: Folens Press.

Norwich, B. (2014). Recognising value tensions that underlie problems in inclusive education. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 44(4),* 495-510.

Norwich, B., & Eaton, A. (2015). The new special educational needs (SEN) legislation in England and implications for services for children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 20(2),* 117-132.

Norwich, B., Kelly, N., & educational psychologists in training. (2006). Evaluating children's participation in SEN procedures: Lessons for educational psychologists. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 22(3),* 255-271.

O'Connor, M., Hopkinson, A., Burton, D., & Torstenson, G. (2011). Pupil voice: Listening to and hearing the educational experiences of your people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 16(3),* 289-302.

Office of the Children's Commissioner. (2012). *"They never give up on you". Office of the Children's Commissioner: School exclusions inquiry.* London: Office of the Children's Commissioner.

Office of the Children's Commissioner. (2013). "*Always someone else's problem": Office of the Children's Commissioner's report on illegal exclusions.* London: Office of the Children's Commissioner.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. (2004). *The social exclusion unit.* London: Crown Copyright.

Ofsted. (1995). *Pupil referral units: The first twelve inspections.* London: Ofsted.

Ofsted. (2007). *Pupil referral units: Establishing successful practice in pupil referral units and local authorities.* London: Ofsted.

Ofsted. (2016a). *Alternative provision: The findings from Ofsted's three-year survey of schools' use of off-site alternative provision.* London: Ofsted.

Ofsted. (2016b). *Maintained schools and academies inspections and outcomes as at 31 August 2016.* London: Ofsted.

Ogg, T., & Kalil, E. (2010). *A new secret garden? Alternative provision, exclusion and children's rights.* London: Civitas.

Osterman, K. F. (2000). Students' need for belonging in the school community. *Review of Educational Research, 70,* 323-367.

Oxford English Dictionary. (2019). *Oxford English Dictionary*. Retrieved from https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/reintegrate

Ozer, J., Price Wolf, J., & Kong, C. (2008). Sources of perceived school connection among ethnically diverse urban adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 23*, 438-470.

Parker, C., Paget, A., Ford, T., & Gwernan-Jones, R. (2016). 'He was excluded for the kind of behaviour we thought he needed support with. . .' A qualitative analysis of the experiences and perspectives of parents whose children have been excluded from school. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 21(1),* 133-151.

Parkinson, E. (2001). Teacher knowledge and understanding of design and technology for children in the 3–11 age group: A study focussing on aspects of structures. *Journal of Technology Education, 13(1),* 1-7.

Parry, O., Thomson, C., & Fowkes, G. (1999). Life course data collection: Qualitative interviewing using the life grid. *Sociological Research Online, 4(2),* 1-11.

Parsons, C., Godfrey, R., Howlett, K., Hayden, C., & Martin, T. (2001). Excluding primary school children: The outcomes six years on. *Pastoral Care, 19(4),* 4-15.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Pillay, J., Dunbar-Krige, H., & Mostert, J. (2013). Learners with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties' experiences of reintegration into mainstream education. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 18(3),* 310-326.

Pirrie, A., Macleod, G., Cullen, M., & McCluskey, G. (2011). What happens to pupils permanently excluded from special schools and pupil referral units in England? *British Educational Research Journal, 37(3)*, 519-538.

Polat, F., & Farrell, P. (2002). What was it like for you? *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 7(2),* 97-108.

Putwain, D. W., Nicholson, L., & Edwards, J. (2016). Hard to reach and hard to teach: Supporting the self-regulation of learning in an alternative provision secondary school. *Educational Studies, 42(1),* 1-18.

Rendall, S., & Stuart, M. (2005). *Excluded from school: Systematic interventions for mental health and education professionals.* New York: Brunner Routledge.

Richardson, H. (2015). Rise in number of primary pupils suspended. BBC News. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-3371819

Riviere, H. (2016). *Using student engagement theory to explore inclusion for pupils with SEN in mainstream schools in England.* In: Papers from the Education Doctoral Research Conference 2015. University of Birmingham, Birmingham, pp. 115-121.

Robson, C. (2011). *Real world research: A resource for social-scientists and practitioner- researchers.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Robinson, C. (2014). *Children, their voices and their experiences of school: What does the evidence tell us?* York: Cambridge Primary Review Trust.

Ryan, R. L., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist, 55,* 68-78.

Scott, J. (2008). Children as respondents: The challenge for quantitative research. In P. Christensen & A. James (Eds.), *Research with children: Perspectives and practices* (pp. 87-108). Oxon: Routledge Publishers.

Sellman, E. (2009). Lessons learned: Student voice at a school for pupils experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 14(1),* 33-48.

Shaw, C., Brady, L. M., & Davey, C. (2011). *Guidelines for research with children and young people. National Children's Bureau (NCB).* London: NCB Research.

Shivlock, G. (2014). Using personal construct psychology in research: Investigating the factors associated with emotionally based non-attendance from young people's perspective. In H. Moran (Ed.), *Using personal construct psychology in practice with children and adolescents* (pp. 113 – 126). Retrieved from https://issuu.com/pcpinpractice/docs/using_personal_construct_psychology

Shochet, I., Dadds, M., Ham, D., & Montague, R. (2006). School connectedness is an underemphasized parameter in adolescent mental health: Results of a community prediction study. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 35(2),* 170-179.

Silverman, D. (2004). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analysing talk, text and interaction.* London: Sage Publications.

Simons, H. (2009). *Case study research in practice*. London: Sage Publications.

Smith, A. (2009). New Zealand families' experience of having a teenager excluded from school. Pastoral Care in Education, 27(2), 89-100.

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research.* London: Sage Publications.

Smith, J. A., & Osborne, M. (2003). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to methods.* London: Sage Publications.

Solomon, Y., & Rogers, C. (2001). Motivational patterns in disaffected school students: Insights from pupil referral unit clients. *British Educational Research Journal, 27(3),* 331-345.

St-Amand, J., Girard, S., & Smith, J. (2017). Sense of belonging at school: Defining attributes, determinants and sustaining strategies. *The International Academic Forum Journal of Education, 5(2),* 105-119.

Taylor, C. (2012). *Improving alternative provision.* London: DfE.

Timpson, E. (2018). *Timpson review of school exclusions*. London: Department for Education.

Thomas, D. (2015). Factors affecting successful reintegration. *Pembrokeshire Behaviour Support Service, 41(1),* 188-208.

Thomson, R., Bell, R., Holland, J., Henderson, S., McGrellis, S., & Sharpe, S. (2002). Critical moments: Choice, chance and opportunity in young people's narratives of transition. *Sociology, 36(2),* 335-354.

Thomson, P., & Pennacchia, J. (2014). *What's the alternative? Effective support for young people disengaging from mainstream education*. London: The Prince's Trust.

Thuen, E., & Bru, E. (2009). Are changes in students' perceptions of the learning environment related to changes in emotional and behavioural problems? *School Psychology International, 30(2),* 115-136.

Trotman, D., Tucker, S., & Martyn, M. (2014). Understanding problematic pupil behaviour: Perceptions of pupils and behaviour coordinators on secondary school exclusion in an English city. *Educational Research, 57(3),* 237-253.

UNESCO. (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and framework for action on special needs education.* Salamanca, Spain: UN.

UNICEF. (1989). *United Nations convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC).* Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf

Vincent, K., Harris, B., Thomson, P., & Toalster, R. (2007). Managed moves: Schools collaborating for collective gain. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 12(4),* 283-298.

Wakefield, P. (2004). The educational inclusion of disaffected secondary school students. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies, 15(2),* 70-85.

Weiner, B. (1985). An attributional theory of achievement, motivation and emotion. *Psychological Review, 92(4),* 548-573.

Whiting, L. S. (2015). Reflecting on the use of photo elicitation with children. *Nurse Researcher, 22(3),* 7-13.

Wigfield, A., Eccles, J. S., Fredericks, J., Roeser, R., Schiefele, U., & Simpkins, S. (2015). Development of achievement motivation and engagement. In R. Lerner (Series Ed.) & C. Garcia Coll & M. Lamb (Volume Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Social and emotional development,* 1-44. New York, NY: Wiley.

Williams, J., & Hanke, D. (2007). Do you want to know what sort of school I want? Optimum features of school provision for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Good Autism Practice, 8(2),* 51-56.

Williams, M., & Robson, K. (2004). Reengineering focus group methodology for the online environment. In M.D. Johns, S.L.S. Chen, & G.J. Hall (Eds.), *Online social research: Methods, issues and ethics.* Oxford: Peter Lang Publishing.

Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method.* USA: Open University Press.

Willig, C. (2007). Reflections on the use of a phenomenological method. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 4,* 209-225.

Willig, C. (2008). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology.* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Winstone, N., Huntington, C., Kyrou, E., & Millward, L. (2014). Eliciting rich dialogue through the use of activity-oriented interviews: Exploring self-identity in autistic young people. *Childhood, 21(2),* 190-206.

Wise, S., & Upton, G. (1998). The perceptions of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties of their mainstream schooling. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 3(3),* 3-12.

Wolk, S. (1998). *A democratic classroom*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Wood, E. (2003). The power of pupil perspectives in evidence-based practice: The case of gender and underachievement. *Research Papers in Education, 18(4),* 365-383.

Woodhead, M., & Faulkner, D. (2008). Subject, object and participants? Dilemmas of psychological research with children. In P. Christensen & A. James (Eds.), *Research with children: Perspectives and practices* (pp. 9-35). London: Routledge.

Worcester, J. A., Nesman, T. M., Raffaele-Mendez, L. M., & Keller, H. R. (2008). Giving voices to parents of young children with challenging behavior. *Exceptional Children, 74(4),* 509-525.

Yardley, L. (2000). Dilemmas in qualitative health research. *Psychology and Health, 15,* 215-228.

Yell, M. L., Meadows, N. B., Drasgow, E., & Shriner, J. G. (2009). *Evidence-based practices for education students with emotional and behavioural disorders.* New Jersey: Pearson International.

Yin, R. K. (2004). *The case study anthology.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Appendix A **School Invitation Email**

Dear [PRU head teacher name],

my name is Ella and I am the trainee educational psychologist who has been working alongside [educational psychologist] and [educational psychologist] at [PRU name]. It has been a pleasure to be involved in the excellent work that takes place at [PRU name]. As part of my training I am hoping to conduct a piece of research in relation to perceptions of outcomes in a primary PRU. I am hoping to interview primary caregivers, pupils and school staff, to explore their perceptions of what works to support pupils in the PRU in achieving positive outcomes. Each perspective is considered valuable in understanding what the PRU offers and in identifying its hugely important contribution as part of [local authority's] provision. A key component of my findings would be that they could be used to support PRUs to inform practice through developing a better understanding of the needs of this particularly vulnerable group of children.

Data collection would involve conducting short interviews with a small number of staff members, parents and pupils. The research is supervised by Dr Hilary McQueen and Dr Helen Upton and has received ethical approval from the UCL Institute of Education.

It would be great to meet with you to explain a little more about the research and discuss whether [PRU name] would be interested in taking part. [Educational psychologist], my supervisor at [local authority] educational psychology service, would also be at this meeting.

I know you are extremely busy but if you could find time to meet with me and [educational psychologist] in your busy schedule I'd be extremely grateful.

Kind Regards,

Ella Taylor

Appendix B **Staff Information Sheet**

Perceptions of enablers and barriers to positive outcomes in a primary PRU

January 2018 to July 2019

Staff information sheet

Who is conducting the research?

My name is Ella Taylor and I am inviting you to take in part in my research project. I am currently training to be an educational psychologist at UCL Institute of Education. This research will be supervised by my tutors at the university, Dr Hilary McQueen (Lecturer in Education) and Helen Upton (senior educational psychologist). I would like to hear your thoughts on pupil experiences at [PRU name], and what factors you perceive to help and hinder pupils in relation to achieving positive outcomes. This will take place in the form of a short interview at school, at a time that is convenient to you.

I very much hope that you would like to take part. This information sheet will try and answer any questions you might have about the project, but please don't hesitate to contact me if there is anything else you would like to know.

Why am I doing this research?

As part of my training I am carrying out a piece of research that will explore people's perceptions of a primary PRU. I am specifically looking at what they perceive to be enablers and barriers to the achievement of positive outcomes. I will interview pupils, primary caregivers, and staff members and each perspective is considered very valuable. I would like to hear your views around what you feel helps pupils at [PRU name] and what else could be done, to help them achieve positive outcomes. The research will help to develop a better understanding of how we can best meet the needs of pupils.

What will happen if I choose to take part?

If you choose to take part, I will interview you at school at a time and date suitable to you. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed, however the information I collect from you will be kept in strict confidence and all participants will be identified by a pseudonym only. All questions are optional, and you do not have to talk about anything you do not wish to.

What will happen to the results of the research?

All data will be completed anonymised after it has been analysed and written up into a report. The signed consent forms will be locked in a secure cupboard and destroyed in September 2019, once the research is complete. A summary of the report will be shared with all participants. Within this summary, every effort will be made to ensure that no individual is identifiable.

Do I have to take part?
It is entirely up to you whether or not you choose to take part. I hope that if you do choose to be involved then you will find it a valuable experience. If you have any further questions, please contact me at ella.taylor.16@ucl.ac.uk

UCL Institute of Education

20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL

Appendix C **Staff Consent Form**

Perceptions of enablers and barriers to positive outcomes in a primary PRU

Staff consent form

If you are happy to participate, please complete this consent form and return to me

	Yes	No
I have read and understood the information leaflet about the research.		
I agree to be interviewed in school at a time convenient for me.		
I am happy for my interview to be audio recorded.		
I understand that the information I give will be anonymised.		
I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time, and my data will not be used.		

Name _____ _____

Signed _____

Date _____

Email address _____

Researcher's name _____

Signed _____

UCL Institute of Education

20 Bedford Way, London WC1H

Appendix D **Primary Caregiver Coffee Morning Flyer**

Parent Coffee Morning

11.45-12.15pm

Friday 22nd June

[PRU name]

There will be cake, biscuits and refreshments

Hi, I'm Ella and I'll be doing some research at [PRU name] as part of my training to become an educational psychologist.

As part of my **research I would really like to hear your views** about things that have helped your child in school, and anything that could be improved.

Come along to the coffee morning to find out more about my research, and to decide if you'd like to take part. It won't take much of your time and **it's really important to hear what parents have to say about their child's education!**

I look forward to meeting you.

Appendix E **Primary Caregiver Information Sheet**

Perceptions of enablers and barriers to positive outcomes in a primary PRU

January 2017 to July 2019

Primary caregiver information sheet

Who is conducting the research?
My name is Ella Taylor and I am inviting you to take in part in my research project. I am currently training to be an educational psychologist at UCL Institute of Education. This research will be supervised by my tutors at the university, Dr Hilary McQueen (Lecturer in Education) and Helen Upton (senior educational psychologist).

I would like to hear your thoughts on your child's experiences at [PRU name], specifically how they have been supported and what works well for them. This will take place in the form of a short interview. I very much hope that you would like to take part. This information sheet will try and answer any questions you might have about the project, but please don't hesitate to contact me if there is anything else you would like to know.

I would also like your child to take part in my research, through participating in a short session with me where they will draw and do activities whilst talking about their experiences of [PRU name] and things they feel that help them. This will take place at [PRU name] during the school day. Please explain the research to your child and discuss whether or not they would like to take part. I will ask your child whether they would like to take part before the session and make it clear that they can stop at any point if they would like. Your child's name will not be used in the report and their information will remain completely anonymous.

Why am I doing this research?
It is important to have your views included in research. Therefore, I would like to find out what you perceive to be positive outcomes from your child attending [PRU name], what you feel helps your child to achieve positive outcomes, and what could be done differently. I would also like to hear the views of your child, and those of the staff. The research will help [PRU name] to develop a better understanding of how they can best meet the needs of this group of children. All primary caregivers and children will be invited to take part in the research.
What will happen if I choose to take part?

If you choose to take part, I will interview you at a time and location suitable to you. The interview can take place at either your home, at [PRU name] or in my office at [office address]. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed, however the information I collect from you will be kept in strict confidence, and all participants will be identified only by a number. All questions are optional, and you do not have to talk about anything you do not wish to.

If you consent to your child taking part, the session I have with them will also be recorded and transcribed. The information they provide will also be kept in strict confidence and their names will not be used. I will ensure your child understands the study and agrees to take part before I begin.

What will happen to the results of the research?
All data will be completed anonymised after it has been analysed and written up into a report. The signed consent forms will be locked in a secure cupboard and destroyed in September 2019, once the research is complete. A summary of the report will be shared with yourself and the school. Within this summary, every effort will be made to ensure that no individual is identifiable.

Do I have to take part?
It is entirely up to you whether or not you and your child choose to take part. I hope that if you both choose to be involved then it will be a valuable experience.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

If you and your child would like to be involved, I will ask you to sign a consent form. If you have any further questions, please contact me at ella.taylor.16@ucl.ac.uk

UCL Institute of Education

20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL

Appendix F Primary Caregiver Consent Form

UCL Institute of Education

Perceptions of enablers and barriers to positive outcomes in a primary PRU

Primary caregiver consent form

If you are happy for you and/or your child to participate, please complete this consent form

	Yes	No
I have read and understood the information leaflet about the research.		
I agree to be interviewed at a time and place convenient for me.		
I agree for my child to take part in a session with the researcher.		
I am happy for my interview, and/or the session with my child, to be audio recorded.		
I understand that the information my child and/or I give will be anonymised.		
I understand that my child and/or I can withdraw from the project at any time, and our data will not be used.		

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

UCL Institute of Education

20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL

Appendix G **Pupil Information Sheet**

Ella's research project

Who am I? I am Ella Taylor. I am training to be an educational psychologist. I often work with children to find out what helps them in school.

Why am I doing this research project? I would like to speak to you about your time at school and what things have helped you.

What will you be asked to do? We will meet together during the school day. We will do some activities together and talk about school. I will ask you some questions. I will record the session on a digital audio recorder.

What questions will I be asked? I will ask about what things have helped you at school

What will happen to the information you tell me? I will type up what you say after the meeting and then write a report. I will share my report with other people, but **I won't use your real name. This means that people won't know that it is you.** What you tell me is private between you and me, but if you tell me anything which makes me think you or anybody else is in danger, I will need to tell somebody.

What do I do now? You can ask me any questions you have before you decide if you would like to take part. If you decide you would like to take part, I will arrange a time with your teacher to come to school and meet with you. **If you change your mind about taking part, you can pull out at any time without giving me a reason.**

UCL Institute of Education

20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL

Appendix H **Pupil Assent Form**

Ella's research project

	Yes	No
I understand what Ella's research project is about.		
I agree to take part in a session with Ella. In this session we will do activities and talk about school.		
I understand that the session will be recorded and typed up.		
I understand that Ella will use the information I tell her to write a report which will be shared with other people, but my real name will not be used, and no one will be able to identify me.		
I understand that I can stop the session at any point, if I would like to.		

Name _____

Date _____

Appendix I Primary Caregiver Interview Schedule

Introduction:

- Explain the purpose of the interview and that it will last around half an hour.
- Explain the use of a digital audio recorder, confidentiality and name change.
- Ask if they have any questions before starting.
- Check they are happy to continue (ask this during the interview also).

I'd really like to hear about how you child came to be at [PRU name]?

- *How long has your child been at this school for? Why are they here?*

In your view, what is the role of the school? What is the school here to do?

- *Why would caregivers want their children to go here? What does the school offer to children?*

What are your hopes for your child in the future?

- *Starting point outcomes (to what extent are their hopes related to the PRU?).*

What are your hopes from your child attending [PRU name]?

- *For you as a caregiver or for your child - e.g. what would you like your child to have learnt by the time they leave the school? What would you like them to be able to do?*

What has helped the achievement of this?

Is there anything that has not helped the achievement of this?

Are there any ways you would improve this school?

- *Question around change - What would make things better?*

Closing comments:

- *Is there anything else you'd like me to know? Do you have any questions? How did you find the interview process?*

Appendix J **Staff Interview Schedule**

Introduction:

- Explain the purpose of the interview and that it will last around half an hour.
- Explain the use of the digital audio recorder, confidentiality and name change.
- Ask if they have any questions before starting.

How and why do many of the pupils come to this school?

- *What route do they enter? For what reasons? How long do they stay?*

In your view, what is the role of the school? What is the school here to do?

- *What does the school offer to children?*

Thinking about the pupils on role here, what are your hopes from them attending [PRU name]?

- *In relation to learning, emotionally, behaviourally*

What has helped the achievement of this?

What has hindered the achievement of this?

Are there any ways you would improve the school?

- *Question around change - What would make things better?*

Closing comments:

- *Is there anything else you'd like me to know? Do you have any questions?*
- *How did you find the interview process?*

Appendix K **Pupil Interview Schedule**

Introduction:

- Explain the purpose of the interview and that it will last around half an hour.
- Explain the use of a digital audio recorder, confidentiality and name change.
- Ask if they have any questions before starting.
- Check they are happy to continue (ask this during the interview also).

Warm up:

- Card game (Snap)
- 'Getting to know each other activity' draw favourite food, thing to do, toy etc.
- Explanation of activities:

  Life Grid 'role play, going back in time'

  Ideal School 'imaginary schools, drawing'

  Drawing

Areas to cover

What was your old school like?

Arrival at [PRU name]:

- *How long have you been here? How did you come to this school? Why?*

At the school:

- *What helps you here?*
- *What would be the best thing to happen from being at this school?*
  - *What has helped this? Is there anything that has not helped this?*
- *Since being here, what has got better?*
- *Since being here, what has changed?*
- *Are there any ways you would improve this school?*

Future (goals)?

- *What would you like to do in the future? – School/life*
- *How would you make those things happen?*

Appendix L **Ethical Approval Email**

Hi Ella

Thank you for the application for Data Protection Registration.

When seeking approval for research involving children and young people, it is always safer to involve the relevant parent/guardian to seek a child, or young person's consent. Children will often have different levels of understanding at the time consent is to be sought. Where a child aged 16 is competent enough to consent for himself or herself to a particular research intervention, it is still good practice to involve their family as part of the decision-making process, unless the child specifically asks the researcher not to do so. Along with older children, researchers must respect any request from a competent 16 year old to keep their information confidential, unless they can justify disclosure on the grounds that you have reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, any form of significant harm.

Research should be conducted both openly and without deception. Where children and young people are in a potentially vulnerable or within a dependent position it is important to ensure that they have the time and opportunity to access their decision-making, for example by discussing their choice to participate with a trusted adult. **With this in mind, I am pleased to confirm that this project is covered by the UCL Data Protection Registration, reference No Z6364106/2018/02/90 social research.**

Regards,

Spenser Crouch
Data Protection & Freedom of Information Administrator & Chief Web Editor
Legal Services, Finance & Business Affairs, UCL, Gower Street, London, WC1E 6BT
Internal Address: 6th floor | 1-19 Torrington Place | London | WC1E 7HB

Appendix M **Excerpt of Coded Transcript**

Bold = interviewer (myself)
Italics = interviewee (Melanie, staff)

Transcript	*Codes*
How have you found that change? *… The actual home ed stuff, yeah… the stuff around it… it's really interesting, I've worked in different PRUs and it's been interesting to see how… we've had new management as of this year and it's been very interesting...*	*Change in management*
You think that's made a difference... *Unfortunately, I think overall, I think if you would speak to the others they would say the same thing. Generally the school's amazing, the staff here are second to none. They're brilliant, they really get the kids and everything else. But the… the objective of why we're here, I suppose. The object of why we're a PRU is to get the kids back to mainstream. But how people see that happening, or how they do that has changed.*	*Staff supportive/close team* *Reintegration (positive outcome)* *Change in management – differing views*
So you think the management have come in… *Yeah there's been a massive change this year... vision, ethos, understanding, is different for us this year… everybody whose come in this year has come from mainstream…*	*Change in management*
So you think that overall goal of reintegration has remained the same, but how you get there has changed? *Yeah I think it's come from people who come in from last year and this year… we've had a couple of management changes and… everybody's come in this year from mainstream and a big person who is*	*Change in management – new staff*

making the changes comes from mainstream secondary. And they're giving us all this trauma training and all this kind of stuff, but they're not actually processing what they're training us on... so they've come in now when it's very towards mainstream standards and everything is very mainstream, everything's data driven, everything is all these things. If our kids could handle mainstream they would be in mainstream classes. Our kids come in and they have special needs, social and emotional mental health needs they come in with daily trauma. We cannot run this school as a mainstream school and still expect them to thrive and progress the way that you want them to. It feels like the soul of the school and the needs of the children have now come second place to data and curriculum.	*Focus on data not SEMH needs* *Mainstream not always most appropriate provision*
What exactly do you mean by data? What do you think management goals are?	
Well we were due for Ofsted, so I think the first thing was to be outstanding in Ofsted, and so it was all about data... So when I came to this school I basically introduced check-ins to the school. I showed the teachers what to do, and within those times of questions there's a lot of emotional regulation, resilience skills that they were learning in fifteen minutes and that was wiped out... anything that would help them. I suppose for us, yes the goal is to reintegrate but the way you reintegrate is to be able to understand themselves, understand what they're feeling, what their triggers are, how do you help yourself. If they can do that, the curriculum will come, all the other stuff will come.	*Focus on data not SEMH needs* *Staff skilled in emotional regulation* *Focus on data not SEMH needs* *Reintegration – positive outcome* *Staff supporting SEMH needs* *Focus on SEMH needs for academic success*
So do you think your views of what the children need is slightly different to management?	

Absolutely, realistically PRUs should be run as centres not schools. They should be therapeutic... I know they don't like that word, but that's really at the core of what we're doing. We're doing behaviour for learning, if you can get the kids along that path… on paper it may look like it will be a slower run, but actually the more they are able to identify their feelings and understand themselves and how to help themselves, the quicker you are going to get all of the other stuff anyway and they'll get those life skills… we did a lot of emotional identification, therapeutic consultation skills…. With the home ed it's been quite interesting because a lot of the children are school refusers… and a lot of the kids that I am now teaching have been rejected by mainstream and have been treated quite badly by mainstream. They've got all these feelings of mistrust and failure and all this other stuff. They haven't lasted in a classroom with a small amount of kids and four adults…	*Different views from management (what is the mission statement)* *Staff developing emotional regulation skills in pupils* *Development of 'life skills'* *Pupils feeling rejected by mainstream* *Pupils' self-concept* *Home educated pupils*
So the home ed are pupils that have been here before? *So the three that I have at the moment... one has been a school refuser for about two three years, he was ok at about year one two and then it started to go downhill, so he's been a school refuser at least two years. It's taken me about three months to get him to trust me and engage and start to be ready for reintegration. I've been push it for about a month, so just last week he's started doing a day or two a week, or just do five days of one hour, so by September he's feeling confident. So he's done that, yay! There's another boy that's done the same thing, it's taken about three months. I feel like it probably takes the kids that long, just so they know that they can throw whatever at you and I'm still here.*	*Pupils home-educated* *Staff building trust with pupils* *Focus on goal of reintegration* *Staff building confidence in pupils* *Staff building trust with pupils*

Appendix N Example of Thematic Development

Bold = interviewer (myself)
Italics = interviewee (Katy, primary caregiver)

Excerpt from interview transcript	Initial codes	Sub-theme	Theme
That's really good so it sounds like he's more... what do you think it is about this school that has helped him?			
Cos there's more one on one. With [James] he needed… he can't deal with big... They are hoping to send him back to mainstream, and I'm hoping that he'll be able to hack it now, but it's going to be touch wood. But here, I don't know, there's like five kids to a class… and you've got more staff so he can go… and people have got more time for him. Whereas in a mainstream it's like "oh just wait your turn" and that's what he can't do.	*One-to-one support from staff* *Small class sizes* *Reintegration* *Cycle of reintegration* *Small class sizes* *More staff in PRU* *More time in PRU* *Differences to mainstream*	*Class size* *Cycle of reintegration* *Class size* *Time*	*Learning environment* *Reintegration* *Learning environment* *Staff skills*
It's hard isn't it… And so you're hoping that he…			
Yeah, they're going to try and go to into… and put him into a	*Hopes for reintegration*	*Expectations of mainstream*	*Reintegration*

mainstream so… well it should have been done a while ago but because we've moved around so many times and I ain't got a fixed address, I don't wanna… like with them here, when he moves, if he goes to a school in [borough] they will go with him, so they will go in with him, but if I have to move out he aint gonna have that and that's what I don't want, for him to come from this... and then say "right you're going into that", because he aint gonna be able to hack it. Which is a good thing that they help you and they stay with you, with a normal school it's just like "no you gotta go now, go on". So we'll just have to wait and see.	*Housing concerns* *Staff going to mainstream with pupil* *Home address affecting support* *Concerns for unsuccessful reintegration* *Staff going to mainstream with pupil* *Differences to mainstream (more time)*	*Out-of-borough funding* *Successful reintegration* *Between borough issues* *Cycle of reintegration* *Successful reintegration* *Time*	*Reintegration* *Reintegration* *Staff skills*
Do you think that will be helpful for [James], like having that support?			
Yeah knowing he's still got someone there, I'm just dreading if they said to me like "oh you're moving out-of-borough so we can't help you and we're putting him straight…"	*Staff going to mainstream with pupil* *Home address affecting support*	*Successful reintegration* *Out-of-borough funding*	*Reintegration*

What do you think would happen if… that was the case with [pupil one]?			
I think he would go back… he'd go back… he'd get the aggression because he won't know none of them and it's going to take [James] time. [James] is one of these, he has to build up trust with ya… he don't trust ya, you ain't got no chance. But yeah... other than that yeah he's alright.	*Cycle of reintegration* *Emotional regulation*	*Cycle of reintegration*	*Reintegration*
Yeah, and in your view what is the role of [PRU], what is [PRU] here to do?			
Well to me they've given my boy a chance, whereas a mainstream school would be like "no not taking him, he's been suspended from here" but here they don't give up on him if you know what I mean. There's still a little person… they don't give up on them, they're still doing… even though like he's doing topics that should have been done beforehand, but he's still getting the work done. For me they just don't give up on him, whereas a lot of schools would	*PRU giving pupils a chance* *Difference to mainstream* *PRU not giving up on pupil* *Education – engaging in the work* *PRU not giving up on pupil*	*Encouragement not give up* *Academic success* *Encouragement not give up*	*Staff skills* *Learning environment* *Staff skills*

Appendix O **Excerpt of Researcher's Reflective Diary**

16th July 2018 - James interview

Overall, session went well. I was concerned he would find it too tricky to meet with a stranger and express his views. He didn't want to go in without a trusted member of staff. During the interview the staff member said "Would you like me to go?" but James wanted him to stay. Very important for me to set the tone at the beginning. Warm-up activity very useful for this. He relaxed once he'd seen what the session was going to be like. Said he didn't want to draw as he picked up the pens and started drawing, almost absentmindedly? Important to have them there (way of drawing his attention to something else?) I should ensure the mood stays relaxed, don't focus my attention too heavily on the pupil. Joint attention to the drawing is good. He was motivated by rewards (warm-up activity). Staff said "Use your words, you have lots of important things to say" beforehand. Seemed to reassure him.

16th July 2018 - Katy interview

Katy appeared happy to come in, she seemed comfortable in my company. This definitely influenced the length of the answers she gave. Didn't see me as a professional? Important to wear casual clothes (no lanyard!). She said she was looking forward to it. Boisterous and chatty. Said "If it helps, then I'll do it". She seemed grateful to the PRU and wanted to help them. Reflects what school said about having a very engaged group of primary caregivers in at the moment.

18th July 2018 - Rheanne interview.

Rheanne came across as more reserved than Katy. Did she see me as a professional? Tried to put her at ease. Quieter at the beginning but eased up, meant her answers were very concise at the beginning. Was I clear on what the expectations of her would be? Don't call it an interview – it is just a conversation. I over compensated for her being quiet at times (anxiety? Transference?) Important for the interview to be led by the participants. Bought her new-born baby to the interview. He slept through and didn't distract. Important to consider the work and family commitments that the primary caregivers have when arranging interviews.

Appendix P **Description of Thematic Analysis Phases**

The research followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) guideline on thematic analysis, as follows:

Phase one - Becoming familiar with the data

The audio recording of each interview and pupil session was transcribed. This facilitated familiarisation with the data and allowed the researcher to become embedded within the data. Each transcript was then read and reread whilst notes were taken on any initial thoughts and ideas.

Phase two - Generating initial codes

I then systematically coded each transcript line by line using Microsoft Word to record the codes (see Appendix M for an excerpt of a coded transcript). Codes have been defined by Braun and Clarke (2013) as a “word or brief phrase that captures the essence of why that data might be useful” (p. 207). The same unit of text could be used for more than one code. When a new code was identified, the transcript was reread for existence of data belonging to that code. The transcripts were reviewed two more times and the initial codes were revised and refined. For example, the codes ‘home-school communication’ and ‘home-school consistency’ were amalgamated, and the code ‘communication between management and previous school’ was discarded as it did not match the data extracted.

Phase three - Searching for themes

This phase consisted of organising the codes into potential themes. Each code was cut into separate strips and laid out to facilitate this phase. I favoured this visual and kinaesthetic method of organising codes over the use of computer software. During this stage, initial codes continued to be extended, developed and discarded where necessary. At the end of this stage the initial codes generated in phase two had been organised into several themes and sub-themes. These initial themes were shared with a fellow trainee who acted as a ‘critical friend’ by asking provocative questions and offering critique as part of the data analysis process (see section 4.7 of the methodology chapter for a discussion on the term ‘critical friend’).

Phase four - Reviewing themes

The phase involved reviewing and refining the initial themes and sub-themes, to ensure that the data were correctly placed and formed a coherent pattern. Once the themes were deemed to capture the coded data, all data were reread to ensure that the themes worked across the data set and that any additional data that may have been missed in earlier coding were included. Thematic maps were created during this phase, as a visual aid for reviewing the themes and sub-themes. These maps were drafted and refined using a web-based programme. Changes made at this stage include moving the sub-theme of ‘hopes to return to mainstream’ from within the ‘integration’ theme, renaming it to ‘disconnect’, and placing it in the ‘feelings of connectedness’ theme. Other changes included discarding the sub-theme ‘slow reintegration’ as it was felt that it did not represent the data accurately.

Phase five - Defining and naming themes

This phase involved defining, refining and naming the themes. Changes made in this phase include renaming a theme from ‘encouragement’ to ‘encouragement to not give up’ and renaming another theme from ‘supporting families’ to ‘families feeling supported’. In total, five themes were identified that embody research question one, seven themes embody research question two and seven themes embody research question three. The themes were broad in nature and typically comprised of a number of more detailed sub-themes.

Phase six - Writing the report

The final phase is to write up the analysis in a suitable format, as evidenced within this thesis. Final drafts of the thematic maps are included in the findings chapter.