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A Narrative Orientated Inquiry Exploring the
Key Stage 2-3 Transition Experiences of
Young People with SEMH Needs in
Mainstream Schools

Gary McCrossan

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List of Abbreviations

AP	Alternative Provision
BESD	Behavioural, Emotional & Social Difficulties
DA	Discourse Analysis
DfE	Department for Education
EBD	Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
EHCP	Education and Health Care Plan
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
EST	Ecological Systems Theory
KS2-3	Key Stage 2-3
EP	Educational Psychologist
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LA	Local Authority
NOI	Narrative Orientated Inquiry
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
TA	Teaching Assistant
UK	United Kingdom

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Abstract

Key Stage 2-3 (KS2-3) transition is experienced by the majority of young people attending mainstream schools in England. Research suggests that, whilst most young people are able to navigate this transition successfully, for some it may represent a period of significant social, emotional, and academic challenge (Jindal-Snape et al., 2020). Furthermore, difficulties during transition may be associated with negative social, emotional, and academic outcomes (Hopwood & Dymont, 2016; West et al., 2010; Zeedyk et al., 2003). Research suggests that in comparison to their peers, young people with Social Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs may be more likely to encounter experiences associated with a difficult KS2-3 transition experience (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Cosma & Soni, 2019).

The current study aims to explore the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools in England. An adapted version of Hiles and Čermák's (2008) model of 'Narrative Oriented Inquiry (NOI) was adopted. Informant style interviews were used, with the support of a visual life-path tool. Data was collected with three male participants aged 12-14 years who were attending mainstream secondary schools in the West Midlands region of the UK and were supported via an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) for SEMH needs.

Data analysis utilised both Holistic-form and Categorical-content analysis, as outlined by Lieblich et al. (1998), in order to explore and understand both the form and content of the stories shared by participants. The form of narratives was plotted in relation to participants' evaluations of school their experience. Content was explored in relation to a Resilience framework, exploring risk and protective factors associated with the participants' KS2-3 transition experiences.

Holistic-form analysis indicates varied trajectories amongst participants, with points of progression and regression appearing to occur at different stages for each participant. Shared points of regression appear to include pre-transition worries and initial adjustment to Year 7. Shared points of progression appear to occur following opportunities for familiarisation with KS3 settings. Categorical-content analysis indicates various individual and environmental risk and protective factors which are

relevant to KS2-3 transition. The current study highlights the potential importance of risk and protective factors including peer relationships, pupil-teacher relationships, and experiencing punitive responses to behaviour, social skills, dispositional optimism, imagined future selves, and academic-self-concept. The implications of the current research are discussed in relation Educational Psychologists, schools and settings, and future research.

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1. Introduction

Research Aims and Overview

This thesis aims to explore the Key stage 2-3 (KS2-3) transition experiences of young people with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs in mainstream schools.

The researcher's intended focus was to explore the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people who have experienced permanent exclusion in mainstream secondary schools. The impetus for this original focus was government exclusion data which indicates a contrast between rates of permanent exclusion in mainstream primary and secondary school settings in England, with a peak in permanent exclusions appearing to occur during KS3 (DfE, 2021). In addition, research also suggests that young people who have experienced permanent exclusions from mainstream secondary schools often cite difficulties associated with KS2-3 transition as factors influencing their experiences of exclusion (DfE, 2019; Farouk, 2017; Trotman, et al., 2015). However, despite continued efforts by the researcher, it was not possible to recruit a relevant participant sample to address this focus. Thus, a pragmatic decision was made by the researcher to adapt the focus of the current study to explore the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with SEMH needs. This refined focus was selected based on data which indicates that young people identified as having SEMH needs are more likely to experience permanent exclusion than their peers without SEMH needs (DfE, 2021). For example, government data indicates that young people who receive SEN support for Social, Emotional & Mental Health needs who do not have an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) are 3.8 times more likely to experience permanent exclusion than their peers with no identified Special Educational Needs (SEN) (DfE, 2021). As will be discussed within the following chapter, research also indicates that, in comparison to their peers, young people with SEMH needs may be more likely to encounter experiences associated with a difficult KS2-3 transition experience (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Cosma & Soni, 2019). Although there is a small research base exploring the views of young

people with SEMH needs in relation to their mainstream school experiences, the systematic review of literature conducted within the current study appears to suggest that there is no existing published research which has directly explored the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with SEMH needs.

Previous qualitative studies exploring young people's KS2-3 transition experiences appear to be largely subject to structured interview approaches (Jindal-snape et al., 2020; Mumford & Birchwood, 2021). The current study adopts a Narrative Orientated Inquiry (NOI) approach using an informant style interview which has been said to allow participants to share rich experiences, un-impeded by the structure of researcher led questioning (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2011). The use of a Narrative methodology also aligns with the Constructivist paradigm adopted within the current study which acknowledges the subjective, socially constructed nature of knowledge. Therefore, the narratives shared by participants are viewed not as definitive, but as a means of making sense of experiences which are context-dependent and could potentially be re-told in alternative ways in future accounts (Wertz, et al., 2011).

Several factors have influenced the researcher's personal interest in this topic. Prior to enrolment in doctoral training, the researcher worked for several years as a teaching assistant (TA), both in schools and for a local authority (LA) Specialist Teaching Service. This experience included supporting young people with SEMH needs, many of whom had experienced permanent exclusion from mainstream schools. This work routinely utilised child-centred and solution focussed approaches to supporting the needs of young people, including the capturing of pupil views to inform next steps and support. During doctoral training the researcher has also had opportunity to support many young people identified as having SEMH needs. These experiences have shaped the researcher's interest in this topic and the view that young people with SEMH needs are able to provide articulate and meaningful insights into their experiences.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

This chapter will begin by discussing definitions of SEMH needs and the importance of gaining pupil voice for this population. KS2-3 transition will then be introduced, and the conceptualisation and theoretical framework regarding KS2-3 transition adopted within the current study will be discussed. Next, issues related to the potential challenges and outcomes associated with KS2-3 transition and how these relate to young people with SEMH needs will be explored. A systematic review of literature will then explore studies relating to the mainstream secondary school experiences of young people with SEMH needs. The outcomes of the review will also be discussed in relation to what this may tell us about the KS2-3 transition experiences of these young people. Finally, in light of the literature explored within this chapter, the rationale for the current research will be presented.

2.2. Social Emotional and Mental Health Needs

The language used to describe young people with SEMH needs has been subject to debate in educational literature over the years, resulting in revisions to education policy and practice (Hickinbotham & Soni, 2021; Stanbridge & Mercer, 2022). The 1944 Education Act refers to pupils who may be understood in current terms as experiencing SEMH needs as 'maladjusted'. This may be seen as aligning with a medical model of behaviour, which positions the factors underpinning behaviour as being the result of individual differences within the young person (Frederickson & Cline, 2015; Stanbridge & Mercer, 2022).

The Warnock Report (1978) appeared to herald a shift away from viewing needs as being linked to individual, 'within-child' factors, instead recognising the impact of contextual and environmental factors (Frederickson & Cline, 2015). Subsequent terms related to SEMH in an English school context have included Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) and Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD). Although offering a broader scope within which to conceptualise young

people's needs, the applicability and clarity of these terms has been questioned (Evans et al., 2004; Stanbridge & Mercer, 2022).

The term SEMH needs was first introduced within the Special educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (DfE, 2015). This statutory guidance outlines four broad areas of special educational need: Communication & Interaction; Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties; Cognition and Learning; and Sensory and/or Physical needs (DfE, 2015). In relation to SEMH, the guidance states:

Children and young people may experience 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 (DfE, 2015, p.98).

This appears to represent a shift away from viewing behaviour itself as an area of need to recognising that behaviours may be a *product* of unmet needs (Greer, 2020; Hickinbotham & Soni, 2021). The acknowledgement of mental health within this category of need may also be indicative of a wider cultural and political emphasis on supporting mental health for young people, as evidenced by the publication of 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: a Green Paper' (DfE, 2017). However, despite the removal of the term 'behaviour' from this conceptualisation, studies suggest that dispositional, within-child attributions are still prevalent in educational practice (Hickinbotham & Soni, 2021; Stanbridge & Mercer, 2022). Furthermore, some commentators suggest that issues of ambiguity associated with previous labels such as BESD may still be prevalent in practice due to a lack of guidance for professionals regarding identification of SEMH needs (Norwich & Eaton, 2015).

2.3. Pupil Voice and Young People with SEMH Needs

The importance of gaining the views of young people is emphasised in policy and legislation. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

outlines the rights of all children to have their views, feelings and wishes heard in all matters affecting them (UNRC, 1989). In particular, the importance of hearing the voice of young people with SEND has been highlighted in legislation and guidance such as the Children and Families Act (DfE, 2014) and the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015), which stipulates the promotion of pupil voice and the involvement of children and families in all decision making. Furthermore, research indicates that the benefits of ensuring pupil voice include enhancing feelings of agency, confidence, and sense of school connectedness (Robinson, et al. 2017).

Despite this emphasis on hearing the voice of all children, there appears to be a lack of research which specifically aims to explore and understand the views of young people with SEMH needs (Hickinbotham & Soni, 2021). This lack of qualitative research is concerning, especially considering that young people with SEMH needs have been described as often being the “least empowered and least liked group of all” (Cooper, 2006, p. 39).

2.4. Key Stage 2-3 Transition

2.4.1. Introduction to KS2-3 Transition

For the majority of pupils attending mainstream schools in England, the move from primary to secondary school occurs at the end of National Curriculum Year 6 (final year of Key Stage 2) and involves the move to National Curriculum Year 7 (first year of Key Stage 3), following a six-week summer holiday. KS2-3 transition is recognised in existing literature as a crucial and significant period (Jindal-Snape & Cantalli, 2019; Maras & Aveling, 2006; West et al., 2010) and has been variously described as a “significant rite of passage” (Bailey & Baines, 2012, p.47) and “one of the most difficult in pupils’ educational careers” (Zeedyk et al., 2003, p.68).

There has been an increased awareness among professionals over the years as to the importance of supporting KS2-3 transition and many schools routinely embed formalised KS2-3 transition procedures such as familiarisation visits in the summer term of Year 6 (Jindal-Snape, 2020).

2.5. The Conceptualisation of KS2-3 Transitions and Theoretical Framework Adopted in the Current Study

2.5.1. Conceptualisations and Theoretical Frameworks adopted in Existing KS2-3 Transition research

The topic of KS2-3 transition is one of the most widely researched areas in education (Jindal-Snape et al., 2020; West et al., 2010) and there is a wealth of research reaching back to the 1960's exploring the phenomenon (Symonds and Galton, 2014). However, a systematic mapping review by Jindal-Snape et al. (2021) examining 96 international KS2-3 transition studies published between 2008 and 2018 indicates that many existing studies do not explicitly outline a clear conceptualisation of KS2-3 transition within the context of their study, nor do they make use of a theoretical framework to underpin their study and discuss their findings. The review concludes that, concerning these studies, it is therefore "difficult to determine the robustness of the findings and interpretation" (Jindal-Snape, et al., 2021, p.13). In line with this, the conceptualisations and theoretical frameworks considered for use within the current study will be discussed in the following sections.

2.5.2. Conceptualisations of KS2-3 Transition

The findings of the review by Jindal-Snape, et al. (2021) indicate a lack of conceptualisation of KS2-3 transition in many studies on the part of researchers. For example, 45% of the included studies conceptualise KS2-3 transition simply as 'change' (e.g., social, pedagogical, environmental changes) with conceptualisations typically adhering to the literal meaning of the phrase 'transition' rather than a formalised conceptualisation.

2.5.2.1. Discontinuity

KS2-3 transition has been explored in research using the concept of discontinuity (Jindal-Snape & Foggie, 2008; Makin et al., 2017; Rainer & Cropley, 2017). In this

context, the concept of discontinuity refers to the factors which remain stable or are disrupted across KS2-3 transition (Galton et al., 1999). Rice (2001) conceptualises these changes as “institutional discontinuities”, which relate to school climate (e.g., changes in the number of pupils, learning environment), educational practices (e.g., school standards, student autonomy), and social structures (e.g., relationships with staff, changes in the structure and stability of social systems) (p.374). Discontinuity may offer a useful conceptualisation and formal understanding of the changes associated with KS2-3 transition. However, research suggests that KS2-3 transition not only involves environmental and social changes but also a change in identity and self-perception (Anderson et al., 2000; Jindal-snape & Cantali, 2019; Ng-Knight et al., 2016; Thompson & Urquhart, 2003; Warin & Muldoon, 2009). Therefore, adopting the conceptualisation of KS2-3 transition in terms of discontinuity may not adequately address these factors.

2.5.2.2. The Conceptualisation of KS2-3 Transition Adopted in the Current Study

Jindal-Snape & Cantali (2019) undertook a longitudinal study of KS2-3 transition experiences in one secondary and 14 feeder primary schools in Scotland. The study collected both qualitative and quantitative data across four time points over three years including the final year of primary school, twice within the first year of secondary school, and once within the second year of secondary school. The authors emphasise the ongoing nature of transition, with pupils reporting problems at different points over the three years, suggesting that transition may better understood as an ongoing process, rather than a one-off event. Therefore, it was felt that the notion of discontinuity may fail to account for these factors. As such, the current study will adopt Jindal-Snape’s (2019) conceptualisation of KS2-3 transition which states that KS2-3 transition may be helpfully understood as:

A dynamic and ongoing process of psychological, social and educational adaptation over time due to changes in context, interpersonal relationships and identity, which can be both exciting and worrying at different times for different people and requires ongoing support from a range of significant others (Jindal-Snape, 2019, p. 1257).

This conceptualisation was selected as it was felt to encompass the range of environmental, contextual, and emotional aspects of KS2-3 transition. Furthermore, research suggests that, rather than a one-off event, transition may be better understood as an ongoing process and that pupils may experience difficulties associated with transition at different times (Jindal-Snape, 2019; Waters et al., 2014). Therefore, the adoption of this conceptualisation was also selected as it encompasses the potentially ongoing and dynamic nature of the transition process.

2.5.3. Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding KS2-3 Transition

2.5.3.1. Stage-environment Fit Theory

In the context of transition research, stage-environment fit theory (Eccles & Midgley, 1989) has been adopted by researchers as a theoretical framework to examine the compatibility of adolescents' developmental needs (e.g., social, emotional, and cognitive needs, personal goals) with their secondary school environment (Booth & Gerard, 2014; Ellerbrock & Kiefer, 2013; Neal et al., 2016; Symonds & Hargreaves, 2016). The theory proposes that difficulties related to KS2-3 transition such as reduced academic motivation may be understood as a mismatch between young people's developmental stage (and associated needs) and their school environments (Eccles et al., 1993). Although stage-environment fit theory may offer a useful conceptual framework within which to explore how young people respond to their new school environment based on developmental characteristics, it has been suggested that viewing stage and environment as separate continuums may fail to account for young people's thoughts and feelings about KS2-3 transition which emerge in response to their adaptations to their new school environment, rather than individual developmental characteristics (Symonds & Hargreaves, 2016). Furthermore, stage-environment fit theory's focus on the fit between developmental stage and school environment may overlook the influence of additional environmental influences (e.g., home, community, policy, culture) on young people's responses to KS2-3 transition. Therefore, stage-

environment fit theory has not been utilised as a theoretical framework for the current study.

2.5.3.2. Ecological Systems Theory

It has been widely recognised that KS2-3 transition is a significant event which presents young people with a range of environmental risks such as adjusting to a new school environment, developing relationships with new staff and peers (Hebron, 2018; Jindal-Snape et al., 2020; Lester et al., 2003; Waters et al., 2014; West et al., 2010). Previous studies have utilised Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (EST) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) as a theoretical conceptual framework to explore young people's experiences of KS2-3 transition (Brewin & Statham, 2011; Strnadová & Cumming, 2014; Strnadová et al., 2016; Waters et al., 2014b). The theory considers the developing child at the centre of a nested structure of systems. Closest to the individual is the *Microsystem*, including settings in which the young person directly interacts such as school, family, and neighbourhood. The *mesosystem* refers to the interaction between these settings. The *exosystem* refers to settings which indirectly influence the young person such as LA services. The *macrosystem* refers to societal and cultural influences on the individual such as cultural beliefs regarding education (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Studies adopting this framework have utilised methodological approaches such as questionnaires which are designed to gather data related to specific factors within the young person's microsystem, such as asking the young person to rate the perceived support of peers, family and friends during KS2-3 transition (Brewin & Statham, 2011; Waters et al., 2014b). It was therefore felt that adopting a similar approach which aimed to capture data relating to pre-determined factors may be prescriptive and risk excluding relevant insights. Furthermore, previous studies adopting this theoretical conceptual framework have drawn upon data gathered from both young people and individuals within their microsystem such as teachers, parents, and carers (Brewin & Statham, 2011; Strnadová & Cumming, 2014; Strnadová et al., 2016). Consequently, it was felt that the current study, which focuses solely on the experiences of young, may offer limited insights into exosystemic influences within which the young person had no direct interaction

such as factors related to transition planning or parental experiences. Therefore, EST has not been adopted as a theoretical framework for the current study.

2.5.3.3. Resilience

Resilience research attempts to explore how some individuals can achieve relatively positive psychological outcomes despite facing adversity (Luthar, 2006; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 2006). Resilience research involves the exploration and understanding of *risk* and *protective* factors. Risk factors are related to both individuals (e.g., self-esteem) and environmental (e.g., parental support) factors which increase the likelihood of individuals experiencing negative outcomes (Masten, 2001). Protective factors relate to both individual and environmental factors which protect individuals against adversity (Armstrong et al., 2005). However, resilience has been defined as a dynamic process (Luthar et al., 2000 Luthar, 2006) which “has the capacity to emerge in later life after earlier periods of coping problems” (Newman and Blackburn, 2002, p. 10). It has also been suggested that Resilience is not a static trait and does not result from the mere presence of particular risk and protective factors but from how individuals engage with and interpret these factors (Bailey & Baines, 2012; Rutter, 2006).

There appears to be a consensus within existing research that whilst most young people can successfully navigate the challenges presented by KS2-3 transition, for some, it may represent a period of adversity (Evangelou et al., 2008; Hebron, 2018; Jindal-Snape et al., 2020; Lester et al., 2003; Waters et al., 2014; West et al., 2010). This period of adversity has been conceptualised as a “challenge of living” (Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008 p.218). As such, it has been argued that a resilience framework may offer researchers a valid theoretical framework for exploring young peoples’ KS2-3 transition experiences (Bailey & Baines, 2012; Catterall, 1998; Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008). Furthermore, a resilience framework was felt to be the most applicable to understanding the temporal, contextual, interpersonal, and emotional aspects encompassed within the conceptualisation of KS2-3 transition adopted by the current study.

2.6. The Difficulties Associated with KS2-3 Transition

2.6.2. Academic, Social, and Structural Changes

KS2-3 transition has been said to present young people with a range of academic, social, and structural changes (Anderson et al., 2000; Bunn & Boesly, 2019; Jindal-Snape et al., 2020; Shepherd & Roker, 2005). Changes include moving from a setting which they have typically attended for the previous seven years to a different, often much larger physical space with a greatly increased number of pupils. In addition, young people also make the shift in identity from being the oldest pupils in their primary school to being the youngest pupils in a much larger secondary setting (Hebron, 2018; Zeedyk, et al., 2003). Changes in educational practices often include a move from a single teacher to being taught by several subject-specific teachers who may have vastly different teaching styles (Jindal-Snape et al., 2020). KS2-3 transition also involves changes to social structures and can involve leaving behind well-established staff and peer relationships from primary settings and establishing new staff and peer relationships. This includes not only changes to these relationships but also a loss of the social and emotional support these relationships may have provided (Spernes, 2022).

2.6.3. Developmental Changes

For many young people, KS2-3 transition also coincides with additional developmental challenges such as biological changes related to puberty, as well as changes in cognitive capacity, emotional development, and personal identity (Anderson et al., 2000; Jindal-Snape & Cantali, 2019; Ng-Knight et al., 2016; Thompson & Urquhart, 2003; Warin & Muldoon, 2009). Although adjustment to these changes can be challenging, they have been described as an integral feature of KS2-3 transition (Lucy and Reay, 2000; Jindal-Snape, 2008), representing a 'transfer paradox' (Hallinan & Hallinan, 1992). For example, Lucey and Reay (2000) propose that for young people to achieve age-appropriate

autonomy, they must first give up the level of adult support and protection which may have been provided in primary school.

2.7. Outcomes Associated with KS2-3 Transition

There appears to be a consensus within existing research that whilst the majority of young can successfully navigate the challenges presented by KS2-3 transition, for some, it may be linked to negative outcomes (Ashton, 2008; Coffey, 2013; West et al., 2010).

2.7.1. Academic Outcomes

The apparent 'dip' in academic achievement experienced by pupils making the KS2-3 transition is well established in research (Jindal-Snape et al., 2019; West et al., 2010). Whilst a causal link between KS2-3 transition and this apparent dip in attainment cannot be established, research indicates a dip in attainment across school systems, where transition occurs at different ages (Anderson et al., 2000). In addition, negative academic outcomes associated with KS2-3 transition may also include factors such as a decline in academic engagement and motivation, and a decline in perceived teacher support (Deieso & Fraser, 2018; Hopwood et al., 2016; Madjar et al., 2018; Otis et al., 2005; Riglin et al., 2013).

In contrast, positive academic outcomes associated with KS2-3 transition include enjoying access to a wider curriculum, feeling sufficiently challenged, and feeling an increased sense of responsibility for learning (Mackenzie et al., 2012; Neal & Frederickson, 2016; Symonds & Hargreaves, 2016). However, it has been suggested that findings related to both positive and negative academic outcomes should be interpreted cautiously as a causal link with KS2-3 transition and academic outcomes is difficult to establish (Jindal-Snape et al., 2020).

2.7.2. The Impact of Pre-transition Worries

Anticipation of the changes associated with KS2-3 transition often present young people with feelings of both anxiety and optimism (Jindal-Snape et al., 2020). This has been conceptualised as 'anxious readiness' (Giddens, 1991, p.44). For example, some young people may experience optimistic anticipation of new academic and social opportunities, as well as concerns around factors such as bullying, increased academic demands, and getting lost within the larger school environment (Ashton, 2008; Jindal- snape, 2008,2010; Jindal-Snape & Cantali, 2019; Jindal-Snape & Foggie, 2008; Zeedyk et al., 2003).

It appears to be widely accepted within research that initial worries related to KS2-3 transition typically reduce over time (Brown et al., 2004; Jindal-Snape et al., 2020; Symonds & Galton, 2014; Topping, 2011; West et al., 2010). However, existing studies suggest that young people experiencing additional difficulties such as special educational needs, mental health difficulties and low prior academic attainment report more concerns prior to transition. These studies also suggest that concerns may persist over time and may be associated with subsequent negative well-being outcomes such as difficulties with social adaptation, depression, and loneliness (Jindal-Snape & Cantaili, 2019; Nowland & Qualter, 2019; Rice et al., 2021; West et al., 2010). However, as noted, these findings should be interpreted with caution as a causal influence between pre-transition concerns and specific social and emotional outcomes cannot be established (Jindal-Snape et al., 2020). Furthermore, it may be that pre-transition concerns are indicative of pre-existing social and emotional factors which may impact on KS2-3 transition experiences and subsequent outcomes.

2.7.3. Social and Emotional Outcomes Related to KS2-3 Transition

KS2-3 transition is associated with a range of positive social and emotional outcomes such as increased self-esteem, opportunities to establish new friendships with a wider range of peers, and opportunities for a 'fresh start' in terms of personal identity (Neal & Frederickson, 2016; Vaz et al., 2014b; Symonds & Hargreaves, 2016). However, a difficult KS2-3 transition experience may be associated with negative social and emotional outcomes such as experiencing

anxiety, experiencing depression, alienation from peers, reduced school attendance, and negative effects on self-image, (Ashton, 2008; Coffey, 2013; Mumford & Birchwood, 2021). For example, it has been suggested that young people who struggle with the challenges presented by KS2-3 transition may be more at risk of experiencing depression both during and beyond secondary school (West et al., 2010). Symonds and Galton (2014) reviewed 104 studies from the United States (US) United Kingdom (UK) and Europe relating to the psychological development of pupils during the primary to secondary school transition. The authors suggest that during this transition period, young people often endeavour to meet a range of psychological needs (safety, relatedness, autonomy, competency, enjoyment) and develop their identities in an environment that is often vastly from their primary school setting. The study also proposes that interactions between young people and their school environment (and how these needs are met) can positively or negatively impact several areas of psychological development such as emotional engagement with school (e.g., perception of school environment); academic self-concept (how the young person views their academic abilities); self-esteem (confidence in personal abilities and attributes); and experiencing anxiety and depression. However, it is worth noting that many of the studies included within the review utilised questionnaires as measures of psychological development, which may offer limited insights into the personal and contextual factors influencing participant responses.

2.7.4. KS2-3 Transition and Permanent Exclusion

Recent government data indicates a clear contrast between rates of permanent exclusion (PE) in mainstream primary and secondary school settings. For example, most recent exclusion data indicates that the rate of PE from mainstream primary schools was 2 per 10,00 and the rate of PE from mainstream secondary schools was 13 per 10,000 (DfE, 2021). This data, and data from previous academic years, indicates that PE rates appear to increase across KS3 and are highest for pupils aged 14 years in academic Year 9 (DfE, 2019, 2020, 2021). This suggests that young people may be more vulnerable to experiencing permanent exclusion during KS3. The Timpson Review of School Exclusion (DfE,

2019b) emphasises the potential importance of the transition between primary and secondary settings for young people who have experienced PE. Parents and carers who contributed to the review relate that KS2-3 transition appeared to present challenges for their children including the increased demands of moving between many different classrooms and interacting with many more teachers than they were used to in their primary school setting. The review concludes that there is a need for transition support programmes to be developed and for good practice to be widely shared between settings to promote effective KS2-3 transition support.

Studies exploring the experiences of young people who have experienced permanent exclusion highlight difficulties during KS2-3 transition such as feeling unsupported by teachers in being able to adjust to the increased demands in terms of learning, self-organisation, and developing friendships. In addition, many young people who have experienced PE during KS3 appear to recall their primary school experiences more positively in contrast to secondary school, which is often described as being more impersonal and inflexible with fewer positive pupil-teacher relationships (DfE, 2019; Farouk, 2017; Thacker, 2017). Trotman, et al. (2015) used an ethnographic approach using one-to-one, semi-structured interviews with 49 young people who had experienced PE from a mainstream school. The study highlights that the behaviours which resulted in participants experiencing a permanent exclusion during KS3 were often cited by pupils as being a response to the social and emotional challenges associated with a poor KS2-3 transition experience. For example, participants report that some behaviours considered as disruptive were adopted to gain recognition from peers and staff and that these adaptive behaviours were often adopted as a result of difficulties during KS2-3 transition and were often sustained into later schooling. This suggests that for some young people, behaviours which may be ultimately linked to negative outcomes, including experiencing permanent exclusion may be underpinned by difficulties associated with KS2-3 transition.

Young people who have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN) are disproportionately represented in PE data. The rate of PE from mainstream state-funded schools in England for those with an Education and

Health Care Plan (EHCP)¹ is 19 per 10,000, and for those identified as having SEN without an EHCP, the rate of PE is 38 per 10,000 (DfE, 2021) compared with the overall rate of PE which is 13 per 10,000 (DfE, 2021). In terms of primary area of need, young people who are identified as having SEMH needs are the are most at risk of experiencing permanent exclusion. For example, young people who receive SEN support for Social, Emotional & Mental Health needs who do not have an EHCP are 3.8 times more likely to experience PE than children with no identified SEN (DfE, 2021).

2.8. Summary

The literature indicates that there are multiple challenges and changes associated with the KS2-3 transition for all young people. Whilst the majority are able to navigate them successfully, for some it may represent a period of difficulty, which may lead to negative social, emotional and academic outcomes. Furthermore, it has been suggested that difficulties encountered during KS2-3 transition may be associated with negative outcomes such as permanent exclusion (DfE, 2019; Trotman et al., 2015). This may be particularly relevant for young people with SEMH needs as government data indicates that they overrepresented in exclusion data in comparison to young people with other areas of need (DfE,2021).

2.9. Risk and Protective Factors Associated with KS2-3 Transition

It has been suggested that a cause-and-effect relationship between KS2-3 transition experience and subsequent outcomes cannot be established due to the complexity of individual transition experiences and the unique interplay of individual risk and protective factors which may support or hinder the KS2-3 transition process (Jindal-Snape, 2020; 2013; Symonds & Hargreaves, 2016).

¹ An EHC plan details the education, health and social care support that is to be provided to a child or young person who has SEN or a disability (DfE, 2015, p.280).

2.9.1. Individual Risk factors

Individual risk factors such as experiencing mental health difficulties (Lester et al., 2013; Nowland & Qualter, 2007; Rice et al., 2011), low prior attainment, and low self-esteem (Bailey & Baines, 2012; West et al., 2010; Zeedyk et al., 2003) may place some young people at increased risk of a negative KS2-3 transition experience. In addition, sociodemographic factors such as chronological age (Galton et al., 2000), being a looked-after child (Brewin & Statham, 2011; Francis et al., 2021), having English as an additional language (Bloyce & Frederickson, 2012; Graham & Hill, 2003), and low socioeconomic status (Anderson et al., 2000; Evangelou, et al., 2008; Vaz et al., 2014; West et al., 2008), may also place young people at increased risk of experiencing a negative transition experience.

Individual protective factors such as having high levels of social skills, holding positive beliefs about expected future selves, and having high levels of dispositional optimism have been identified in research as individual protective factors which may positively influence KS2-3 transition (Boman & Yates, 2001). Studies also suggest that attributes linked to self-awareness such as emotional intelligence and emotional self-efficacy may also act as protective factors which support positive school adjustment following school transfer (Adeyemo, 2005; Bailey & Baines, 2012; Qualter et al., 2007).

West, Sweeting and Young (2010) followed 2000 Scottish pupils from 135 primary schools in 1994 at age 11 and followed up in 43 secondary schools at ages 13 and 15 and post school at age 18/ 19. The study indicates that pupils with measures of low attainment and self-esteem at KS2 reported poorer transition experiences. At age 15, a difficult transition experience was significantly related to higher levels of depression and lower self-esteem. Similar, but less significant results were seen at age 18/19. A limitation to these results may be that measures were not taken in the first year of secondary school, therefore pupils were required to recall their first few weeks of secondary school over a year later. As such, any views were retrospective and may have been influenced by their current situation.

2.10. KS2-3 Transition Experiences of Young People with SEN

Existing research highlights that young people with SEN may experience increased difficulties in multiple domains during KS2-3 transition including social, emotional, and academic adjustment (McCoy et al., 2020). For example, young people with SEN are more likely to report concerns regarding bullying and social adjustment and are more likely to report lower levels of academic self-concept and perceived social support than their peers without SEN (Hodson et al., 2005; Hughes et al., 2013). A systematic review of international literature by Hughes, et al. (2013) exploring the psychosocial impact of KS2-3 transition for young people with SEN in mainstream schools suggests that post-transition, those with SEN are more likely to experience concerns regarding bullying, are more likely to experience difficulties with social adjustment and are more likely to report lower levels of academic self-concept and perceived social support than their typically developing peers. However, the relatively small number of studies included in the review (5), which include the views of young people with a range of needs may offer limited generalisability to a wider SEN population.

Cantali (2019) reviewed international literature focussing on the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with Additional Support Needs (ASN), which is the Scottish equivalent to the UK term SEN. The findings of the review are largely in line with those of Hughes et al. (2003). Firstly, the review indicates that young people with ASN may be more vulnerable to negative experiences such as anxiety and bullying during their KS2-3 transition experience than their peers without ASN. Cantali (2019) suggests that:

There is a need for recognition that transition may be an ASN for some children, or it may heighten an existing ASN for a child, leading to increased vulnerability (p.43).

Many of the studies included in the findings of the review highlight the need for an enhanced level of support for young people with SEN during their KS2-3 transition. Also, in line with Hughes (2003), Cantali (2019) highlights the relative paucity of literature in this area and concludes that further research is needed to support generalisable good practice for young people with SEN during KS2-3

transition. It is also worth noting that of the 22 studies reviewed, only seven adopted a qualitative methodology which aimed to directly explore young people's views regarding KS2-3 transition. This apparent lack of qualitative data within existing studies may also suggest the need for future research which aims to capture the views and experiences of young people with SEN regarding KS2-3 transition.

However, young people with SEN are not a homogenous group and broad comparisons between those with and without SEN may offer limited insights into how individual young people with varied areas of need experience KS2-3 transition. This is emphasised in the conclusions of systematic reviews of KS2-3 transition literature which highlight the need for future research to explore and understand the experiences of young people with a wide range of needs (Jindal-Snape et al., 2020; McCoy et al., 2020).

Despite the wealth of KS2-3 transition research, there appears to be relatively little existing published research which aims to explore the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with SEMH needs in mainstream settings. A doctoral thesis by Grant (2020) used a grounded theory approach to explore the factors which contributed to experiences of a successful KS2-3 transition for six young people in academic Year 8 identified as having SEMH needs. The study took place in 3 mainstream comprehensive schools in a diverse London borough, UK. The study proposes the over-arching theory of *The Clockwork Theory of Secondary Transition for Pupils with SEMH Needs*. Within this theory, three interdependent mechanisms are identified, which may influence positive KS2-3 transition experiences: 1) early intervention which promotes the development of trusting relationships and a sense of belonging; 2) the need to distance current from primary schooling experiences; 3) having a sense of choice and agency. The study concludes by highlighting the need to broaden the current evidence base through further research which aims to explore the factors which may facilitate successful KS2-3 transitions for young people with SEMH needs.

This apparent paucity of existing research may indicate a need for further research particularly considering that young with SEMH needs may be more susceptible to potential risk factors associated with a negative KS2-3 transition experience than their peers.

2.11. School and Organisational Factors Associated with KS2-3 Transition

2.11.1. Pupil-teacher Relationships

There appears to be a consensus among existing research that positive pupil-teacher relationships are an important protective factor in ensuring positive social and emotional outcomes for all young people during the KS2-3 transition process (Bailey and Baines, 2012; Bru et al., 2010; Coffey, 2013; Hopwood et al., 2016; Jindal-Snape et al., 2019, 2020; Longobardi et al., 2016; Ryan et al., 2013; Tobbell & O'Donnell 2013). However, several studies indicate that young people with SEMH difficulties may be more at risk of experiencing negative pupil-teacher relationships than their peers (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Cosma & Soni, 2019; O'Connor et al., 2011). Cosma & Soni (2019) undertook a systematic review of eight UK studies which explored the views of young people with BESD/SEMH in relation to their educational experiences. The findings of the review indicate that negative pupil teacher relationships were often linked to negative school experiences for young people with SEMH needs. Notably, some young people cited negative pupil-teacher relationships as a factor which influenced negative outcomes such as disengagement from school and experiencing permanent exclusion. Factors associated with difficult relationships include feeling unfairly treated, unsupported, and negatively labelled by teachers. However, it is worth noting that the majority of included studies were undertaken in specialist provisions such as pupil referral units and did not specifically aim to explore young people's experiences of mainstream secondary schools. Therefore, data relating to mainstream secondary experiences is limited. These experiences and views in relation to pupil-teacher relationships are also evident across international literature (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Hajdukova, et al., 2014).

The importance of pupil-teacher relationships is further emphasised by the views of young people with SEMH needs attending pupil referral units following permanent exclusion who cite positive teacher relationships as being a factor which enabled positive academic and emotional outcomes in these settings (Cosma & Soni, 2019; Gonzi et al., 2006; O'Connor, 2011; Sellman, 2009). Positive aspects that seem to be associated with pupil teacher relationships in these settings include flexible responses to classroom behaviour management and feeling supported both academically and socially. This suggests that pupil-teacher relationships have the potential to act as either a risk or protective factor for young people with SEMH difficulties during KS2-3 transition depending on the quality of these relationships.

2.11.2. Curriculum Engagement

Findings of a systematic review of 96 international KS2-3 transition studies by Jindal-Snape et al. (2020) indicate that academic factors related to a positive KS2-3 transition experience include feeling appropriately challenged, having opportunities to engage in new and interesting topics, experiencing self-development, and experiencing a wide and diverse curriculum. In contrast, the review found that negative experiences appear to be linked to factors including a lack of curriculum continuity and progression and feeling that the curriculum is too challenging. However, existing research indicates that young people with SEMH needs may often experience difficulties with curriculum engagement such as feeling that their underlying learning needs are not being adequately addressed and feeling unable to meet the increased academic demands of KS3 (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Nind et al., 2012). Cefai and Cooper (2010) conducted a systematic review of eight small-scale qualitative studies exploring the views of young people with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties in mainstream secondary schools in Malta. The review indicates that many young people across the included studies reported feeling that the curriculum was inaccessible due to lack of academic support, un-engaging, and irrelevant to their life and future aspirations. Some young people within the included studies also reported engaging in behaviours which resulted in behavioural sanctions a means of making their school experience more fun and engaging. However, the findings of this review may not be widely generalisable to an English school context

as there may be inherent differences between the education systems in England and Malta.

Nind et al. (2012) explored the views of eight female participants in a specialist secondary provision for pupils with BESD in the UK. The study found that some young people cited experiencing academic difficulties in their previous (mainstream) settings. Furthermore, for some participants, negative outcomes such as poor pupil-teacher relationships were attributed to experiences of not having their learning needs adequately met. In contrast, some participants in this study cited factors such as perceiving the curriculum as engaging and relevant as important in promoting engagement in learning (Nind et al., 2012). Michael and Frederickson (2013) explored the views of 18 young people aged 11-16 years attending two pupil referral units (PRUs) in London regarding their perceived barriers and enablers to positive academic and social outcomes. The study found that curriculum-based factors experienced in alternative provision relating to positive outcomes included perceiving the curriculum as engaging and relevant, personalisation of learning, and opportunities for extra-curricular activities. However, it is unclear from the participant information within the study whether all participants were identified as having SEBD or a similar label which limits the generalisability of the findings.

2.11.3. A sense of School Connectedness

School connectedness (SC) has been conceptualised as “feeling accepted, respected, included, and supported in the school environment” (Goodenow, 1993, p.80). Connectedness has been referred to as school belonging, school membership and school bonding (Allen et al., 2022) A sense of connectedness has been identified as a protective factor which may help support a positive KS2-3 transition experience (Hebron, 2018; Jindal-Snape et al., 2020; Lester et al., 2013; Spernes, 2022; Vaz, et al., 2014b). A longitudinal study by Lester et al. (2013) explored the relationship between school connectedness and mental health for 3,459 Australian pupils at four points over the primary-secondary school transition process. Utilising self-reported measures of school connectedness, and depression and anxiety, the study indicates a significant reciprocal relationship between school connectedness

and mental health in the first two years of secondary school, with pupils rating higher levels of school connectedness also reporting decreased levels of depression and anxiety. In contrast, lower reported levels of school connectedness were associated with increased reported levels of depression and anxiety. The study also indicates that reported feelings of depression and anxiety in primary school predicted lower levels of connectedness in secondary school. Although limited to a small group of Catholic schools in one area of Australia, these findings highlight the importance of school connection during KS2-3 transition. The study also indicates that young people experiencing mental health difficulties in primary school may find establishing a sense of connection to their secondary school more challenging than their peers and that these difficulties may persist over time (Lester et al., 2013). Indeed, the bi-directional influence of mental health and SC has been suggested in previous studies (Klinck et al., 2020; Loukas et al., 2009, 2016; Pate et al., 2017). However, Lester et al. (2013) do not account for additional variables such as pupil characteristics, peer and teacher relationships, and parental support in their findings in relating to SC. As such as bi-directional influence between mental health and SC cannot be fully established given the potential influence of these additional variables.

Studies indicate that young people with SEMH difficulties are more likely to report lower levels of school connectedness than their peers (Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2018; McCoy & Banks, 2012). Dimitrellou and Hurry (2019) used self-report measures to explore the sense of school belonging and social relations (perceived relationships with teachers, peers, and teaching assistants) of 1,440 young people in academic years 7-10 in 3 mainstream primary schools in the UK. The study included the responses of pupils identified as having SEN including SEMH needs ($n= 36$) and Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) ($n = 99$). The study found that overall, pupils with SEN were significantly less likely to report a sense of school belonging and perceived positive relationships with teachers than their peers without SEN. There were no statistically significant differences between the scores of young people identified with SEMH and MLD. Within the SEN group, positive relationships with teachers had the most significant association with sense of school belonging ($r = .475$), this was followed by relationships with teaching assistants ($r = .367$), and finally with peers ($r = .269$). Again, this highlights the importance of pupil-teacher

relationships in supporting positive school experiences for young people with SEMH needs.

However, studies suggest that despite being more at risk of reporting lower levels of school connectedness, young people with SEMH needs seem to acknowledge the importance of connectedness in promoting a positive school experience (Craggs & Kelly, 2018; Nind, Boorman, & Clarke, 2012; Tellis-James & Fox, 2016). Craggs & Kelly (2018) explored the views of 4 young people identified as having SEMH difficulties who had experienced managed moves during KS3. Young people reported factors including positive pupil-teacher relationships making friends, feeling safe, feeling understood and accepted and receiving appropriate support as being factors which promoted a sense of connectedness in their receiving school.

2.12. Summary

This section has highlighted key themes which have been suggested in literature as being potential risk factors associated with their KS2-3 transition process.

Comparison of these themes with the experiences of young people with SEMH needs suggests that young people with SEMH needs may be more susceptible to these risk factors. However, as highlighted by existing KS2-3 transition research, risk and protective factors influencing resilience during KS2-3 transition are often dynamic and inter-related (Bailey & Baines, 2012; Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008). For young people with SEMH needs, multiple risk and protective factors may interact during KS2-3 transition, creating a profile of complex needs which may be mutually re-enforcing (Bailey & Baines, 2012). However, it is worth noting that many of these comparisons are based on international literature. As such, they may lack relevance to the context of the current study. For example, whilst international studies may use terms such as SEBD (e.g., Cefai & Cooper, 2010), these terms may differ from what is understood as SEMH as outlined in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015).

Therefore, the findings from these studies may not be generalisable to the English school system. Furthermore, whilst there is a small research base exploring the views of young people with SEMH needs, many studies have taken place within the context of specialist provision and offer limited insights into the mainstream

secondary experiences of these young people (Cosma & Soni, 2019). This suggests that further research would be beneficial to understand the experiences of young people with SEMH needs in mainstream English schools. Although literature suggests that young people with SEMH needs may be more susceptible to risk factors associated with a negative KS2-3 transition experiences, the lack of research in this area means that little is currently known about these experiences.

However, ascribing potential risk or protective factors to young people based on individual characteristics or sociodemographic factors may be over-simplistic and it may be a false assumption that specific risk factors pose comparable levels of risk for all young people (Armstrong et al., 2005; Bailey & Baines, 2012).

Accordingly, studies suggest that it is the complex interactions between young people and their environment that can often produce both risk and protective factors which may influence KS2-3 transition experiences (Bailey & Baines, 2012; Daniel, 2010; Jindal-Snape et al., 2020; Mowat, 2019). This suggests the importance of researchers attempting to explore and understand the individual KS2-3 transition experiences of young people within their unique contexts.

2.13. Systematic Review

2.13.1. Definition of a Systematic Literature Review

A systematic literature review (SLR) is a comprehensive, transparent, replicable method of accumulating the most relevant available evidence to answer a specific research question. Systematic reviews differ from a narrative review by promoting transparency and replicability of findings and may help to reduce bias by reviewing all relevant studies, allowing the reader to judge the sum of the evidence (Tight, 2019).

2.13.2. Objectives of the Current Systematic Review

The initial aims of this systematic review were to explore the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools. However, an initial search of four databases (Applied Social Sciences Index & Abstracts (ASSIA), Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC), Psycinfo and Web of Science) in June 2022 did not yield any relevant studies linked to this specific review focus (See Appendix 1. for an outline of the search terms used within the initial search).

As discussed, issues relevant to KS2-3 transition such as pupil-teacher relationships and establishing a sense of belonging often feature in the accounts of young people with SEMH needs within qualitative studies (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Cosma & Soni, 2019; Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2018; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Therefore, the current review will instead aim to explore research relating to the experiences of young people with SEMH needs in mainstream English secondary schools as these studies may offer insights which are relevant to the KS2-3 transition experiences of these young people. This decision was also informed by the conceptualisation of KS2-3 transition adopted within the current study, which acknowledges KS2-3 transition as a dynamic and ongoing process (Jindal-Snape, 2019).

2.13.3. Research Focus and Questions

The focus of this systematic review is to synthesise and explore research which has sought to explore the mainstream secondary school experiences of young people with SEMH needs. This review will also critically appraise relevant literature and explore potential areas for further research to inform the direction of the current study.

The questions this review aims to answer are:

- 1. What do existing studies tell us about the experiences of young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools?*

2. *What can these studies tell us about the KS2-3 transition process for young people with SEMH needs in mainstream school?*

2.14. Method

A qualitative meta-synthesis was selected as being the most valid method of addressing the aims of this review as it offers an opportunity to go beyond aggregation of findings, allowing deeper meaning, theoretical insight, and the extraction of key themes (Noblit & Hare, 1988). Qualitative meta-synthesis consists of the following phases:

1	Formulate a clear research problem and question
2	Comprehensive search of literature
3	Appraisal of studies for inclusion
4	Integrate and analyse findings

Table 1. The Stages of a Meta-synthesis (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003).

2.15. Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria adopted during the initial search is outlined in the table below.

	INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
POPULATION	Secondary aged pupils (11-16) with SEMH needs (or associated labels).	Not secondary aged pupils, (i.e., not aged between 11-16 years).

		Not identified as having SEMH needs.
CONTEXT	Personal views and experiences of young people with SEMH needs regarding their experiences within a mainstream school setting.	Views of others e.g., school staff, other professionals, parents, other, young people without SEMH needs.
OUTCOME	Rich qualitative data presented coherently using thick description. Clear analysis of data presented	No direct pupil views presented. Incoherent presentation and analysis of data.
STUDY DESIGN	Qualitative or mixed method designs	All other study designs
LANGUAGE	English/ views translated into English	Non-English
LOCATION	All countries	
TYPE OF PUBLICATION	Peer-reviewed journals, theses.	All other publications.
DATE OF PUBLICATION	01.01.2000-present	All other publication dates

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Initial Search of Databases

2.15.1 Rationale for inclusion and exclusion criteria

Population

It was decided to only include UK secondary aged pupils (11-16 years). Although UK Key Stage 3 covers the age range 11-14, it was felt that pupils in KS4 (14-16 years) may also offer insights on their KS2-3 transition experiences. It was decided not to include studies exploring the views of participants aged 17 years and above as the time elapsed since KS2-3 transition may mean that they were unable to accurately reflect on this period. It was decided to only include studies which included participants who were formally identified as having SEMH needs, or a similar relevant label (e.g., BESD).

Studies conducted throughout the UK were included in as it was felt that these school systems were similar enough to the English school system to offer relevant insights. Thus, relevant terms were included within the search terms such as Social Emotional and Behavioural Needs, (SEBN) which is the term most closely related to SEMH used in the Scottish education system. Although studies could potentially include participants with characteristics associated with an identification of SEMH needs (e.g., attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, experiences of anxiety), these characteristics may not necessarily warrant identification of a label of SEMH needs and it may be an error to assume that the experiences of these participants are comparable to those formally identified as having SEMH needs. As such, only studies where participants have been identified with a formal label of SEMH needs (or related terms) were included.

Context

Given the focus of the systematic literature review, only studies which specifically aimed to explore the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with SEMH needs regarding their mainstream UK school experiences were included. Studies which only included views of others (e.g., staff, parents) were excluded. Although these views may offer relevant insights, research indicates that young people and adults may often place emphasis on different aspects of the KS2-3 transition process than adults (Spernes, 2022).

Government data indicates that young people with SEMH needs are more likely to experience permanent exclusion than their peers. Therefore, studies which were

undertaken in the context of both mainstream and specialist settings (e.g., pupil referral units), and offered relevant data regarding young people's mainstream secondary school experiences were included.

Outcome

Studies where direct views were not presented or presented incoherently were excluded. This was to ensure the aims of the review question were addressed and there was no misinterpretation of findings.

Study Design

Qualitative and mixed method studies were included to ensure studies were relevant to the review question.

Language

Studies not presented in English were excluded to ensure accessibility to the researcher.

Context

Only studies conducted within the United Kingdom were included. This was to ensure findings were relevant to the context of the current study.

Type of Publication

A decision was taken to include both peer-reviewed, published studies and theses. The decision to include theses in the search was to ensure that potentially relevant findings were not excluded.

Date of Publication

Studies published since 01.01.2000 were included to ensure a breadth of relevant research was included. Although there have been many changes in the educational context since this date, research suggests that the challenges associated with KS2-3 transition appear to have remained consistent over time.

2.16. Search Strategy and Terms

Search terms included terms related to population (e.g., SEMH, adolescent), Context (e.g., school, mainstream), and Outcomes (e.g., views, experiences). A full list of revised search terms can be found in Appendix 2.

Following a search of four databases (Applied Social Sciences Index & Abstracts (ASSIA), Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC), Psycinfo and Web of Science) in June 2022, titles and abstracts of results were screened with full copies of relevant studies then being obtained for review against inclusion criteria. At this stage, an inclusive approach was undertaken, to avoid relevant studies being excluded due to pertinent information being missing from the abstract. Reference harvesting was also applied as well as searches of relevant journals (*Educational Psychology in Practice*, *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, *Educational and Child Psychology*, *Research Papers in Education*, *British Journal of Educational Psychology*).

A search across all four databases resulted in 12 studies which were logged as potentially relevant. After a review of titles and abstracts, seven studies were selected to be screened against the inclusion criteria and full texts were obtained. Reference harvesting of these studies did not provide any additional relevant results. After screening against inclusion criteria, one study was excluded as it focused on participant experiences of involvement in the evaluation of a behaviour policy within a specialist provision (Sellman, 2009). One study was removed due to its focus on the views of young people with SEMH needs in relation to a specialist provision (Nind et al., 2012). See Appendix 3 for an outline of the inclusion and exclusion screening process.

Five studies were then appraised for quality (See Figure.1).

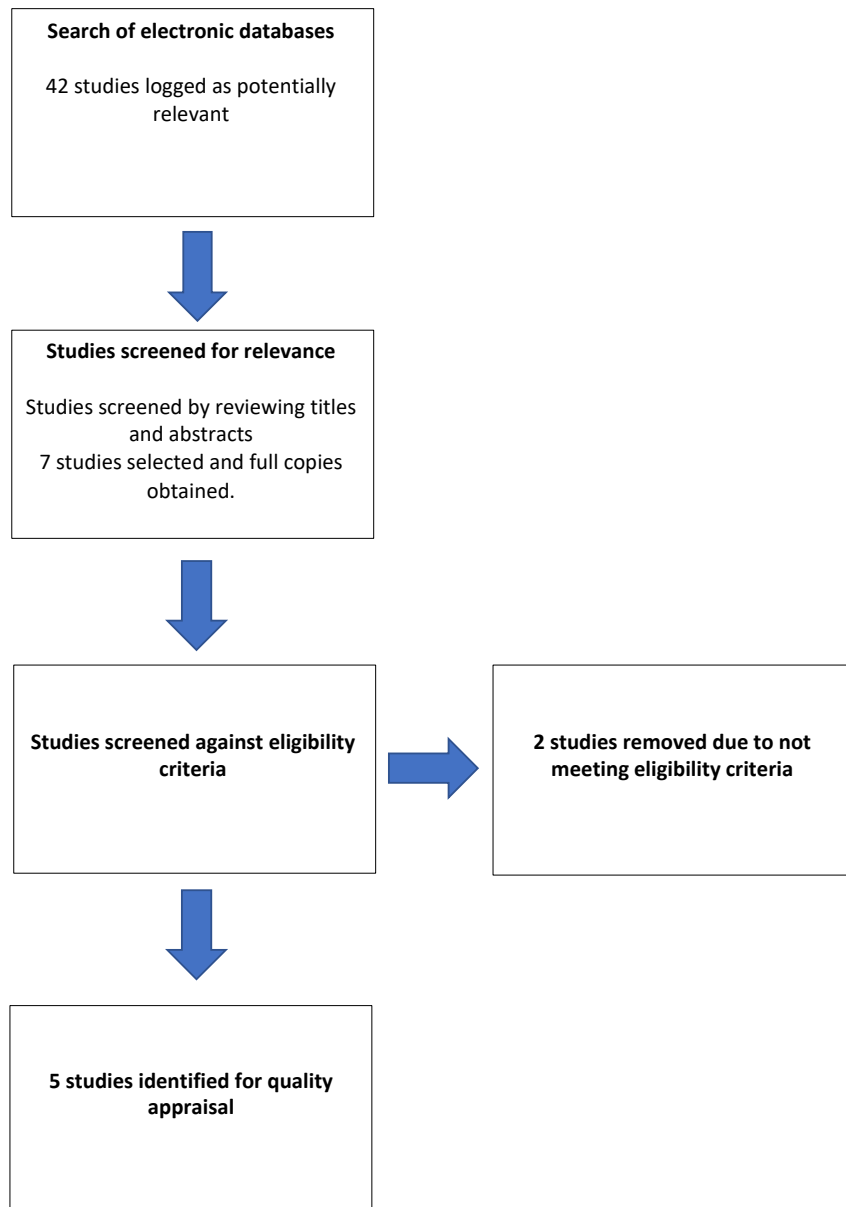


Figure 1. Outline of the Systematic Review Search and Selection Process

2.17. Critical Appraisal of Included Studies

Whilst there are a wide range of tools for the critical appraisal of quantitative studies, which are assessed against a 'gold standard', the subjective nature of qualitative research means that it is not possible to apply such a standard or hierarchy (Pettigrew & Roberts, 2007). There is a lack of consensus regarding the most appropriate tool for appraising the methodological quality of qualitative studies (Long et al., 2020). However, it is suggested that researchers can make use of tools using structured checklists such as The Critical Appraisal Programme (CASP) Qualitative Research Checklist (2018). The CASP tool was selected for the critical appraisal of the methodological quality of included studies. The tool was chosen due to its wide use within the context of systematic reviews of qualitative research and its applicability to a range of qualitative methodologies (Long et al., 2020). Outcomes of the rating can be found in table below and a detailed description of critical appraisal of methodological quality for each study using the CASP tool can be found in Appendix 4.

(3= Yes, 2= Partially, 1= Unclear, 0= No)

Study

	Caslin (2019)	Caslin (2021)	Clarke et al. (2011)	Dimitrellou & Male (2019)	Sheffield & Morgan (2017)
<i>Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?</i>	3	3	3	3	3
<i>Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?</i>	3	3	3	3	3
<i>Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?</i>	3	3	2	3	3

<i>Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?</i>	3	3	2	3	3
<i>Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?</i>	3	3	2	3	3
<i>Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?</i>	2	2	3	2	0
<i>Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?</i>	3	2	2	2	2
<i>Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?</i>	2	2	1	2	3

<i>Is there a clear statement of findings?</i>	2	2	2	3
<i>Is the research valuable?</i>	3	3	2	3

Table 3. Overview of CASP Ratings for Included Studies.

2.18. Data Extraction

Stage 3 involved careful reading of papers to ensure familiarization. Data from each study was extracted including the aims of the study including, the aims of the study, participant characteristics, contextual details, methodology, and the key findings of the paper. Details can be found in table below. It is worth noting that two of the included studies are by the same author (Caslin 2019;2021) and conducted in similar contexts, with similar participant numbers. However, review of these studies indicates that both studies included different participant samples.

Study	Aims	Terms used	Participants	Context	Method(s) of data collection	Method of Data Analysis	Key Themes Identified
<i>Caslin (2019)</i>	Place the pupil at the heart of the research process to gain an insight into why they may display what is considered 'difficult' behaviour in the classroom.	SEBD	13: 6 female, 7 males aged 14-16, identified as having SEBD who had been permanently excluded from mainstream	Three provisions in England including a special school for young people labelled as having SEBD,	Semi-structured interviews	Constructivist Grounded Theory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Feeling blamed 2. Feeling singled out 3. Feeling disempowered due to teachers' attributions of behaviour

	(Caslin, 2019, p.169)		secondary schools	an alternative training provision and a support centre for children who have been excluded from mainstream education			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Awareness that behaviours are linked to needs 5. Pupils internalised the labels imposed on them 6. Difficult relationships a catalyst for 'difficult' behaviour
<i>Caslin (2021)</i>	Explore the position of young people within the confines of an education system which seeks to remove them (Caslin, 2009, p.120).	SEBD	13: 7 males, 6 females aged 14-16 years identified as having SEBD who had been permanently excluded from mainstream	Three provisions in England including a special school for young people labelled as having SEBD,	Activities such as graffiti walls/ storytelling. Semi-structured interviews	Constructivist Grounded Theory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Feeling like a culprit, rather than victim. 2. Teachers' responses to young people's behaviour negatively impacted on

		secondary schools	an alternative training provision and a support centre for children who have been excluded from mainstream education	with young people using visual life paths.		relationships and feelings of trust. 3. Ineffectiveness of permanent exclusion as a response to behaviour. 4. Not feeling wanted in mainstream school. 5. Not feeling informed or included in decision making.
<i>Clarke et al. (2011)</i>	Listen to, and engage with, the educational experiences of	BESD	3 girls aged 11-16 formally identified as having	One independent, girl-only special school	A range of task-centred activities	Analysis of video data looking for themes, 1. Not feeling listened to in mainstream settings

<p>participants (Clarke, et al., 2020, p.770).</p>		<p>behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties</p>	<p>in England for young people with behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties</p>	<p>including video recording of views using a 'diary room'</p>	<p>patterns, and participant 'priorities'</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Not being listened to resulting in disconnection from school. 3. Not being heard through 'traditional' means of communication. 4. Finding alternative activities to engage in- resulting in conflicts with school staff. 5. Young people creating a space to be heard in school.
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							6. Importance of staff getting to know pupils.
<i>Dimitrello u & Male (2019)</i>	1. Investigate the mainstream experiences of pupils with MLD and SEMH. 2. Explore the reasons given for positively or negatively affecting their sense of school belonging. 3. Investigate their social relations (SR)	SEMH	37 pupils aged 11-16 years (13 with SEMH needs).	Three mainstream secondary schools in England.	Structured interviews	Thematic Analysis	1. Dissatisfaction with behaviour management strategies and teaching approaches. 2. Feeling discriminated against/labelled due to behaviour. 3. Difficulties socialising with others. 4. Lack of involvement in

	with their teachers, teaching assistants (TAs) and peers. (Dimitrellou & Male, 2019, p.89).						<p>decision making.</p> <p>5. Negative relations with teachers.</p> <p>6. Negative relations with peers/ experiencing bullying.</p>
<i>Sheffield and Morgan (2017)</i>	1. Research Question 1: Are young people with a label of	BESD/S EMH	9 pupils aged 13-16 years. 1 female, 8 males. All had a	One mainstream secondary school in England	Semi-structured interviews	Grounded Theory	<p>1. Academic difficulties</p> <p>2. Relationship difficulties.</p>

<p>BESD/SEMH aware of this and other labels and how do they evaluate these labels?</p> <p>2. (2) research Question 2: How do young people with a label of BESD/SEMH describe themselves and their experiences at school?</p>		<p>statement of SEN, with BESD identified as primary area of need)</p>				<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Distancing self from misbehaviour 4. Positive impact of having individual strengths acknowledged 5. Motivators for success 6. Becoming a different person 7. Positive impact of receiving support 8. Teacher-pupil relationships 9. Negative view of the label BESD and SEMH
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(Sheffield & Morgan, 2017, p.52).						
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Table 4. Overview of Data Extracted from Studies Included within the Systematic Review

2.19. Qualitative Synthesis of Included Studies

The qualitative synthesis of studies involved the development of a list of themes for each study (Noblit & Hare, 1988). First, the included studies were read multiple times to ensure familiarity. Following this stage key themes were then extracted from each study until theoretical saturation was reached (i.e., there were no themes remaining). Themes were then juxtaposed across each of the five studies to determine how they are related and to ascertain which themes were present across multiple studies. Consideration was given to whether the synthesised findings, which are three times removed from the original idiographic data, could offer meaningful insights. Due to the small scale of this review, it was decided that it would be possible to maintain 'sufficient familiarity' (Toye et al., 2014) with the original studies to ensure that any interpretations and insights were grounded in the original data. Through this process eight themes emerged:

- Feeling singled out
- Pupil-teacher relationships
- Lack of voice
- Peer relationships
- Disengagement from school as a pre-cursor to 'difficult' behaviour
- The ineffectiveness of behavioural sanctions
- Motivation
- Classroom support.

(Data from original studies supporting these themes can be found in Appendix 5)
Each of these themes will be discussed in-depth below.

Feeling Singled Out

The theme of feeling singled was evident in four of the five included studies (Caslin, 2019, 2021; Dimitrellou & Male, 2019; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). Young

people described feeling unfairly treated due to labels they felt they had received because of their prior behaviour, which then influenced the perceptions and responses of teachers (Caslin, 2019; Dimitrellou & Male, 2019). These labels were also associated with some young people feeling disliked and unwanted in lessons by some teachers (Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). Young people also acknowledge feeling that there is a 'stigma' attached to formal labels such as SEMH and cite this as being linked to unfair treatment by teachers (Caslin, 2021; Dimitrellou & Male, 2019). This perception of unfair treatment due to formal labels is also evident in the language used by pupils to compare mainstream and specialist settings. For example, one young person comments, "You always got blamed for everything in normal schools. . .because you have got disabilities" (Caslin, 2019, p.173). The language used by pupils across studies such as 'thick' (Caslin, 2019), 'hyper' (Sheffield & Morgan), or 'bad' also suggests that young people may often internalise these perceived labels (Dimitrellou & Male, 2019).

In some studies, a sense of frustration and being unjustly 'blamed' appeared to be linked to receiving behaviour sanctions. Young people described these sanctions as often appearing to be associated with teachers' assumptions about the function of their behaviour. Descriptions of sanctions received for behaviours which young people cite as being adopted in retaliation to the actions of other students were also evident (Caslin, 2021; Dimitrellou & Male, 2019; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). This sense of feeling unfairly treated and blamed was also linked to feeling disempowered and not being believed when young people sought support from teachers for social challenges (Caslin, 2019).

Pupil-teacher Relationships

The theme of pupil-teacher relationships was evident in all of the included studies. Negative pupil-teacher relationships were often seen as a catalyst to young people displaying 'difficult' or 'challenging' behaviours (Caslin, 2019, 2020; Clarke et al., 2011; Dimitrellou & Male, 2019). Across all studies issues of mistrust and being unfairly treated appeared to be factors which negatively impacted on establishing positive pupil-teacher relationships. Other factors linked to negative pupil-teacher relationships appeared to include a lack of empathy and

understanding on the part of teachers, a lack of classroom support, not feeling liked or wanted in lessons (Caslin, 2021; Dimitrellou & Male, 2019; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017), and not feeling adequately listened to (Caslin, 2019; Clarke et al., 2011).

In some studies, young people were able to reflect upon positive relationships with teachers and linked these positive relationships to feeling a sense of enjoyment of school and feeling relaxed and ready to engage in learning. These relationships appeared to be supported by teachers showing understanding, being supportive, having belief in the young person, being seen as 'fun', adopting engaging teaching styles, and adopting a consistent and fair approach to behaviour management (Dimitrellou & Male, 2019; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017).

Peer Relationships

The theme of peer relationships was evident in three studies (Caslin, 2021; Dimitrellou & Male, 2019; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). Young people reported social difficulties such as having very few friends in school, experiencing difficulties forming meaningful relationships, and difficulties engaging in group work with peers (Dimitrellou & Male, 2019; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). Bullying was also cited in one study, with some young people reporting current or past experiences of bullying as being associated with a lack of enjoyment of school (Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). Dimitrellou & Male (2019) suggest that whilst most pupils with SEMH needs in their study reported overall negative experiences of peer relationships, a minority reported experiencing positive relationships. However, data relating to the factors which may have facilitated these positive relationships was not included.

Lack of Voice

The theme of 'lack of voice' was evident in three studies (Caslin, 2021; Clarke et al., 2011; Dimitrellou & Male, 2019). Young people reported feeling a lack of involvement or inclusion in decision making. This also appeared to be related to issues of a lack of perceived pupil voice in relation to school-based issues (Clarke et al., 2011; Dimitrellou & Male, 2019) to more significant issues such as decisions around placement following permanent exclusion from mainstream settings (Caslin, 2021). Experiences of not feeling heard appear to be linked to a

cumulative process of dis-engagement with school, and feelings of mistrust with teachers (Caslin, 2021; Clarke et al., 2011;). Notably, participants in Clarke et al. (2011) equate not being heard or not having a voice to discrimination and a lack of care. Young people in this study also acknowledged that a lack of engagement from school staff through traditional means of communication (e.g., putting hand up in class) often resulted in conflict when alternative means of communication were adopted (e.g., shouting out). This then appeared to lead to conflict with staff and feelings of frustration and injustice when punitive behaviour sanctions were adopted.

Motivation

The theme of motivation appeared in two studies (Dimitrellou & Male, 2019; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). Young people mainly discussed external factors as positively influencing their motivation to engage with learning. In both studies there is an acknowledgment of the importance of education for achieving positive future outcomes. In addition, upcoming exams such as GCSEs were seen as being associated with future aspirations and in turn, a motivator to engage more positively with school (Dimitrellou & Male, 2019; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). Young people in Sheffield and Morgan (2020) referenced external family support as having a positive impact on motivation through direct guidance and family members acting as positive role models. Young people in this study also reported internal motivators to change and were able to pinpoint where they had made an internal decision to adapt their behaviours to achieve desired outcomes.

A sense of Injustice

The theme of experiencing a sense of injustice was evident across four studies (Caslin, 2019; Clarke et al., 2011; Dimitrellou & Male, 2019; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). As discussed, young people often reported a sense of injustice in relation to feelings of discrimination or unfair treatment from teachers (Caslin, 2019; Clarke et al., 2011; Dimitrellou & Male, 2019; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). Young people also reported feeling a sense of unfairness at behaviours which were adopted in response to the actions of other pupils and felt that this was often based around teachers' pre-conceived ideas about them due to past behaviours. Morgan and Sheffield (2020) note that many young people appeared to distance

themselves from their behaviours in response to the actions of others and note that the theme of somebody else having 'started it', in relation to peer conflicts, was a frequently cited reason for experiencing behaviour sanctions. For some, a sense of injustice was associated with a perceived inflexibility in teachers' approaches to behaviour management such as not offering second chances (Dimitrellou & Male, 2019, p.93).

Classroom Support

The theme of classroom support was evident in two studies (Dimitrellou & Male, 2019; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). Within these studies, young people appeared to offer contrasting views regarding targeted classroom support. In both studies, some young people referenced one-to-one teaching assistant (TA) support as being beneficial in supporting positive academic, behavioural, and psychological outcomes. However, some young people reported feelings of resentment due to not receiving enough support in class and felt that the quality of support they did receive was mixed (Dimitrellou & Male, 2019; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). Young people in Sheffield and Morgan (2017) felt that targeted support often served to highlight perceived feelings of being 'different' in comparison to peers, particularly when the support involved segregation from classmates.

The Ineffectiveness of Behavioural Sanctions

The theme of ineffectiveness of behavioural sanctions was evident across three studies (Caslin, 2021; Dimitrellou & Male, 2019; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). Lower-level classroom sanctions such as detentions were often viewed by young people as inconsequential and not acting as a deterrent (Caslin, 2021; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). Young people also reported that behaviour sanctions offered little guidance as to how to improve their behaviour or what the behavioural expectations were (Caslin, 2021; Dimitrellou & Male, 2019). Sanctions such as internal and external exclusions were also seen as ineffective and were associated with feelings of frustration due to pupils missing out on education and opportunities to socialise with peers (Caslin, 2019; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017).

2.20. Limitations of the Systematic Review

The current review is relatively small-scale and was limited to a search of just four databases over a relatively short time period. As such, the researcher acknowledges that the review is limited to the results yielded within these constraints and may not be representative of the full range of relevant research.

The interpretive nature of the meta-synthesis approach adopted within current review means that outcomes are limited to the researcher's own subjective interpretations. Similarly, whilst a widely used checklist (CASP) was used to critically appraise included studies these judgements are limited to the researchers own subjective view.

2.21. Discussion

1. What do existing studies tell us about the experiences of young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools?

Overall, the mainstream secondary school experiences of the young people included within this review appear to be largely negative. However, this conclusion should be interpreted with caution as three of the five included studies include the perspectives of young people who had experienced permanent exclusion from mainstream settings. As such, it is possible that these young people may report more negative experiences of mainstream settings than their peers with SEMH needs who have not experienced permanent exclusion. However, synthesis of studies highlights that several common themes were found across studies including pupils in both mainstream and secondary settings. Common themes appear to be linked to the interpersonal aspects of mainstream school experiences. For example, young people reported feeling 'singled out' by adults because of labels they had either 'achieved' through prior behaviour or in relation to their formal identification of SEMH needs. This feeling of being singled out was often linked to negative outcomes such as feeling unwanted and unliked, disengagement from learning, negative relationships with teachers and feeling a sense of frustration and unfairness. Furthermore, the review suggests that these

perceived negative labels and adult perceptions may often be internalised by young people.

Further themes related to interpersonal relationships were also highlighted including Pupil-teacher Relationships and Relationships with Peers. Young people were able to reflect upon the factors and outcomes associated with both positive and negative relationships with teachers and peers. The theme of Injustice was also largely linked to interpersonal aspects of mainstream school experience such as feeling unfairly treated by teachers and experiencing sanctions due to behaviours which were cited as a response to the actions of peers. These factors may therefore highlight the importance of interpersonal relationships for young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools. These themes are also in line with the wider KS2-3 transition literature which also suggests the influence of interpersonal factors such as positive relationships with teachers and peers on young peoples' KS2-3 transition experience (Bailey and Baines, 2012; Hopwood, Jindal-Snape et al., 2019, 2020; Ryan, Shim, and Makara 2013; Tobbell and O'Donnell 2013).

Additional themes have also highlighted several aspects of mainstream school experiences which may be considered in terms of risk and protective factors. The theme of Lack of Voice highlights that young people may often feel ill-informed and not included in relation to decision making in school. Furthermore, the review has highlighted that a lack of voice can lead to feelings of dis-engagement and feelings of frustration when alternative means of communication are met with behavioural sanctions in school. The theme of Classroom Support suggests mixed experiences of classroom support. Some young people appeared to recognise the benefits of targeted support whilst others appeared to experience a lack of support or low-quality support. In addition, some young people felt that targeted support further highlighted feelings of being 'different' in comparison to their peers. Ineffectiveness of Behavioural Sanctions was a theme highlighted across studies where young people often questioned both the efficacy and educational value of behavioural sanctions.

The current review has offered some insights into positive aspects of mainstream school experiences for young people with SEMH needs. Positive relationships

with staff and peers have been noted as factors which may support a positive school experience (Dimitrellou & Male, 2019; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). However, these experiences appear to be in the minority amongst the included studies and are typically related to relationships established with teachers in specialist provision. The theme of Motivation appeared to be linked to positive school experiences. Young people highlight positive external motivators such as family guidance and recognition of the importance of exams and education as being linked to making conscious decisions to engage more positively with school. However, it is worth noting that the theme of Motivation was only evident in the studies conducted in mainstream settings.

2. What can these studies also tell us about the KS2-3 transition process for young people with SEMH needs in mainstream school?

It is unclear how the themes discussed directly relate to young people's KS2-3 transition experience as a causal link between these themes and KS2-3 transition cannot be established. However, as highlighted within the narrative review, many of these themes appear to be linked to factors cited in wider research as being significant challenges associated with the transition process which may lead to negative outcomes. For example, establishing new relationships with staff and peers, adjusting to changes in emotional development and sense of identity (Anderson et al., 2000; Jindal-snape & Cantali, 2019; Ng-Knight et al., 2016; Zeedyk, et al., 2003). Furthermore, the current review suggests that aspects of mainstream school experience which act as protective factors during the KS2-3 transition experience such as establishing positive relationships, positive academic engagement, and feeling a sense of belonging (Jindal-Snape et al., 2020; Lester et al., 2013; Spernes, 2022) may often be lacking in the mainstream secondary school experiences of young people with SEMH needs.

2.22. Rationale for the Current Research

It cannot be assumed that all young people with SEMH will experience a negative KS2-3 transition experience. However, the current systematic review and the wider research base discussed within the narrative review suggests that they may be more susceptible to the risk factors associated with a negative transition experience than their peers without SEMH needs. Despite the wealth of qualitative KS2-3 transition literature, there currently appears to be a lack of research which directly explores the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with SEMH needs (Jindal-Snape, 2020). Therefore, future research which aims to specifically explore and understand the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools may help to shed further light on how these young people experience risk and protective factors during the KS2-3 transition process. However, research suggests that resilience is a dynamic concept which may not emerge from the mere presence of risk and protective factors, but from how individuals engage with and interpret these factors (Bailey & Baines, 2012; Rutter, 2006; Ungar, 2015). Furthermore, research also suggests that young people may often place importance on different aspects of transition than adults (Topping, 2011). This suggests the importance of research which aims to explore and understand young people's views in relation to these experiences using exploratory, qualitative approaches. Therefore, the aim of the current study is to explore the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with Social Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) needs in mainstream schools.

3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will begin by outlining the ontological and epistemological standpoints of the current study. Secondly, the concepts of Narrative Psychology and Narrative Analysis will be introduced and as well as a discussion of their philosophical underpinnings. The research design of the current study, Narrative Orientated Inquiry (NOI), will then be introduced followed by a critical discussion of the approach and alternative methodologies considered. Issues regarding data collection will then be considered including an overview and rationale of the adopted approaches: informant style interviews and a visual life-path tool. Next, details regarding the research context, selection criteria, stakeholder engagement and participant characteristics will be outlined. This will be followed by a discussion of the ethical considerations of the current study, including details of how issues of informed consent, confidentiality, minimising risk, and power were addressed by the researcher. Issues regarding validity and trustworthiness will then be discussed. Finally, an overview of the NOI procedure, as outlined by Hiles & Čermák (2011), will be provided.

3.2. Research Aims

Specifically, the current study aims to answer the following questions:

- 1. What are the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools?*
- 2. What risk and protective factors are associated with KS2-3 transition for young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools?*

These questions will be explored through exploratory qualitative research approaches using inductive reasoning.

3.3. Ontological and Epistemological Position of the Current Research

Ontology refers to claims about the nature of existence and reality (Mathison, 2005) whereas Epistemology is concerned with the nature and justification of knowledge (Schwandt, 2007). These philosophical standpoints determine the methodological approaches utilised by researchers (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014.)

A positivist paradigm adopts a realist ontology, i.e., the view that there is an external reality, separate from human thought that can be described and explained objectively through empirical, scientific methods (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Mills & Wiebe, 2010). Positivism espouses a dualist/objectivist epistemology which assumes that a researcher is capable of investigating a phenomenon without influencing it, and potential threats to validity which arise through factors such as the individual values and biases of the researcher can be ameliorated through scientific rigour (Mills & Wiebe, 2010). Thus, quantitative methodologies which aim to confirm hypotheses through experimental/manipulative approaches are typically used within a positivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

A post-positivist paradigm adopts a critical-realist ontology, proposing that reality exists but owing to the biases of human interpretation and perception, this reality can only be understood imperfectly and in a probabilistic manner (Given, 2008; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Post-positivism adopts a modified dualist/objectivist epistemology. This epistemological standpoint rejects the notion of dualism but proposes that objectivity and reduction of threats to validity can be achieved through scientific rigour. Proponents of this paradigm utilise both qualitative and quantitative methodologies which aim to reach conclusions through falsification, rather than verification of hypotheses (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

A constructivist paradigm follows a relativist ontology which suggests that reality is actively constructed by individuals within subjective and intersubjective realities and

specific contexts (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Spencer, 2006). The paradigm adheres to a transactional and subjectivist epistemology, which proposes that knowledge can never be separate from individual experiences, theories, biases, and understandings, and as such, knowledge is co-constructed through interactions between the inquirer and participant through the inquiry process (Given, 2008). Adopters of constructivism draw upon hermeneutic (i.e., interpretive), exploratory, and iterative qualitative methodologies where insights are derived from interactions between researcher and participant (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The focus of the current research was to explore and understand the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with SEMH needs. As such, a constructivist paradigm was felt to be appropriate due to its emphasis on understanding, rather than explaining phenomena (Charmaz, 2006), and its definition of knowledge and individual perceptions of experiences as social constructs which are unrepresentative of an external, objective reality and are influenced by factors such as individual values, beliefs, politics, and language, (Given, 2008). Constructivism acknowledges the relationship between researcher and participant and how these relationships influence the knowledge generated both during and after the research process (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). In keeping with the epistemological and ontological standpoint of the constructivist paradigm, a narrative methodology was adopted. This will be discussed in the following section.

3.4. Current Research Design

3.4.1. Narrative Psychology

Bruner (1986) contrasts two 'modes of knowing': the first, *paradigmatic* "attempts to fulfil the ideal of a formal, mathematical system of description and explanation" (p.12); the second mode, *narrative* is concerned with how we make sense of the world by mapping events over time through stories Bruner (1986). Schrif (2012) asserts that narrative is a dynamic process which should be conceptualised as a verb (i.e., to narrate), and the primary function of this process is to give presence to subjective experiences, make sense of the past, present, and future, and co-create shared and divergent understandings of the world (Schrif, 2021, p.35).

Narrative psychology proposes that humans readily interpret experiences as *storied*, and that narrative structure provides a framework for making sense of these experiences (Sarbin, 1990). A narrative brings subjective experiences into a temporally meaningful, coherent account, allowing the narrator to make sense of their experiences, regardless of whether or not they have a full understanding of the reasons for them (Hiles & Čermák, 2011; Murray, 2003; Polkinghorne, 1988).

Individual narratives are said to be socially constructed and influenced by factors such as the wider social context and the nature of the relationship between narrator and audience (Murray, 2003). From this perspective, even in a research setting, narratives are regarded as co-constructions, with the final result being a joint understanding of the world, the self, the past and others (Schrif, 2012).

Narrative psychology emphasises the relationship between narrative and the development and maintenance of personal identity (Murray, 2003). Ricoeur (1991) suggests that during narratives, there is an interplay between *configuration* (bringing structure to the world through narrative) and *re-figuration* (how the narrator defines themselves through narrative). Similarly, a key feature of personal narratives is the idea of *identity positioning*, whereby narrators, based on individual motivations or context, can actively construct how they experience their sense of self by telling their story in a particular way (Hiles & Čermák, 2017).

3.4.2. Narrative Analysis

Within the field of psychology, narrative analysis is still emerging and as such, a consensus on a methodological model for narrative analysis has not been reached (Hiles & Chrz, 2017). Broadly speaking, the goal of narrative analysis is to as unobtrusively as possible, explore stories about a theme whilst acknowledging the relationship between the researcher and the narrator (Wertz, et al., 2011). It has therefore been suggested that the principle of reflexivity is important, with the researcher regarding findings as being relative to their standpoint (Given, 2008). The

issue of reflexivity within the current research will be discussed further in section 3.14.

Within narrative analysis, stories are analysed concerning the questions brought by the researcher, with due consideration given to the immediate and wider linguistic and cultural contexts that may have influenced the account (Wertz, et al., 2011).

Narrative analysis differs from other methodological approaches in that it attempts to explore the whole account, rather than dividing it into discursive units or thematic categories (Wertz, et al., 2011). Many adopters of narrative analysis draw upon the work of philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin who proposes that the self is always unfinished, and is constructed in relation to others (e.g., other people, other aspects of the self, society, and culture), therefore, any meanings drawn by researchers from narrative analysis cannot claim to be final due to their potential for alteration in future narratives (Morson, 1986; Wertz, et al., 2011).

3.5. Research Design of the Current Study

This current study used an adapted version of Hiles and Čermák's (2008) model of 'Narrative Oriented Inquiry (NOI). The use of an adapted version of NOI refers to the researcher's decision to adopt a selection of the suggestion interpretive processes. Hiles and Čermák (2011) suggest that NOI should be considered "a dynamic framework for good practice" which is "not intended to be exhaustive and definitive but is explicitly inclusive and pluralistic" (Hiles and Čermák, 2011, pg.4). As such, the authors propose that the interpretive approaches outlined within the model can be used either individually or in combination.

NOI regards narrative as more than data to be analysed but as a distinct methodological approach requiring a method of data collection known as a narrative interview (Hiles & Čermák, 2017). Within NOI, narrative interviews are regarded as an opportunity for the co-construction of narratives between researcher and participant (Silverman, 2001, cited in Hiles & Čermák, 2017). This view aligns with the constructivist paradigm adopted within the current study,

which acknowledges the relationship between researcher and participant and the influence this relationship has on the knowledge generated both during and after the research process (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014).

A key perspective in interpreting narratives within NOI is the distinction between *sjuzet* (how the story is being told), and *fabula* (the sequence of events being related) (Hiles & Čermák, 2017). While the *fabula* is the defining quality of narrative, it is the *sjuzet* that is particularly relevant to understanding the psychological processes involved in personal narratives (p., 166).

NOI also draws upon the interpretive perspectives proposed by Lieblich et al. (1998). Firstly: Holistic-Categorical (whether the unit of analysis is the whole story or the themes and categories that are contained within it). Secondly: Content-Form (whether the unit of analysis is the story itself or *how* the story is told). From these perspectives, Lieblich et al. (1998) have derived four distinct approaches to interpretive analysis:

- **Holistic-content** involves exploring and linking overall themes of the story and identifying specific units of text which may illuminate the story as a whole.
- **Categorical-content** requires a division of the text into, smaller, separate units and analysing these discrete units using thematic analysis.
- **Holistic-form** is concerned with the *fabula* i.e., the overall plot or structure of the story.
- **Categorical-form** is concerned with the *sjuzet*, in other words, the distinct linguistic features and ways of relating a plot that supports the overall style of the story.

3.5.1. Narrative plots

Gergen & Gergen (1986) suggest that every narrative can be distinguished by its plot, which can be examined through 'plot analysis'. They suggest that narratives have an evaluative framework with a 'valued endpoint' or 'goal state' which is considered to be desirable or undesirable (e.g., wellbeing, achievement, discovery, loss). Gergen & Gergen (1986) propose that "the successful narrative

is one that arranges a sequence of events as they pertain to the achievement of a particular goal state” (p.27). They go on to suggest that given the narrator’s goal of sequencing events in relation to the achievement of this goal state, then there are only three rudimentary plot patterns: Stability, Regressive, and Progressive. Each of these is described and illustrated below.

Progressive narrative: within this plot line events are linked in a way which progresses towards the goal state.

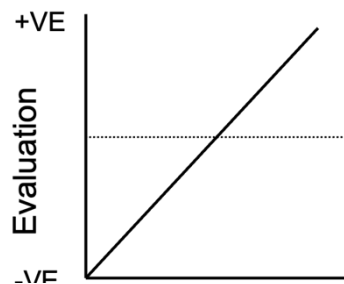


Figure 2. An Example of a Progressive Plotline

Regressive Narrative: within this plot line individuals move away from the goal state.

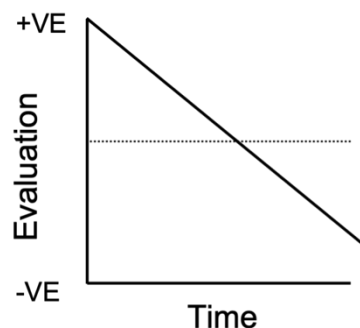


Figure 3. An Example of a Regressive Plotline

Stability Narrative: within this pattern, individuals remain unchanged with respect to the evaluative position.

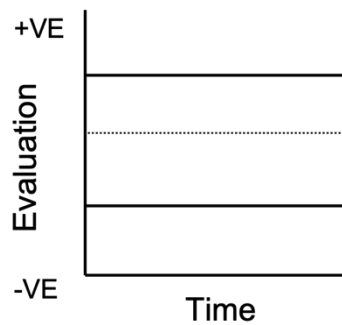


Figure 4. An Example of a Stable Plotline

Gergen & Gergen (1988) also outlined four classic typologies, adapted from classic literature, which are used to represent more complex plot structures. These are represented visually below.

Romantic Saga: This represents a series of both regressive and progressive phases which culminate in a positive ending.

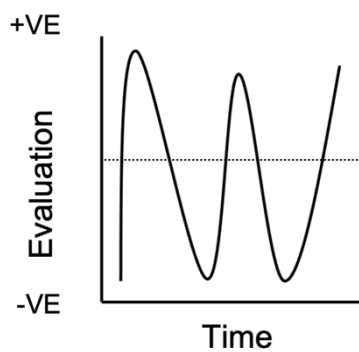


Figure 5. An Example of a Romantic Saga Plotline

Tragic Narrative: A progressive narrative preceded by a rapid regression.

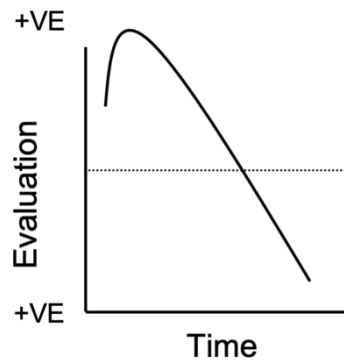


Figure 6. An Example of a Tragic Plotline

Comedy-Romance Narrative: A regressive narrative followed by a progressive narrative in which events become increasingly challenging before a positive outcome is achieved.

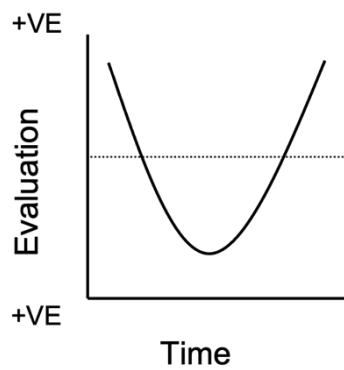


Figure 7. An Example of a Comedy-Romance Plotline

Happily- Ever- After Narrative: A progressive narrative followed by stability.

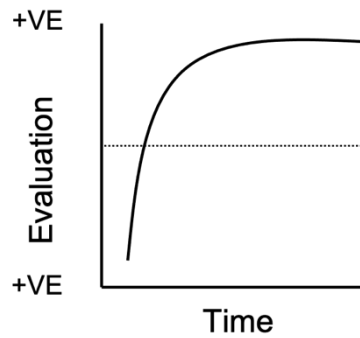


Figure 8. An Example of a Happily-Ever-after

3.6. Critique of Narrative Analysis

It has been suggested that narrative accounts can never be considered an authentic route to the 'truth', either in relation to the events recalled by the narrator, or their subjective experience of these events. As such, some commentators suggest that narratives should be considered as 'accounts' which are shaped by contextual variables (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006). However, these criticisms regarding the authenticity of narrative accounts are recognised within a constructivist paradigm which acknowledges the construction of reality by individuals within subjective and intersubjective realities (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Spencer, 2006).

The subjective nature of narrative analysis may also present a potential limitation. For example, the researcher's own viewpoint and interpretation and understanding of the narratives may risk bias, the participants voice being 'lost', and the voice of the researcher being given precedence over the participants (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Furthermore, it has been suggested that narrative analysis may present researchers with a dilemma if their interpretation of events differs from that of the participant (Moen, 2006). Considering these issues, the researcher has ensured confirmability is achieved by clearly outlining the links between any assertions and interpretations made during analysis and the original raw data. Furthermore, a reflexive approach (Willig, 2008) has been adopted throughout the current study in order to ensure acknowledgement of the potential impact of the researcher at all stages the research process. This will be discussed further in section 6.4.

3.7. Alternative Methodological Approaches Considered

A number of alternative methodological approaches were considered including Discourse Analysis (DA) and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). DA views narratives as behaviours in themselves, where narrators use specific linguistic functions or verbal 'performances' which transcend their content in order to perform particular actions in particular situations (Crossley, 2011). As such, Discourse Analysis was not considered applicable to the aims of the current research, which are concerned with understanding subjective experiences of KS2-3 transition as an ongoing process. IPA and NOI share philosophical commonalities such as the goal of giving presence to subjective experiences through language. However, NOI differs from IPA by viewing narratives as not a selection of know-able facts that can be arrived at through particular methods, but as a means of making sense of experiences and perceptions that are context-dependent and could potentially be re-told in alternative ways in future accounts (Wertz, et al., 2011). As such, NOI was selected due to being more in line with a constructivist paradigm.

3.8. Data collection

3.8.1. Individual Interviews

Data for the NOI was collected through unstructured informant style interviews, undertaken on a one-to-one basis with participants. Informant style interviews utilise open and facilitative questions (e.g., tell me about your experience of...) which allow the participant to impose their own structure on the session (Powney & Watts, 1987) and support the researcher in eliciting a more valid and unimpeded rendering of the participant's experience (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2011). Informant interviews are distinct from respondent interviews, which adopt a question- response framework. It has been suggested that respondent interviews may influence narratives by the researcher selecting themes, ordering the questions, and introducing the language of the interviewer to the narrative (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2011), whereas informant style interviews allow

participants to guide the structure of the interview and explore the issues relevant to their experiences in collaboration with the researcher (Powney & Watts, 1987). This was felt to be in fitting with constructivist paradigm adopted by the current research which acknowledges the co-construction of knowledge between researcher and participant during the research process. This approach was also selected as it empowers participants to only share the issues and experiences which they feel most comfortable in discussing, and those they feel are most relevant to their experience.

3.8.2. Visual Life-Path Tool

Individual interviews were supported using a Life-Path tool (Wilson, et al. 2007), a visual temporal framework made up of a tabulated structure, with one axis signifying the passage of time. Other aspects of the participant's life (e.g., education history) are then represented by columns or rows underneath or to the side of this time axis, thus creating a concrete, visual representation of the participant's recollections which can be referred to by the researcher at later stages in the interview. An example is outlined in Figure 9. below.

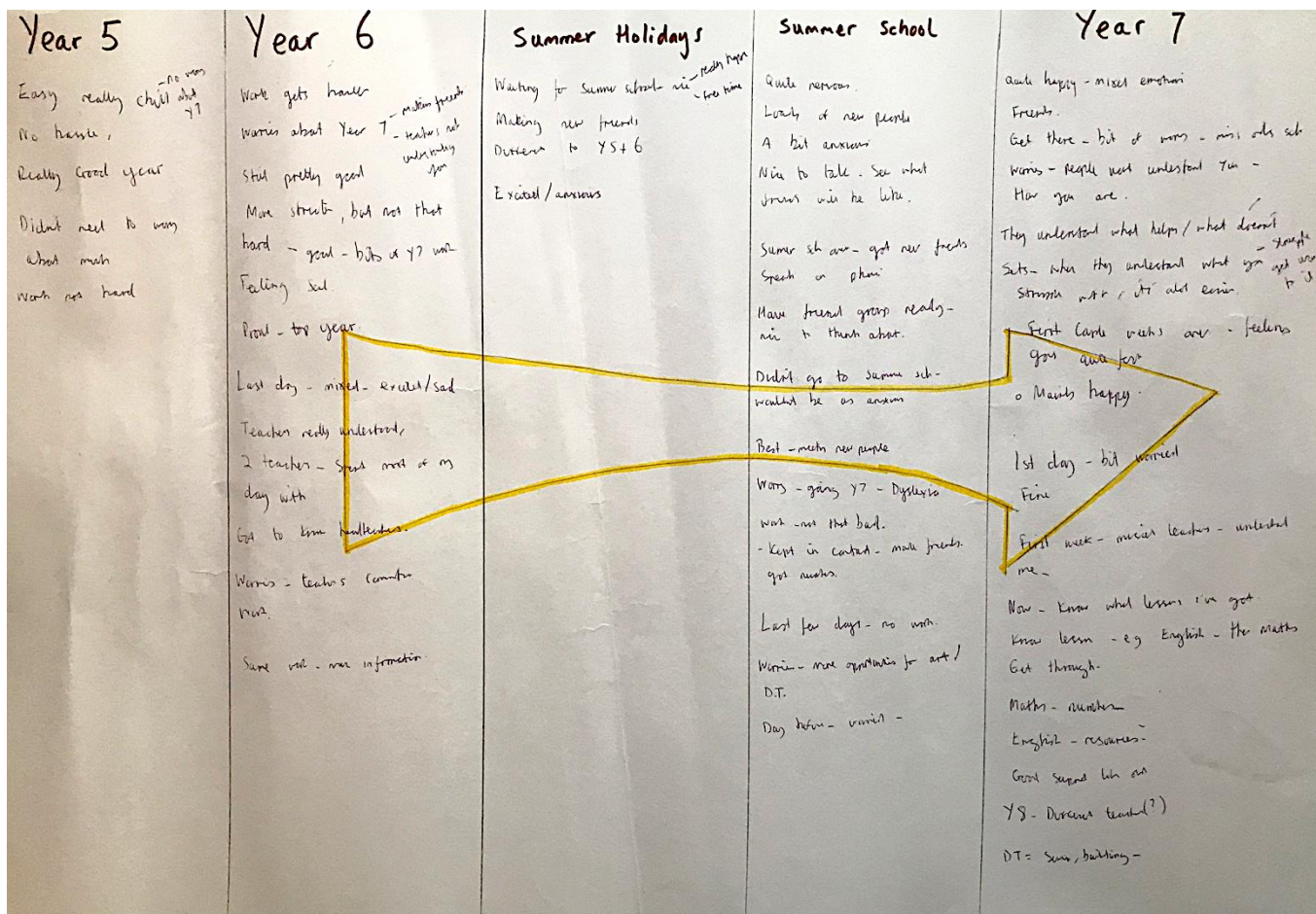


Figure 9. An Example of a Completed Visual Life-Path Tool.

The rationale for the use of the Life Path tool was that its visual element may help to facilitate a more relaxed encounter which supports the exploration of sensitive issues and gives participants greater control over the interview process (Wilson, et al., 2007). This tool was also felt to be applicable to the current research as it has been adopted successfully in previous research exploring the views of young people with SEMH needs (Caslin, 2021).

3.8.3. Procedure for Narrative Interviews

Interviews took place in a private room, away from environmental distractions. Participants were given the option to have a familiar member of school staff of their choice present throughout the interview in order to ensure they feel safe and were able to request the support of this adult if needed. All participants chose to

have a TA present. Staff members were instructed by the researcher to refrain from interacting with the participant during the interview.

The narrative interview followed the phases below, as outlined by (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2011).

1. Preparation

Jovchelovitch & Bauer (2011) suggest that researchers should prepare for a narrative interview by developing a preliminary understanding of the topics/ events which are to be explored during the interview. For the current research, this involved conducting a review of relevant literature. Following this review of literature, *exmanent* questions were formulated (questions which reflect the interests of the researcher and are grounded in the language and formulation of the researcher). Jovchelovitch & Bauer (2011) make the distinction between *exmanent* issues (the issues which represent the interests of the researcher) and *immanent issues* (the language and themes which merge during narration).

2. Initiation

The context of the study was re-iterated to all participants in broad terms. Following this, the Life path was then introduced to participants, with the explanation that the purpose of the visual aid was to help the researcher to understand their story. All participants were then given the option to divide the timeline into chapters or sections which they felt were relevant to their experiences, or have the researcher divide the sections for them. This choice was given in order to reduce the potential of the researcher influencing or imposing a structure onto the narrative. This choice was felt to be in fitting with the philosophical underpinnings of the narrative approach which propose that researchers should aim to explore narratives in an un-obtrusive manner as possible (Wertz, et al., 2011). All participants asked the researcher to make this decision. For each interview, the timeline was divided by the researcher into academic school years including Year 6, Summer Holiday, and the secondary school years up to and including the participants current year group. Although Jovchelovitch & Bauer (2011) suggest that researchers should avoid introducing dates and places within the initiation phase, it was deemed appropriate to

reference these time scales and settings, in order to ensure experiences of KS2-3 transition were adequately captured. Following this process, one participant (Oliver) requested that the academic Year 5 and Summer School phases could be included within their grid (See Figure 9).

Participants were then asked if they were happy for the researcher to audio record the interview and were reminded of their rights as per the Participant Information Sheet and Participant Consent Form (See Appendices 7 &10). In order to initiate the Main Narration phase, participants were asked to “tell (the researcher) everything they can about their school experience, starting from Year 6 (in one case Year 5) up to and including their current school year. This prompt was felt to be broad enough to offer an opportunity for a long and in-depth narration of past events. This prompt was repeated verbatim for each participant.

3. Main Narration

During Main Narration, the researcher remained silent, other than non-verbal signals of encouragement and explicit instructions to continue narration. Throughout the narration the researcher made written notes which informed the immanent questions used during the Questioning stage (see stage 4). Once participants appeared to have finished narration, they were asked, “Is that everything you wanted to tell me?” to ensure they had completely finished their narration.

4. Questioning

During the Questioning phase the exmananet questions created by the researcher during the Preparation phase were translated into immanent questions to explore gaps in the participant’s narration. This involved addressing any interests of the researcher using only the language and themes introduced by the participant during the main narration phase. Jovchelovitch, & Bauer (2000) suggest that the researcher should use ‘what ’questions, related to events (e.g., what happened before/after...) and avoid ‘why ’questions related to attitudes and justifications as these accounts should occur naturally during narration and be grounded in the

participant's language. Phases 1, 2 and 3 were audio recorded for verbatim transcription.

5. Concluding Talk

Jovchelovitch, & Bauer (2000) suggest that, during the Concluding Talk phase, the researcher should asked follow-up 'why 'questions through informal conversation and reflection on the visual timeline, with information being recorded by the researcher through note taking, rather than being audio recorded. However, it was decided that this stage would be omitted within the current study. This decision was made in order to address issues of trustworthiness by ensuring all interpretations could be linked the original transcript data.

Debrief

Participants were given a participant debrief form following the interview (See Appendix 6) which thanked them for their participation and signposted to relevant support services and professionals within their setting and local community to support with any issues that may have arisen in relation to participation in the study. Participants were also reminded of their rights as outlined in the participant information sheet (See Appendix 7) and given an opportunity to ask the researcher any questions. A photograph of the completed timeline was taken with a digital camera as a record and stored in a password protected file on a laptop which is only accessed by the researcher. Completed Life Paths were stored in a locked file cabinet, which is only accessed by the researcher.

3.9. Research Context

The research took place within a LA in the West Midlands region, England. Data collection occurred in July 2022.

3.10. Selection Criteria

A purposive sample was used, where young people who were considered to have experiences relevant to the study were considered for participation. Eligibility criteria are outlined in the table below.

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Any gender	
Currently supported for SEMH needs (e.g., SEND support, EHCP)	Not currently being supported for SEMH needs
Experienced transition from a mainstream UK primary school to a mainstream UK secondary school.	Did not transition from a mainstream UK primary school to a mainstream UK secondary school.
Aged 11-15 (National Curriculum year group 7-10)	Not Aged 11-15 (National curriculum year group 7-10)
Currently enrolled in and attending full time education.	Not currently in enrolled in full-time education.
Not currently experiencing any significant additional circumstances which may affect well-being (e.g., bereavement, family separation).	Currently experiencing circumstances which may affect well-being.
Not likely to experience distress when discussing/ recalling past school experiences (to be assessed with parents/carers/ staff).	Parents/carers/ staff/ participant feel that pupil may experience stress when discussing/ recalling past school experiences.

Table 5. Recruitment Eligibility Criteria

3.11. Stakeholder Engagement

At the time the research was undertaken, the researcher worked as a trainee educational psychologist (TEP) for LA Educational Psychology Service (EPS). Colleagues within the EPS facilitated contact with relevant schools, provided an

information sheet for gatekeepers (See Appendix 8) and the researcher then contacted gatekeepers at the schools which expressed an interest in taking part. The researcher arranged an initial meeting with gatekeepers with the purposes of discussing the research proposal, outlining the eligibility criteria, and sharing the participant and parent information sheets (See Appendices 7 & 9) and participant and parent consent forms (See Appendices 10 & 11). The information sheets and consent forms were then shared by the gatekeepers with those young people (and their parents/carers) identified by the gatekeepers as meeting the eligibility criteria. Parents and young people then opted into participation by returning a completed consent form to the gatekeepers. To ensure transparency, all parents and participants were invited by the gatekeepers to contact the researcher or gatekeeper either by phone or email to discuss the research and clarify any concerns if they wished.

Once participants had opted in and consent for sharing of contact details had been arranged with gatekeepers, the researcher contacted parents/ carers via email to thank them for their participation and to answer any questions/ clarify any concerns they may have. Arrangements for data collection were then facilitated by gatekeepers within schools.

3.12. Participant Characteristics

Three male participants aged 12-14 years who met the eligibility criteria were selected. Each participant was supported via an EHCP for SEMH needs. All participants were attending mainstream secondary schools in the West Midlands region of England. All participants had attended their current school since Year 7 and had experienced KS2-3 transition from a mainstream primary school in the West Midlands region.

Participant information can be found in Table 6. Below.

Pseudonym	Age	National Curriculum Year Group
'Ben'	13 years	9
'Jack'	12 years	7
'Oliver'	12 years	7

Table 6. Participant Characteristics

Additional Contextual Information

'Ben' was previously known to the researcher through the researcher's role as a TEP. This involvement included EPS assessment in July 2021 and contributing psychological advice towards and EHCP needs assessment in October 2021. Following information sheets being shared in May 2022, both Ben and his parents expressed a verbal interest in participation. Prior to consent being obtained, the researcher contacted Ben's parents via email to clarify the following points:

- The researcher's role as a researcher and how this differed from the role of TEP.
- Clearly stating that the participant's involvement in the research would not constitute EPS involvement and would therefore not contribute to any form of assessment, planning, or further support in school.
- The boundaries and responsibilities upheld by the researcher in terms of confidentiality and data storage.

These points were also shared verbally with Ben prior to consent being obtained. Following the sharing of this information, both Ben and his parents completed parent and participant consent forms.

3.13. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were informed by the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics (2021). The research gained ethical approval from the University of Nottingham Ethics Committee (See Appendix 12).

3.13.1. Informed Consent

Voluntary and informed consent was acquired by the researcher from both participants and their parents/carers prior to their involvement in the study. In order to ensure both participants and their parents/ carers were given necessary and sufficient information about the research in an understandable form all potential participants who were deemed by gatekeepers to meet the eligibility criteria and their parents/carers were provided with participant/ parent information sheets (See Appendices 7 & 9). Participants and their parents/ carers were invited to opt-in to involvement in the research by completing a consent form and returning it to the gatekeepers. Once this consent was received and sharing of personal information was facilitated by gatekeepers, the researcher contacted the parent/carer of the participant via email to outline the purposes of the study and to answer any questions the parent/carer may have.

3.13.2. Confidentiality and Data Protection

All participants were made aware of their rights to confidentiality and anonymity both in written form via the participant information sheet/debrief form (See Appendices 6 & 7) and verbally, in person before the study was undertaken and immediately following data collection. Participants were made fully aware of how the data was to be used and reminded that confidentiality would only be breached in the event of a safeguarding concern.

All digital audio files and anonymised transcriptions were stored as password protected files on a password protected device which is only accessed by the researcher. Pseudonyms were used within the transcription for participants. Any information which was felt to place participants at risk of being identified (e.g., reference to names of settings was not included in the transcript). Completed life paths were stored in a locked file cabinet which is only accessed by the researcher. In order to ensure the anonymity of participants, only a sample of transcription is presented within the appendices of this study (This decision will be discussed further within Chapter 6).

3.13.3. Minimising Risk to Participants

BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2021) classifies research involving participants under the age of 16 and research involving potentially sensitive topics as involving “more than minimal risk” (p.10). To minimise potential risks, gatekeepers and parents/carers of participants were fully informed of the focus of the study and made fully aware of the sensitive topic which was to be explored with participants. They were also asked to use their knowledge of participants to make a judgement as to whether the potential participants would be at risk of distress due to participation.

The ‘informant’ style interview adopted by the current study, which utilises open-ended questioning, was felt to minimise potential risk by creating an atmosphere where participants did not feel pressurised and were free to only discuss topics which they felt comfortable in sharing. The use of a visual focus in the form of a Life path tool was also felt to offer a more relaxed encounter, which minimised any feelings of pressure which may have arisen through a more traditional question-response format.

The researcher developed rapport with participants before commencement of the interview through informal conversation. Participants were then given the option to ask any questions they had prior to commencement. Participants were also reminded that they were free to share as little or as much information as they were comfortable with and were free to stop the interview at any point, without a reason being a required. Participants were also given the option to have a trusted member of staff present during the interview process.

Following the interview process, participants were thanked for their participation and reminded of their rights as outlined in the participant information sheet (See Appendix 7). Participants were also given a participant debrief form (See Appendix 6) which also thanked them for their participation and signposted them to relevant supports within their setting and LA.

3.13.4. Power

To address the potential risk of participants feeling pressurised into involvement due to the inherent adult- child power imbalance, participants were notified of the following rights in plain, accessible language:

- Their right to refuse to participation in the study at any point.
- Their right to withdraw from the study at any point without explanation; and
- Their right to request that any or all data collected be destroyed and committed from the research up to 6 months after data collection.

Participants were informed of these rights both in written form via the participant information sheet (See Appendix 7) and verbally by the researcher prior to data collection.

The researcher ensured transparency by explaining their role as a TEP and researcher and ensured participants that any information collected would only be used for research purposes and would not be shared with their parents, school or LA and would not impact on their current educational experience. The paradigm and methodology adopted was also felt to address any potential power imbalances by offering participants any opportunity to act as co-constructors of the narrative interview (Harcourt & Sargeant, 2011).

3.14. Reflexivity

Reflexivity has been described as the ways in which researchers describe “the contextual intersecting relationships between the participants and themselves” (Dodgson, 2019, p.220). It has been suggested that the aim of reflexivity in qualitative research is to acknowledge and explain the impact of researcher’s subjectivity on each stage of the research process (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022).

One way in which reflexivity was ensured in the current study was through the use of a reflexive diary. This record was kept throughout the study and followed the process outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1989) known as ‘progressive subjectivity’, whereby

the researcher records priori constructions before each stage of investigation and their developing constructions at regular intervals as the study progresses. Guba and Lincoln (1989) propose that this check allows researchers to check whether their developing constructions adhere to constructivist principles by allowing the researcher to review whether they have afforded too much privilege to their own constructions or whether they have allowed constructions to emerge jointly, with participants. Extracts from this diary can be found in Appendix 19. In addition to this practical step, the impact of the researcher's own subjectivity, including reference to the research context, data collection, and data analysis are discussed in depth in section 6.4.

3.15. Validity and Trustworthiness

It has been suggested that validity and reliability, which are typically associated with a quantitative approach within a positivist paradigm, may not be applicable or achievable in the case of qualitative studies (Willig, 2017). Guba and Lincoln's (1981) four criteria for ensuring 'trustworthiness' (*credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability*) were used, due to the criteria being well-established and widely adopted by qualitative researchers (Shenton, 2004). Trustworthiness refers to the quality and rigour of an inquiry, i.e., whether the findings are the outcome of a systematic process (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

1. Credibility

Credibility corresponds to the positivist notion of internal validity and relates to confidence in the findings and interpretations of studies (Guba and Lincoln, 2013). Credibility within the current study was ensured by adopting the following methodological approaches:

Adoption of well-established research methods

Narrative Orientated Inquiry is a well-established methodology in qualitative research (Hiles & Čermák, 2017), which has been successfully employed in a number of comparable projects (e.g., Tellis-James & Fox; Thacker, 2017; Want, 2021).

Similarly, the use of a visual Life Path tool has been adopted successfully in peer-reviewed studies involving young people with SEMH needs (Caslin, 2019; 2021).

Triangulation of Sources

The current study elicited narrative data from multiple participants. As suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1981), this verification of individual experiences supports credibility by ensuring a rich picture of the views and experiences of young people with experiences relevant to the current study.

Ensuring Honesty in Informants

As previously outlined, all participants were given opportunities to refuse to participate, thus ensuring that data collection involved only those participants who wished to engage in the study freely. Participants were also given assurances to anonymity and were assured that they were free to be as honest and as open as possible during their narration.

2. Transferability

Transferability corresponds to the positivist criterion of external validity (how applicable the findings of a study are to other contexts) (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Due to the relatively small sample size of the current study, conclusions relating to the applicability of findings to other settings may be impossible to determine. However, it has also been suggested that transferability of findings can be supported through providing 'thick description', i.e., detailed contextual information, thus allowing the reader to determine whether the finds may be transferable to their own context (Firestone, 1993; Polit & Beck, 2010). In line with this, contextual information such as time frames, locale, the age, year group and setting of participants was provided in attempt to enhance the reader's ability to determine proximal similarity (Polit & Beck, 2010).

3. Dependability

Dependability corresponds to the positivist criterion of reliability, which relates to the consistency in measures and procedures used in a study (Payne & Payne, 2004). Given the methodological changes and emerging constructions of participants often

seen within qualitative research, reporting on the consistency of measures and procedures can be difficult to achieve (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). However, in order to ensure dependability, Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest that details of these procedural changes (which would be considered threats to reliability within a Positivist study), must be readily available. This is so that the reader can ascertain which research practices have been followed and evaluate their effectiveness. The current study has been able to support dependability by clearly and thoroughly outlining the processes and justifications involved in each stage of the study, including research design and implementation, data collection and data analysis.

4. Confirmability

Confirmability corresponds to the positivist criterion of objectivity, (ensuring that finds relate to what was studied, rather than the beliefs, views, and motivations of the researcher) (Payne & Payne, 2004). Guba and Lincoln (1989) propose that within a Constructivist paradigm, the integrity of the researcher can be assured by explicitly outlining how the constructions and assertions of the researcher can be traced back to their sources and how “the logic used to assemble the interpretations into structurally coherent and corroborating wholes is both explicit and implicit in the narrative of the case study” (pg. 243).

3.16. Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an adapted version Hiles & Čermák’s (2011) Narrative Oriented Inquiry which will be outlined in the following sections.

3.16.1. Transcription

Each narration was transcribed verbatim from the original audio recording including both participant and researcher vocalisations. Crossley (2000) highlights that although discursive approaches such as DA analysis require the transcription of aspects of discourse such as length of pauses and intonation, these details are not necessary for narrative analysis which is concerned with the content and overall structure of narratives. She therefore suggests that transcription of data for

use within narrative analysis should follow a simple playscript style transcription in order to avoid unnecessary details impeding the reading and interpretation. In keeping with the constructivist research paradigm which acknowledges that knowledge is co-constructed through research, both researcher and participant vocalisations were transcribed. Following transcription, the researcher immersed themselves in the data through a process of repeated reading to gain familiarity with the narrative. Crossley (2000) suggests a minimum of six initial readings is required, however this number was greatly surpassed within the current research.

Following this stage, the raw text was broken into consecutively numbered segments representing meaningful episodes and events (Hiles & Čermák, 2008). This process was based on the researcher's own interpretation of what constituted a meaningful segment. The text was then arranged down the left-hand side of the page with a wide margin included on the right for coding and comments. An example of this can be found in Appendix 20.

3.16.2. Coding

Hiles & Čermák (2011) suggest that coding at this stage should be abductive, i.e., psychological theory and narrative/linguistic constructs are applied to the narrative, rather than these theoretical perspectives emerging *from* the data.

Sjuzet-fabula and Identity Positioning coding

The first step in the coding process was to separate the narrative into its most basic components: sjuzet, (*how* the story is being told) and fabula (the sequence of events within the narrative). This was done by underlining the sjuzet, with the fabula representing segments which are not underlined. Where sjuzet and fabula overlap, this was indicated by square brackets in order to promote transparency.

Identity positioning coding

At this stage instances of identity positioning were also coded using the code *IP*. Hiles & Čermák (2011) define identity positioning as how narrators “actively

construct how they experience their personal sense of self, by telling their story in a particular way” (p.159). Within narrative analysis, identity positioning performed by narrators are considered to be a process, i.e., “part and parcel of our mundane interactive, affective and continuous business of negotiating and navigating who we are in relation to one another” (Bamberg, 2020, p. 250). An illustrative extract including the use of Sjuzet-fabula, and Identity Positioning coding is

provided below.

<p>First week of Year 7 I was <u>a bit naughty shall we say</u> (<i>IP</i>) because I had a fight on the first week and got excluded. (3)</p>	<p>Story episode 3: Description of first week in Year 7. <i>IP2- Naughty</i></p>
<p>When I got excluded, I came back and got shouted at by a teacher, so I <u>got scared</u> (<i>IP</i>) and then I started being... <u>behaved</u>. (4)</p>	<p>Story episode 4: Description of encounter with teacher. <i>IP3- Scared</i></p>

Figure 10. An Example of Sjuzet-fabula and Identity Positioning Coding.

3.17. Holistic-Form Perspective

The transcript was then analysed using the Holistic-form perspective. Holistic-form analysis is concerned understanding how narratives are structured and organised. Riesman (2008) suggests that all narratives rely on particular structures to bind them as a whole and therefore “narrative structure matters in human communication” (p. 77). It has also been noted that a particular strength of structural analysis of narratives is to explore how narrators construct aspects of their identity and morality and how these may be shaped by cultural and social influences (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). However, it has been suggested that prescriptive comparison between individual stories and specific ‘types’ of narratives may risk losing sight of the individuality of these unique experiences (Frank, 1995). As such, it has been suggested that researchers should seek to apply these methods in a non-schematic and flexible way in order to capture the dynamic shifting nature inherent in real life stories (Murray, 2003). The following staged approach outlined by Lieblich, et al. (1998) was used:

1. Identifying a Focus for the Plot

This stage involved identifying a theme or issue as a focus for the plot. The focus of the plot addressed the research question *What are the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools?* Participants’ evaluation of their school experience was therefore chosen as the focus of the plot.

Identifying Plot Dynamics

This stage involved identifying elements of speech from the narrative that were indicative of plot dynamics. Forms of speech such as reflections, evaluative comments, as well as elements of speech which the researcher determined to be indicative of a structural aspect of the narrative including turning points, shifts, progressions, regressions.

Producing a Graphic Representation of the Narrative

Firstly, a table outlining the researcher’s descriptions and interpretations of each narrative was produced (Murray, 2015). This included a summary of the

researcher's interpretations for each phase (e.g., Year 6, Summer holiday) alongside illustrative extracts to support each interpretation. This included extracts from both the Main Narration and Questioning phases of the interviews. The researcher's comments relating to the themes included within each illustrative extract were also included (see example in Table 7 below). Full tables can be found in Appendix 13.

Phase	Summary	Evaluative extracts	Comments
Year 6	<p>Jack describes not liking Year 6 and only cites experiencing fights as reason for not liking school.</p> <p>Jack appears position himself as being quite passive in his Year 6 school experience through his description of being asleep for much of Year 6.</p> <p>Jack describes not feeling excited about the transition to Year 7 due to his general dislike of school at this time. This evaluation appears to be a contrast to his current school</p>	<p>I didn't like it, I don't know why, I got in to loads of fights, that's it really, that's all I remember really. (1)</p> <p>I didn't really like it, I was sleepy, and I fell asleep a lot; don't know why. (9)</p> <p>No, I just didn't want to go to school. I didn't like school back then and that. (12)</p>	<p>Negative evaluation- Disliking Year 6 Experiencing fights with peers.</p> <p>Not liking Year 6, overall memory is of being sleepy.</p> <p>A general dislike of school. Not linked to specific factors.</p>

	<p>experience (e.g., I didn't like school <i>back then...</i>)</p> <p>Jack describes feeling nervous about the transition to Year 7 in the final term of Year 6. These worries appear to be significant as noted by Jack's description of experiencing nightmares about transition.</p> <p>Jack describes how a visit to his secondary school helped these nerves to go. It appears that this was a significant reduction in nerves. Jack links this to being able to attend the school site during a school day</p>	<p>Before the summer holidays I was nervous for Year 7, and I had nightmares about it. (2)</p> <p>I don't know, I was just nervous. People just said that people hurt you and that. (11)</p> <p>...and then one time I visited the school, and all the nerves just went and that's all I remember. (2)</p> <p>It was that we went during the school day, and everybody was nice. (13)</p>	<p>Regression- feeling nervous about transition</p> <p>Progression: pre-transition visit helping to alleviate worries.</p>
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	and meeting 'everybody'. It is unclear whether this refers to staff or teachers.		
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Table 7. An Example of the Researcher's Narrative Descriptions and Interpretations

Based on these tables, a graphic representation of the narrative was created. Lieblich, et al. (1998) suggest that a graphic representation should be created in order to produce a coherent visual representation of the plot line. To promote transparency, illustrative extracts from each narrative were also included within the graphic representation (See Chapter 4). Hiles & Čermák (2011) do not outline a suggested scale for plotting points of progression and regression. As such, plot lines were determined based upon the researcher's own interpretations, based on reading the transcribed data, of where points of progression and regression may lie within the graphic representation in relation to the participant's positive and negative evaluation of their school experience.

Finally, each graphic representation was compared with the typologies outlined by (Gergen & Gergen, 1986).

3.18. Categorical-Content Perspective

The data was then further analysed using the Categorical-content perspective. This approach involves submitting sections of a narrative to thematic analysis (Hiles & Cermak, 2008). This approach was selected as it allowed the researcher to identify themes across each narrative, therefore addressing Research Question Two:

What are the risk and protective factors associated with KS2-3 transition young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools?

The following staged approach outlined by Lieblich, et al. (1998) was used:

Selection of the Subtext

Lieblich, et al. (1998) suggest that the initial stage of analysis within the categorical-content perspective should be the selection of a subtext related to the research question. They recommend that sections not related to this subtext should be removed from the overall narrative. However, given that the focus of

each narrative on a particular process (KS2-3 transition), it was decided that each entire narrative would be submitted to analysis.

Definition of the Content Categories

This stage involved identifying themes and perspectives across the narrative and arranging them into clusters of meaning (Lieblich, et al., 1998, p.3). Categories were pre-defined using the theoretical framework of Resilience. The researcher therefore examined the text for content related to risk and protective factors.

Current KS2-3 transition research suggests that risk and protective factors often fall into the categories of individual and environmental factors (Armstrong et al., 2005; Bailey & Baines, 2012; Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008; Masten, 2001).

Therefore, risk and protective factors were then categorised into these further sub-categories.

Sorting the Material into the Categories

During this stage units of analysis such as separate sentences and utterances were assigned to relevant categories. Lieblich, et al. (1998) recommended that researchers should select “principal sentences”, i.e., specific sentences which represent the content categories, where the text contains rich data and repetition (p.3). In keeping with this, principal sentences were selected which best represented each category. An example of the categorisation of principal sentences can be found in Figure 11. below, and full tables can be found in Appendix 14.

Category	Principal Sentence	Sub-category	Comments
Individual Risk factors	My worry was, about going to Year 7, cos I've got like dyslexic and stuff like that, that's what mainly worried me about going to summer school, like I thought I was gonna struggle with the work but it's not that bad. (23)	Worries in linked to specific labels and academic difficulties	Oliver recalls feeling worried as to whether he would struggle with the work in Year 7 and summer school due to being dyslexic, however, he recalls this feeling of worry reducing once he was able to gain familiarity with the work during summer school.
Individual Protective Factors	I'm in bottom set for everything so I kinda struggle with everything but it's quite, once you get used to it, it's fine. It's not like I'm dumb or something like that, it's just like, when I learn, I'm learning the same as everyone else, but just, were	Recognition of own needs and the support that works	Oliver is able to reflect upon his academic difficulties but recognises that he has his own learning style and the support that works best for him. This is also evident in Oliver's aspiration to move up to a higher set where he recognises the support and pace that would be

Figure 11. Example of the Coding of Principal Sentences

Drawing Conclusions from the Results

This stage of data analysis will be discussed further within in the following chapter.

4. Findings

4.1. Introduction to this Chapter

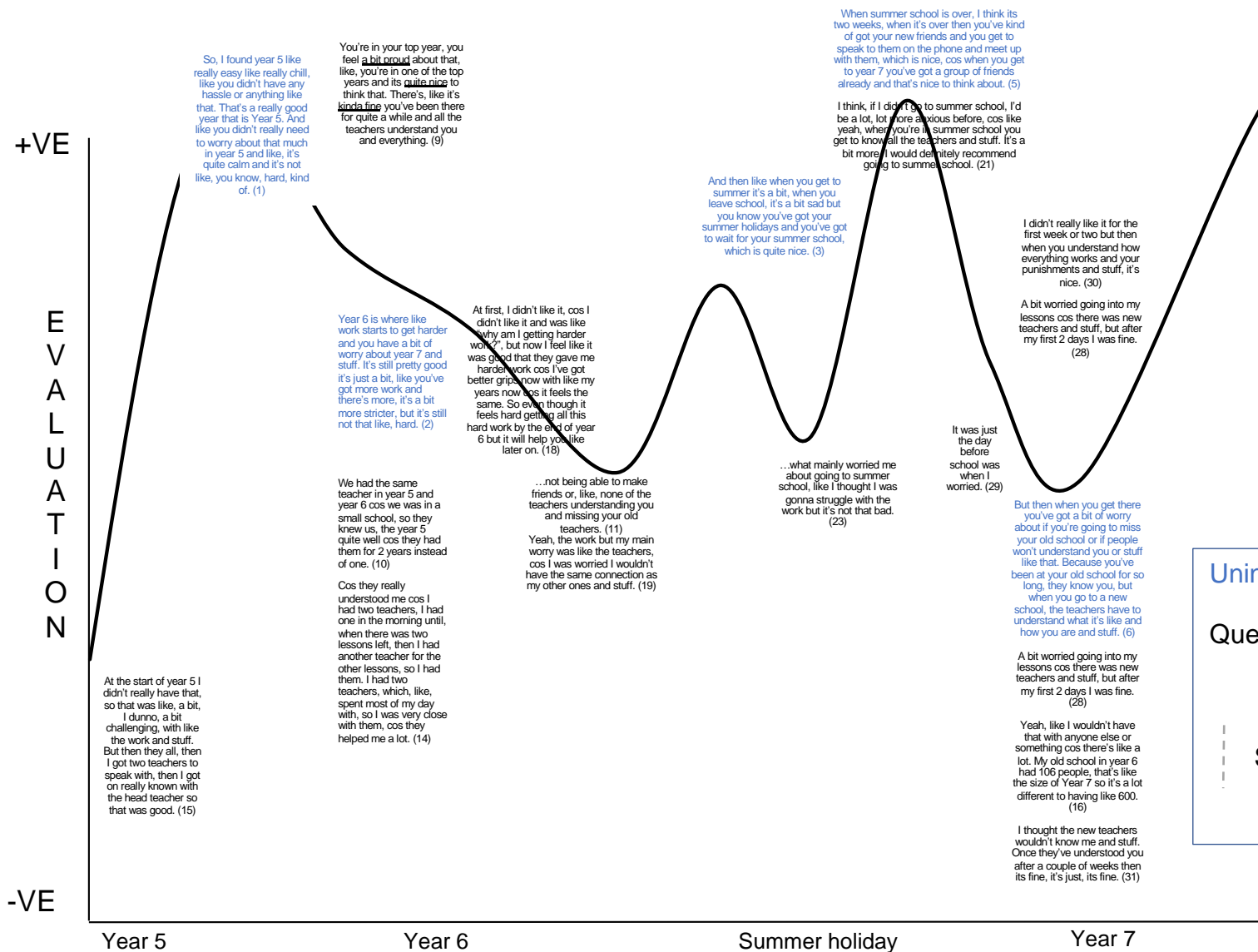
This chapter aims to describe the form and content of the narratives shared by each participant. Firstly, the form and structure of each narrative will be explored using holistic-form analysis. This will include a graphic representation of each plotline, along with a detailed commentary and reflections upon the structure and typology of each narrative. Secondly, the content of each narrative will be explored using categorical-content analysis. This will include a presentation of the clusters of meaning (i.e., themes and perspectives) identified by the researcher. These clusters of meaning relate to the pre-defined categories of Risk and Protective factors and the plausibility of interpretations will be supported through selected illustrative extracts.

4.2. Typologies

4.3. Interpretive Holistic-form Analysis

Tables outlining the researcher's descriptions and interpretations of each narrative were produced in line with guidance outlined by Murray (2015). Each table includes a summary of the researcher's interpretations and comments relating to the themes included within each narrative. Tables are included in Appendix 15 for transparency.

4.4. Oliver's story



Uninterrupted Narrative

Questioning Phase

Separation of phases

94 Figure 12. Graphical Representation of Oliver's KS2-3 Transition

4.4.1. Oliver's KS2-3 Transition Experience Commentary

Overall, Oliver's Year 5 plot line appears to be one of progression. During the Questioning phase, Oliver described his school experience as *"a bit challenging, with like the work and stuff"* (15). Oliver then reflects upon the impact of receiving teacher support: *"then I got two teachers to speak with, then I got to really know the head teacher, so that was good"*. (15) This progressive plot line is emphasised by Oliver's overall positive evaluation of Year 5 during the main narration phase which he describes as *"a really good year"* (1), *"really easy"* (1) and *"really chill"*.

Oliver's account of Year 6 indicates a slightly regressive tone. This is noted in his reflections upon a perceived increased academic challenge *"work starts to get harder"* (2), perceived increased in 'strictness *"it's a bit stricter"* and the emergence of worries in relation to KS2-3 transition *"you have a bit of worry about year 7 and stuff"* (2). However, Oliver's overall evaluation of Year 6 appears to be a positive one which is noted in his description of positive aspects of Year 6 such as a sense of pride linked to being one of the oldest pupils in the school *"You're in your top year, you feel a bit proud about that"* (9), familiarity with the setting and staff *"you've been there for quite a while"* which Oliver relates to feeling supported and understood *"all the teachers understand you and everything"* (9). Despite an initial regression, this positive evaluation appears stable until towards the end of Year 6 when worries in relation to transition begin to emerge, suggesting a regression in the plot. For example, *"til the second half you start getting worried about like, going to Year 7"* (12). Oliver cites specific worries relating to transition such as not being able to make friends, not feeling 'understood' by staff, and not having the same level of connection with staff as he had experienced throughout years 5 and 6. However, these worries appear to be balanced with feelings of excitement in anticipation of Year 7: *"I was really excited to go to year 7, but at the same time I was just a bit anxious about its cos I didn't know like, what would happen"* (20)

The beginning of Oliver's Summer Holiday phase suggests a progression represented by excitement for the summer holiday and starting summer school

“you’ve got your summer holidays and you’ve got to wait for your summer school, which is quite nice” (3). A regression is noted just before summer school as indicated by Oliver’s descriptions of feeling worried about *“struggling”* (9) with the academic demands of summer school. A progression is then noted as indicated by Oliver’s evaluation of summer school *“I would definitely recommend going to summer school”* (21). Following summer school, this positive evaluation remains stable due to maintaining friendships established in summer school. This linked to positive feelings associated with getting to know new staff and having an already established friendship group prior to Year 7 *“cos when you get to year 7 you’ve got a group of friends already and that’s nice to think about”* (5). Worries which emerge towards the end of Oliver’s summer holiday phase suggest regression which remains stable across the first few weeks of Year 7.

Oliver describes feeling both worries and excitement during the first few weeks of Year 7 *“I was a bit worried, but I knew I would have more opportunities and stuff”* (26). Oliver describes not enjoying the first few weeks of Year 7 and attributes this to worries in relation to whether new staff would understand him *“I thought the new teachers wouldn’t know me and stuff. Once they’ve understood you after a couple of weeks then its fine”* (31).

However, a progression is then noted which appears to be stable across the Year 7 phase as suggested by Oliver’s positive evaluation of the Year 7 phase *“that feeling goes quite fast, its mainly happy after that”* (8).

4.4.2. Typology Reflections: Oliver

Oliver’s plot line relating to his KS2-3 transition experience appears to be most consistent with that of a romantic-saga plotline which is characterised by a series of both regressive and progressive phases culminating in a positive ending.

A series of progressive and regressive phases are noted throughout Oliver’s Year 5, 6, and summer holiday phases as well as the initial phases of Year 7. Oliver’s regressive phases appear to be linked to anticipatory worries such as prior to summer school and Year 7 or experiencing new challenges such as the perceived increase in academic challenge during Year 6. Conversely, Oliver’s progressive phases appear to follow a period of adjustment to these challenges and new phases.

For example, this may be seen in Oliver's description of the first few weeks of Year 7 *"I didn't really like it for the first week or two but then when you understand how everything works and your punishments and stuff, it's nice"* (30). The positive ending associated with the romantic saga typology may be indicated by Oliver's reflections upon his upcoming transition to Year 8. For example, *"I don't really need to worry about Year 8 because it's not really bothering me"* (39) and *"I might get a couple of new teachers going to Year 8, but it's fine cos I'll get to know them quite quick, the same as going into Year 7"* (38).

The positive ending to Oliver's narrative is also reflected in the identity positioning seen throughout the narration. For the majority of Oliver's narration, he appears to assume an identity position of a helper offering reassurance to others based on his own experiences. This is seen in the encouraging tone and mostly second-person perspective he adopts throughout the narration: *"And once the first couple of weeks are over, its fine then you still have a bit of worry, it's just, that feeling goes quite fast, its mainly happy after that"* (8).

4.5. Jack's Story

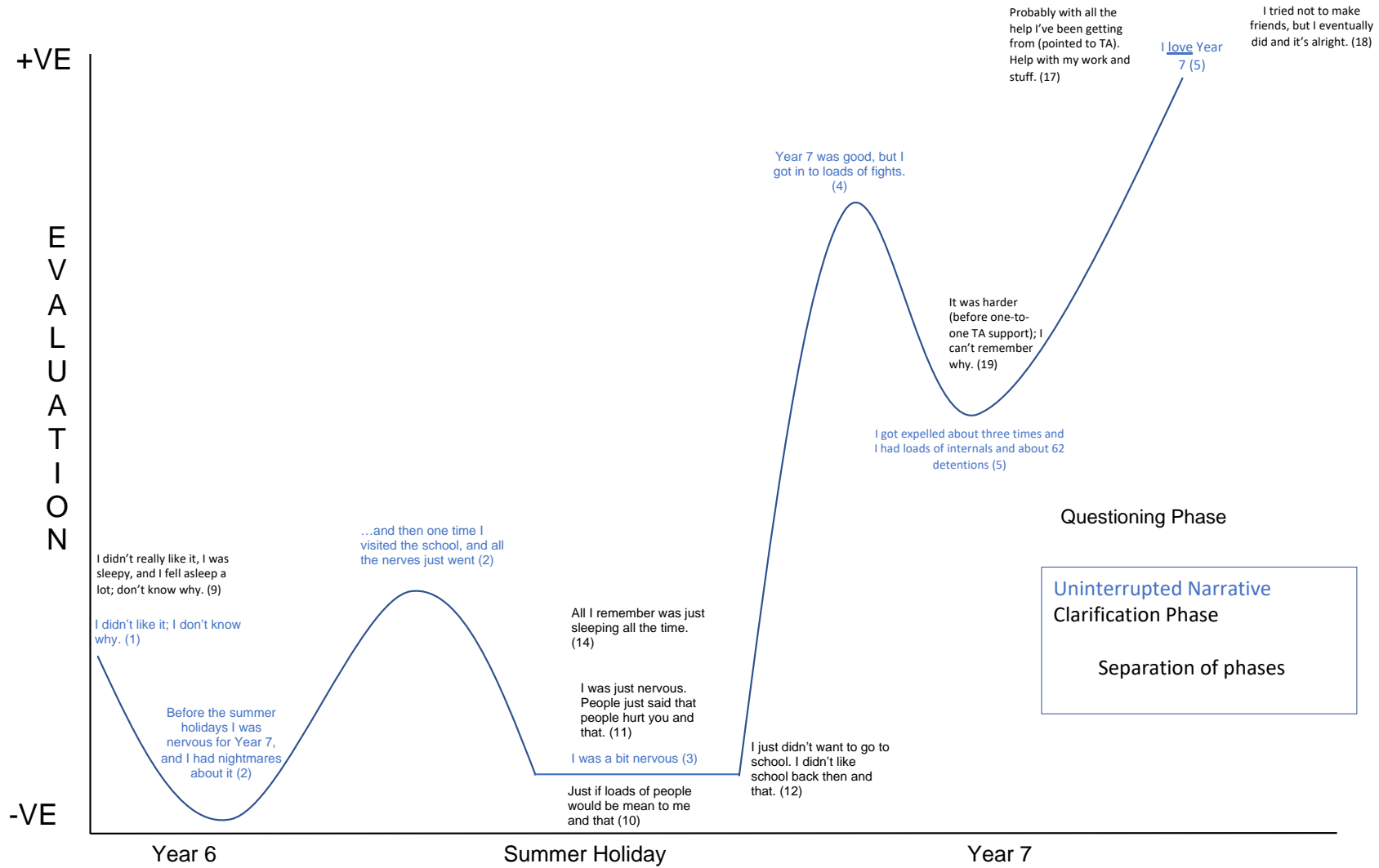


Figure 13. Graphical Representation of Jack's KS2-3 transition

4.5.2. Jack's KS2-3 Transition experience Commentary

Jack's overall evaluation of Year 6 appears to be negative "*I didn't really like it*" (9). His limited reflections of simply being "*sleepy*" (9) during Year 6 tentatively suggests stability due to the lack of positive or negative evaluation. Following this period of stability across Year 6, a regression is noted in Jack's reflections on being "*nervous*" (9) before the summer holidays and experiencing nightmares related to moving up to Year 6. A progression is then noted following a visit to secondary school prior to the summer holidays where Jack describes that "*all of the nerves just went*" (2).

A regression is then noted in Jack's summer holiday phase where he recalls feeling nervous due to rumours shared by others in relation to "*people hurting you*" (11) in secondary school. Stability of this negative evaluation is noted by Jack's overall reflection of "*sleeping all the time*" (14) and not feeling excited about transition due to a general dislike of school.

Jack's overall evaluation of Year 7 appears to be a positive one in comparison to Year 6: "*Year 7 was good*" (4). A period of regression is noted Jack's reflection on receiving a number of behaviour sanctions including a fixed term exclusion. A progression is also noted in Jack's comment that "*It was harder*" (19) before receiving one-to-one teaching assistant support. This progression following the receipt of adult support may also be indicated by Jack's present tense evaluation of Year 7: "*I love Year 7*" (5).

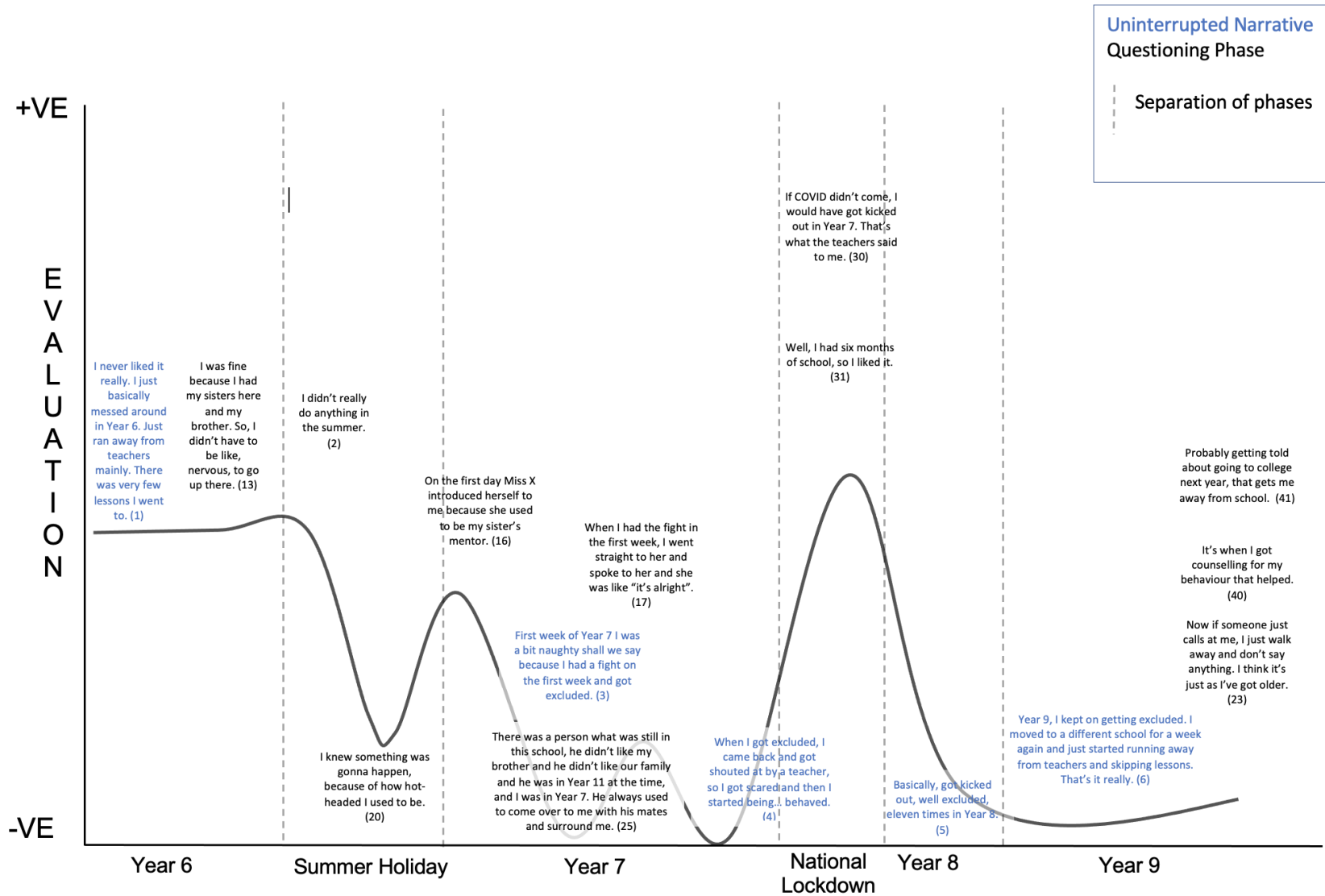
4.5.3. Typology Reflections: Jack

Jack's plot line relating to his KS2-3 transition experience appears to be most consistent with that of a romantic-saga plotline (regressive and progressive phases culminating in a positive ending). Jack's overall evaluation of Year 6 appears to be negative with progression and regression occurring prior to, and throughout his Summer Holiday phase in relation to pre-transition worries. Jack frequently refers to feeling 'sleepy' throughout his Year 6 and Summer Holiday phases which could indicate a position of passivity.

Although Jack's overall evaluation of Year 7 is comparatively more positive than Year 6, regression is suggested by experiences of fights with peers and receiving both internal and fixed term exclusion: "*Year 7 was good, but I got into loads of*

*fight*s” (4). In response to the researcher question “*What kind of things have made you love Year 7?*” Jack commented on receiving one-to-one TA support for “*work and stuff*” (17). Jack also notes making eventually making friends, despite being resistant to this. These reflections suggest a further progression in the overall plotline, which culminates in the present tense evaluation of “*I love Year 7*” (5). This evaluation is communicated in language which is comparatively more emotive than his evaluation of the Year 6 phase, suggesting the significance of this progression for Jack. Furthermore, Jack’s apparent identity positioning when reflecting on his feelings in anticipation also suggest a comparatively positive change in his current evaluation towards his school experience: “*I didn’t like school back then and that*” (12).

4.6. Ben's story



101 Figure 14. Graphical Representation of Ben's KS2-3 transition

4.6.1 Ben's KS2-3 Transition Experience Commentary

Ben's evaluation of his Year 6 phase appears to be negative: *"I never liked it really"* (1). This evaluation appears to be stable across Year 6. A regression is suggested during the summer holiday phase where Ben reflects on anticipating that *"something was gonna happen"* prior to starting Year 7.

A progression is indicated by Ben's reflection on meeting a learning mentor on his first day in Year 7. The positive nature of this relationship is evident in his description of seeking this member of staff out and receiving reassurance following an experience of a fight with another pupil. A regression occurs during Ben's first week of Year 7 where he describes experiencing a fight with another pupil which resulted in a fixed-term exclusion. This negative evaluation appears to be stable across Year 7 as noted in Ben's reflections on being victimised by older pupils and feeling scared after being shouted at by a member of staff on return from fixed-term exclusion. Ben's positive evaluation of being at home during the COVID-19 national lockdown then appears to suggest a progression.

A regression is noted in Ben's overall evaluation of his Year 8 phase: *"Basically I got kicked out, well excluded eleven times in Year 8"* (5). This negative evaluation appears stable across Year 8 and into to Year 9, where Ben describes disengagement from learning, and receiving further fixed-term exclusions and managed moves. A slight progression is suggested by Ben's reflections on the positive outcomes of receiving "counselling for my behaviour" (4) and feeling more able to walk away from conflict with peers. Anticipation of a positive progression is also suggested in Ben's positive description of being made aware that he will be accessing a vocational course during Year 10.

Typology Reflections: Ben

Ben's plot line relating to his KS2-3 transition experience appears to be largely regressive in form. Tentative comparisons may be made with a Tragic plotline. For example, Ben appears to have faced several instances of challenge such as conflicts with peers and receiving a number of fixed-term exclusions and managed moves which have culminated in further regressive phases. However, Ben's

regressive plot appears to be more gradual than that associated with a Tragic plotline, with Ben's experiences suggesting a gradual regression over time. Ben's overall evaluation of his school experience appears to be negative. Notably, periods of apparent progression in evaluation of school experience are characterised by circumstances which removed Ben from the school environment such as COVID lockdown: *"well, I had six months off school, so I liked it"* (31), and the anticipation of a vocational course of study in Year 10: *"that gets me away from school"* (41). A turning point associated with further regression is suggested in Ben's reflection of his Year 9 phase where beginning to run away from teachers and skipping lessons appear to be linked to prior experiences of behaviour sanctions: *"I kept on getting excluded. I moved to a different school for a week again and just started running away from teachers and skipping lessons"* (6).

4.7. Categorical content analysis: What are the risk and protective factors associated with Key stage 2-3 transition for young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools?

The following section will provide an overview of the risk and protective factors interpreted through the process of categorical content analysis. The factors will be presented in tabulated form followed by a more in-depth discussion.

4.8. The risk and protective factors associated with Oliver's story

Category	Principal Sentence	Sub-category	Comments
Risk factors	My worry was, about going to Year 7, cos I've got like dyslexic and stuff like that, that's what mainly worried me about going to summer school, like I thought I was gonna struggle with the work but it's not that bad. (23)	Negative academic-self concept	Oliver reflects on overcoming initial worries in relation to academic self-concept.

<p>Protective factors</p>	<p>people. It's quite nervous and you get a bit anxious but when you sit down and you're with loads of new people, it's quite nice to talk to them and see what your new friends will be like. (4)</p> <p>When summer school is over, I think its two weeks, when it's over then you've kind of got your new friends and you get to speak to them on the phone and meet up with them, which is nice, cos when you get to year 7 you've got a group of friends already and that's nice to think about. (5)</p> <p>I'd definitely recommend going to it cos, I think, if I didn't go to summer school, I'd be a lot, lot more anxious before, cos like yeah, when you're in summer school you get to know all the teachers and stuff. It's a bit more, I would definitely recommend going to summer school. (21)</p> <p>But then when you get there you've got a bit of worry about if you're going to miss your old school or if people won't understand you or stuff like that. (6)</p>	<p>Continuity of support</p>	<p>initial anxiety, Oliver describes the positive impact of being able to meet new friends.</p> <p>Oliver also describes friendships made during summer school being maintained throughout the transition process and this having a positive impact due to having an already established friendship group prior to starting Year 7. Oliver also acknowledges the positive impact of being able to make connections with new teachers prior to starting Year 7 in September.</p> <p>Oliver describes having initial worries as to whether staff in secondary school would 'understand' him. Oliver contrasts</p>
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<p>When they understand how you, when you've got your sets and school, when they understand how you're doing and what you struggle at, it's a lot easier. (7)</p> <p>I still get support, like my old school. (37)</p> <p>Cos they really understood me cos I had two teachers, I had one in the morning until, when there was two lessons left, then I had another teacher for the other lessons, so I had them. (14)</p> <p>But soon they'll understand what helps you and what doesn't and stuff. (7)</p> <p>I had two teachers, which, like, spent most of my day with, so I was very close with them, cos they helped me a lot. (14)</p>	<p>Feeling understood by teachers</p> <p>Positive pupil-teacher relationships</p>	<p>this with the recognition of the positive support he received in primary school being due to staff getting to know him over two years. Oliver then reflects that staff gaining familiarity with his learning needs made things feel easier.</p> <p>Throughout the narrative, Oliver highlights the importance of being understood by teachers in terms of how he learns and the supports he finds most beneficial.</p> <p>Oliver developed positive relationships with primary teachers over Year 5/6 which are characterised by receiving</p>
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<p>Protective factors</p>	<p>I was quite excited cos I kinda just wanted to go home, like, but when I got in the car, I thought, like, when I saw my teachers and I gave them a hug, like, it was a bit sad, cos, like, not gonna see them. (13)</p> <p>Yeah, like I wouldn't have that with anyone else or something cos there's like a lot. My old school in year 6 had 106 people, that's like the size of Year 7 so it's a lot different to having like 600. (16)</p> <p>I was worried I wouldn't have the same connection as my other (teachers) and stuff. (19)</p> <p>Like, I know I can't have the help I had in my old school, but I can have like, little bits. (17)</p> <p>I might get a couple of new teachers going to Year 8, but it's fine cos I'll get them to know them quite quick, the same as going into Year 7 I'll get to know them really fast, so. (38)]</p>	<p>academic support and feeling understood.</p> <p>Oliver also describes things feeling challenging before these positive relationships and associated support were established. Oliver also acknowledges the practicalities of this level of support not being available in secondary school. This positive experience with teacher support/relationships during Year 7 appear to have increased Oliver's resilience for the move to Year 8.</p>
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	<p>But when I came back to school, I was a bit worried, but I knew I would have more opportunities and stuff, (26)</p> <p>like, I really love art and at my old school we didn't do like pastels and all this, we just did pencils and stuff, like we we've got a lot more opportunity (27)</p>	Increased opportunities	Oliver cites initial worries in relation to KS2-3 transition being balanced by excitement in anticipation of the increased opportunities of secondary school.
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<p>Protective factors</p>	<p>It feels hard getting all this hard work by the end of year 6 but it will help you like later on. (18)</p>	<p>Preparation for the increased academic expectations of Year 7.</p>	<p>Oliver reflects on the initial challenge of being given work that felt more difficult in Year 6 but recognises the importance of this increased challenge in feeling prepared for the increase in academic challenge he encountered in Year 7.</p>
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Table 8. The Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Oliver's Narration

Risk/ Protective Factors

Academic Self-concept

Academic self-concept refers to the perception a learner has about their own abilities (Marsh, 1990). Oliver reflects on feeling worried about whether he would be able to meet the academic demands associated with both summer school and Year 7 and links this specific learning needs: *“cos I’ve got like dyslexic and stuff like that... I thought I was gonna struggle with the work”* (23).

Despite these worries, Oliver also appears to show a reflective awareness of his own needs as a learner: *“I’m in bottom set for everything... once you get used to it, it’s fine”* (33). Oliver also appears to show an awareness of the nature of academic support that works for him: *“I’m learning the same as everyone else, but just, we’re doing it at a smoother pace so like, I can get more understanding of what’s happening”* (33). This awareness of the support he needs is also highlighted in Oliver’s reflection upon his aspiration to move up ability sets in maths: *“I want to like be, where summer school made it smooth into Year 7 that’s what I want for going up sets”* (34). Oliver also demonstrates a level of academic self-awareness in terms of recognising that there are some subjects he prefers more than others. Oliver comments that *“I really love art”* (27) and that anticipation of this preferred subject can act as a motivator: *“Like, if I have a day where I’ve got like two lessons that I don’t like and then the last lesson I do like, like art; It helps me get through”* (35).

Protective Factors

Summer School

Oliver describes his experience of summer school positively throughout his narrative and reflects positively upon its impact on his KS2-3 transition experience: *“I would definitely recommend going to summer school”* (21). A number of factors associated with summer school are directly linked to a positive KS2-3 transition experience such as getting to *“know all the teachers and stuff”* (21) and being able to establish a friendship group prior to transition: *“when you get to year 7, you’ve got a group of friends already and that’s nice to think about”* (5). The establishment of this friendship group is also related to positive anticipation at the start of Year 7 such as feeling *“happy cos you’ve got your friends and you’re like, it’s like really nice and*

stuff “(6). Oliver’s experience of summer school was also linked to reducing pre-transition worries: *“I think, if I didn’t go to summer school, I’d be a lot, lot more anxious before”* (21).

Continuity of Support

Throughout Oliver’s narration he shows an awareness of the level of support received by teachers in primary school and links this to teachers getting to know him over time: *“Because you’ve been at your old school for so long, they know you”* (6). Oliver described feeling worried that this level of teacher support would not be available in Year 7 and teachers would not *“understand what it’s like and how you are and stuff”* (6). Oliver’s story indicates that despite these initial worries, he went on to feel supported and understood by teachers in Year 7: *“when they understand how you’re doing and what you struggle at, it’s a lot easier”* (7). This feeling of continued support is noted in Oliver’s reflection that *“I still get support, like my old school”* (37). However, Oliver’s reflections also suggest an awareness of the practicality of the support provided in primary school not being available to the same extent in secondary school: *“I know I can’t have the help I had in my old school, but I can have like, little bits”* (17).

Feeling Understood by Teachers

Throughout Oliver’s narrative he refers to the importance of feeling ‘understood’ by staff. Oliver highlights the importance of staff understanding: *“what helps you and what doesn’t”* and *“what you struggle at”* (7). The feeling of being understood by teachers is linked to Oliver’s positive reflections of Years 5 and 6: *“Cos they really understood me”* (14). Conversely, not feeling understood appeared to be a significant theme throughout Oliver’s pre-transition concerns: *“I just didn’t think they would understand me and stuff”* (31). Oliver reflects upon a period of adjustment in Year 7 where staff gradually got to know him which culminated in positive outcomes: *“when they understand how you’re doing and what you struggle at, it’s a lot easier”* (7).

Positive Pupil-teacher Relationships

Oliver reflects positively on the close and supportive relationships he was able to develop with two teachers during Years 5 and 6: *"I had two teachers, which, like, spent most of my day with, so I was very close with them, cos they helped me a lot"* (14). These benefits of these positive relationships are highlighted in Oliver's description of school before these relationships were established feeling *"challenging, with like the work and stuff"* (14). Oliver also cites pre-transition concerns that *"I wouldn't have the same connection as my other (teachers)"* (19). However, despite Oliver's recognition that the same level of connection with staff may not be available in secondary school, his reflection on moving up to Year 8 suggests that he has been able to establish connections with staff and that this has been beneficial: *"I might get a couple of new teachers going to Year 8, but it's fine cos I'll get them to know them quite quick, the same as going into Year 7, I'll get to know them really fast"* (38).

Recognition of the Increased Opportunities of KS3

Oliver reflects upon initial feelings of worry associated with KS2-3 transition being balanced with feelings of excitement in anticipation of the increased opportunities available in secondary school: *"I was a bit worried, but I knew I would have more opportunities"* (26). The opportunities and resources available in Year 7 are also emphasised in comparison to those available primary school: *"I really love art and at my old school we didn't do like pastels and all this, we just did pencils and stuff, like we we've got a lot more opportunities"* (27). Oliver's account also highlights the importance of him finding subjects and topics he is passionate about and being able to explore these in greater depth in secondary school: *"There is definitely a lesson that you'll find that you're gonna really love"* (27).

Preparation for the Increased Academic Demands of KS3

During Oliver's Year 6 phase, he comments on initial worries related to a perceived increase in academic demands: *"I didn't like it and was like 'why am I getting harder work?'"* (18). However, Oliver reflects that this increased challenge appeared to help him feel more able to meet the academic demands of secondary school: *"but now I feel like it was good that they gave me harder work... it will help you like later on"* (18).

4.9. The Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Jack's Story

Category	Principal Sentence	Sub-category	Comments
Risk factors	Year 7 was good, but I got in to loads of fights. (4)	Experiencing conflict with peers	Jack discussed 'getting into fights' several times during his narration in regard to his Year 6 and Year 7 experience.
	They hit me first and but then I turned around and did that (mimes punch). (6)		
	I got expelled about three times and I had loads of internals and about 62 detentions. But other than that, I love Year 7. (5)	Experiencing repeated behavioural sanctions	Jack described experiencing a number of behavioural sanctions such as detentions and fixed-term exclusion. Jack appeared somewhat unsure of the reasons behind these sanctions. Jack reflects positively on experiencing fixed term/ internal exclusion due to being able to sleep in longer/ not being in lessons.
	I don't know what expelled means. It wasn't like the permanently one. I think it was because of the fights and that. (14).		
	Well, you get an internal you get to sit out of lesson (10)		
I didn't care because I could sleep in longer. (15)			

	<p>Just if loads of people would be mean to me and that. (10)</p> <p>I don't know, I was just nervous. People just said that people hurt you and that (11).</p>	Negative rumours shared by peers.	Jack related pre-transition worries to negative stories shared by peers in relation to secondary school.
Protective factors	<p>Not really, I tried not to make friends, but I eventually did and it's alright. Because I don't like having lots of people around me and that. (18)</p> <p>Before the summer holidays I was nervous for Year 7, and I had nightmares about it and then one time I visited the school, and all the nerves just went and that's all I remember. (2)</p> <p>It was that we went during the school day, and everybody was nice. (13)</p> <p>Probably with all the help I've been getting from (pointed to TA). Help with my work and stuff. (17)</p>	<p>Developing positive peer relationships</p> <p>Opportunities to gain familiarity with new setting prior to transition.</p> <p>Receiving targeted support</p>	<p>Jack describes making friends despite an initial reluctance to do so.</p> <p>Jack cites having an opportunity to visit his new school and meet staff prior to transition to a reduction in worries and nightmares.</p> <p>Jack linked receiving one-to-one TA support to 'loving' Year 7. Other than help with work, Jack appeared</p>

	<p>Researcher: Help with your work and stuff, was there anything else that (TA) has helped with?</p> <p>Jack: Sometimes, I can't really remember. (18)</p>		<p>unsure of the other areas in which this support had been beneficial.</p>
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Table 9. the Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Jack's Narration

Risk factors

Experiencing Conflict with Peers

Throughout Jack's narrative he describes experiences of conflict with peers in school. These experiences are related to negative evaluation of Year 6: *"I didn't like it, I don't know why, I got in to loads of fights"* (1). These experiences are also present in Jack's reflections on negative aspects of Year 7 which he describes as *"good, but I got in to loads of fights"* (4). These experiences of conflict are often related to negative outcomes in Year 7 such as experiencing internal and fixed-term exclusions. For Jack, these experiences of conflict with peers are often described as a response to the actions of others: *"They hit me first and but then I turned around and did that"* (*mimes punch*) (6). This theme continues throughout Year 7 where Jack describes conflicts occurring due to the *"same stuff as year 6"* (14), suggesting this was an ongoing challenge for him.

Experiencing Repeated Behavioural Sanctions

Jack's description of his Year 7 phase contains reference to experiencing a significant number of behavioural sanctions: *"I got expelled about three times and I had loads of internals and about 62 detentions"* (5). It appears from Jack's description of these behavioural sanctions that he viewed significant sanctions such as internal and fixed-term exclusion as somewhat positive experiences due to factors such as getting *"to sit out of lesson"* (10) and being able to *"sleep in longer"* (15).

Negative Rumours Shared by Peers

Jack reflects upon the negative impact of rumours shared by peers in relation to KS2-3 transition: *"I was just nervous. People just said that people hurt you and that"* (11). For example, Jack recalls worrying that *"loads of people would be mean to me and that"* (10). It is notable that these worries appeared to occur even after Jack had experienced an opportunity to visit his secondary school where he experienced feeling that *"everybody was nice"* (13).

Protective factors

Developing Positive Relationships with Peers

During the Questioning phase, Jack described eventually making friends during Year 7, despite an initial reluctance to do so: *“I tried not to make friends, but I eventually did and it’s alright. Because I don’t like having lots of people around me and that”* (18).

Opportunities to Gain Familiarity a New setting Prior to Transition

Jack reflects on feelings of nervousness in relation to KS2-3 transition. The significance of these worries is highlighted by Jack’s description of experiencing *“nightmares about it”* (2). Jack then describes that having opportunity to visit his new setting prior to transition as being linked to a reduction in these nerves: *“I visited the school, and all the nerves just went”* (2). Jack acknowledges that being able to visit the school *“during the school day”* (13) and experiencing recognising that *“everybody was nice”* (13) as being important in reducing the worries he had been experiencing.

Receiving Targeted Adult Support

During the Questioning phase, Jack cited being assigned one-to-one adult support as being a factor which helped to support him ‘loving’ Year 7: *“Probably with all the help I’ve been getting from (TA)...help with my work and stuff”* (17). The positive impact of this adult support is highlighted in Jack’s comparison of school being *“harder, but I can’t really remember why”* (18), before this support was available. Jack appeared unsure of other aspects of school life in which this support had been beneficial. For example, when asked if there was anything else that this support has helped with Jack replied, *“Sometimes, I can’t really remember”* (18).

4.10. The Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Ben's Story

Category	Principal Sentence	Sub-category	Comments
Risk factors	<p>First week of Year 7, I was a bit naughty shall we say because I had a fight on the first week and got excluded. (3)</p> <p>But she was worse than me, proper naughty. (16)</p> <p>I knew something was gonna happen, because of how hot-headed I used to be. Like, I am still hot-headed but not as bad as I used to be (20)</p> <p>If COVID didn't come, I would have got kicked out in Year 7. That's what the teachers said to me. (30)</p>	Internalising negative labels/ narratives	Ben describes his behaviour during the first week with the negative label of 'naughty' and links this to experiencing a fight with another pupil. He also uses this construct within his comparison with his sister's behaviour.
	<p>We didn't mess around with them teachers, we just started messing around with teachers we didn't like (19).</p>	Pupil-teacher relationships	Ben describes the influence of pupil-teacher relationships on

	<p>Year 8, I got, I had to go to a different school. Basically, got kicked out, well excluded, eleven times in Year 8 (5). Year 9, I kept on getting excluded. (6)</p>	<p>Experiencing fixed-term exclusion</p>	<p>his behaviour and that of his peers.</p> <p>Ben describes several experiences of fixed-term exclusion during KS3.</p>
	<p>I moved to a different school for a week again and just started running away from teachers and skipping lessons. (6)</p>	<p>Experiencing a managed move</p>	<p>Ben describes his experiences of two managed moves during KS3.</p>
	<p>There was a few of us, when we used to get angry, we just never listened to the teachers and left them basically. (7)</p>	<p>Influence of peers</p>	<p>Ben suggests the influence of peers on particular behaviours.</p>

	<p>It's just when everyone else goes in (to lessons). It's the same here really. (12)</p> <p>I knew because there was a lad I knew already from primary school who I knew and he just started saying about my weight all week, on the first week of Year 7, so on the Friday I just grabbed him. (21)</p> <p>When he first started saying it, I was gonna fight him just then, but then I thought, nah. (22)</p> <p>There was a person what was still in this school, he didn't like my brother and he didn't like our family and he was in Year 11 at the time, and I was in Year 7. He always used to come over to me with his mates and surround me. (25)</p>	<p>Experiencing conflict with peers</p>	<p>Ben describes several experiences of conflicts with peers which resulted in negative outcomes such as experiencing behavioural sanctions.</p>
<p>Protective factors</p>	<p>Now if someone just calls at me, I just walk away and don't say anything. I think it's just as I've got older (23)</p>	<p>Increased self-awareness</p>	<p>Ben reflects upon his personal approach to responding to peer conflicts adapting over time and links this to increased maturity</p>

<p>When they used to take me out of lessons and do the work separately. Because they knew I didn't like the lessons they just broke it up into little bits and eventually did the lesson. (10)</p> <p>When I had the fight in the first week, I went straight to her and spoke to her, and she was like "it's alright". (17)</p> <p>It's when I got counselling for my behaviour; that helped. (40)</p>	<p>Receiving individual/ targeted support</p>	<p>Ben discusses several experiences of receiving targeted adult support for academic and emotional needs.</p>
<p>Ben: I was fine because I had my sisters here and my brother. So, I didn't have to be like, nervous, to go up there. (13)</p> <p>When they used to take me out of lessons and do the work separately. Because they knew I didn't like the lessons they just broke it up into little bits and eventually did the lesson. (10)</p>	<p>Sibling support</p>	<p>Ben reflects upon the importance of having siblings already in secondary school in reducing pre-transition worries.</p>

<p>When they used to take me out for walks when they knew I was about to, I used to throw pencils at peoples' heads. (11)</p> <p>When I had the fight in the first week, I went straight to her and spoke to her, and she was like "it's alright". (17)</p>	<p>Positive pupil-teacher relationships</p>	<p>Ben reflects on the benefits of supportive relationships with adults in school during his Year 6 and 7 phases.</p>
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Table 10. The Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Ben's Narration

Risk Factors

Internalising negative Labels/ Narratives

There are several examples of Ben demonstrating negative self-description. For example, Ben describes himself as “*naughty*” (3) and uses the self-descriptive term ‘*hot-headed*’ when reflecting upon pre-transition worries: “*I knew something was gonna happen, because of how hot-headed I used to be*” (20). Similarly, in relation to his older sister, Ben comments that, “*she was worse than me, proper naughty*” (16). It also appears that Ben may have internalised some of the narratives shared by teachers in relation to his behaviour: “*If COVID didn’t come, I would have got kicked out in Year 7. That’s what the teachers said to me*” (30).

Pupil-teacher Relationships

A number of Ben’s reflections suggest that experiencing negative pupil-teacher relationships may have been a factor which contributed to disengagement from learning and engaging in particular behaviours during his Year 6 phase: “*There was one teacher Mrs X, and Mrs Y, what I didn’t like, that’s why we just started messing around on the last day*” (19). In one reflection Ben directly cites teacher relationships as being influential on his behaviour and the behaviour of others during Year 6: “*we didn’t mess around with them teachers, we just started messing around with teachers we didn’t like*” (19). However, Ben also describes relationships with teachers in primary school as being “*hit and miss*” (9) and he is also able to reflect on experiencing positive relationships with staff (see Positive Pupil-teacher Relationships below).

Experiencing Exclusion

Ben recalls experiencing several fixed-term exclusions across his secondary school experience. These experiences of exclusion are attributed to conflict with peers: “*It was when this kid, he kept on saying something that he knew was annoying*” (36); and staff: “*I told the teacher to do one and then I kept on swearing and ran away from them*” (34). Ben appears to evaluate these experiences of fixed-term exclusion positively due to having opportunities to

engage in preferred activities such as gaming: *"I actually quite liked it... I just sat on my X-Box all day"* (24). However, Ben's description of these fixed-term exclusions as being *"kicked out"* (5) may suggest that he also viewed these experiences negatively.

Experiencing a Managed Move

Ben's narration indicates that he has experienced two managed moves during his KS3 experience. Ben describes not attending lessons during his first managed move in Year 8 as he did not want to stand out or look *"weird"* (33) due to wearing the uniform of his current school. Ben's reflections on both managed moves suggest that the experiences offered limited educational benefits. For example, Ben summarises his first managed move in Year 7: *"I just started playing on my phone and that, I didn't go to any lessons"* (33). Similarly, when reflecting on his second managed move he describes a similar experience *"I was just in there (internal exclusion) again, it was alright"* (38). Furthermore, Ben's description of his Year 9 phase appears to suggest that experiencing behavioural sanctions such as fixed-term exclusions and managed moves may have been a factor which influenced subsequent disengagement from learning: *"Year 9, I kept on getting excluded. I moved to a different school for a week again and just started running away from teachers and skipping lessons"* (6).

The influence of Peers

There are a number of references to the influence of peers throughout Ben's narrative. For example, during Ben's Year 6 phase where he reflects *"There was a few of us, when we used to get angry, we just never listened to the teachers"* (7). When asked to describe instances that made Ben and his friends feel 'angry' he reflected, *"Oh, it's just, we used to mess around, and someone would take it that bit further and try and be rude about it"* (8). The influence of peers is suggested by Ben's reflection that he and his peers *"never skip lessons on our own"* (39).

During the Questioning phase Ben reflected that going into lessons was often dependent on peers, both in primary and secondary school: *"It's just when everyone else goes in (to class). It's the same here (secondary school) really"*

(12). In terms of identity positioning, Ben often uses the plural pronoun of 'we' when describing misbehaviour such as "*we were just being naughty, we found loads of hiding spots*" (41). At times, Ben also appears to suggest an 'us vs them' positioning in terms of peers and staff: "we just never listened to the teachers and left them basically" (7). During the Year 6 phase Ben describes an instance of being restrained by staff: "*they had to like, hold me so I didn't go anywhere. But they failed on that cos (friend's name) just grabbed their arms off me and I just disappeared*" (8). This positioning is also suggested by Ben's description of skipping lessons during Year 9: "*They usually find us*" (39).

Experiencing Conflict with Peers

Ben describes a number of incidents of conflict with peers throughout his KS3 experience. He describes an incident of conflict with a peer which appeared to accumulate throughout his first week of Year 7: "*he just started saying about my weight all week, on the first week of Year 7, so on the Friday I just grabbed him*" (21). The accumulative nature of this incident may be reflected in Ben's description of trying to avoid the outcome of conflict: "*When he first started saying it, I was gonna fight him just then, but then I thought, nah*" (22). A similar experience is also described in Ben's Year 8 phase: "*It was when this kid he kept on saying something that he knew was annoying... so I flipped the table*" (36). Ben also describes experiencing peer conflicts which were linked to older pupils targeting him due to family connections: "*he didn't like my brother and he didn't like our family... he always used to come over to me with his mates and surround me*" (25). Within these descriptions, Ben also appears to reflect on taking personal responsibility for dealing with these conflicts by adapting his outlook: "*They knew I wasn't scared; my solution is to never be scared of anyone*" (27).

Protective Factors

Increased Self-awareness

Ben described himself as being “*hot-headed*” (40) but was able to reflect that “*I am still hot-headed, but not as bad as I used to be*” (20). This shift is also highlighted in Ben’s reflection that he now feels more able to walk away from situations which may have previously resulted in conflict with peers: “*Now if someone just calls at me, I just walk away and don’t say anything. I think it’s just as I’ve got older*” (23). This internal attribution for positive change suggests that increased self-awareness over time may have helped Ben to feel more equipped to deal with these challenging situations.

Receiving Individual/ Targeted support

Ben reflects on the impact of receiving targeted academic support during his Year 6 phase, such as being given opportunities to “*do the work separately*” (10). An important aspect of this support appears to be staff getting to know Ben well and thus being able to offer the support that worked best for him: “*Because they knew I didn’t like the lessons they just broke it up into little bits and eventually did the lesson*” (10). Ben also reflects on the importance of receiving targeted support in relation helping him to be less ‘hot-headed’: “*It’s when I got counselling for my behaviour; that helped*” (40).

Sibling Support

Ben reflects upon not experiencing any worries prior to KS2-3 transition due to having siblings already in school: “*I had my sisters here and my brother. So, I didn’t have to be like, nervous, to go up there*” (secondary school) (13).

Positive Pupil-teacher Relationships

Ben recalls being introduced to a learning mentor who had on the first day of Year 7. Ben goes on to describe seeking the support of this adult and receiving reassurance following a fight in the first week of Year 7: “*When I had the fight in the first week, I went straight to her and spoke to her, and she was like, ‘it’s alright’*” (17). Ben also notes the positive impact of staff in his Year 6 setting knowing him well and recognising, through his behaviour, when he needed support: “*When they used to take me out for walks when they knew I was about to, I used to throw pencils at peoples’ heads* (11).

4.11. Summary of findings

Research question one: What are the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools?

The narratives constructed by each participant suggest varied KS2-3 transition experiences. Two of the narratives (Oliver and Jack) appear to be in line with that of a Romantic-saga plotline where regressive and progressive phases culminate in positive endings. There appear to be similarities in the factors associated with points of progression within these narratives. For example, receiving adult support and having opportunities for familiarisation with a new setting appear to be linked to points of progression. However, points of regression appear to occur at different phases for each of these participants. For example, Oliver appears to experience regression at the start of his Year 7 phase, whereas for Jack, this phase is associated with significant progression. Ben's narrative is relatively more regressive than Oliver and Jack and may be loosely comparable to that of a Tragic plotline, where points of initial progression are followed by a sudden regression. However, Ben's plotline appears to suggest a more gradual regression over time than that of an archetypal Tragic plotline. Ben's evaluation of school appears to be largely negative throughout each phase of the narrative. A process of gradual regression appears to be linked to factors such as interpersonal difficulties such as conflict with peers. It is notable that a significant point of progression for Ben appears to be COVID lockdown, where he appears to positively evaluate this time spent away from school.

Research question 2: What are the risk and protective factors associated with KS2-3 transition for young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools?

The narratives suggest a number of risk and protective factors, which appear to be linked to varied points of progression and regression in the participants' evaluations of their school experience.

Protective factors linked to organisational supports were suggested, such as experiencing summer school and having opportunities to visit a new setting prior to transition. Protective factors linked to the academic aspects of transition include having opportunities to experience a suitable level of increased academic challenge in Year 6 prior to transition and experiencing continuity of academic support.

Individual perceptions of academic needs and abilities emerged as both risk and protective factors in Oliver's account. For example, Oliver appeared to experience difficulties in relation to meeting the academic demands of summer school and Year 7. However, he also appeared to demonstrate a level of academic self-awareness which appeared to be associated with positive outcomes. Awareness of and positive engagement with the increased academic opportunities of secondary also appeared to be a protective factor for Oliver. For Jack and Ben, experiencing behaviour sanctions such as detentions, internal and fixed-term exclusions and managed moves appeared to be risk factors associated with negative evaluation of school experience. Furthermore, both participants appeared to reflect upon the ineffectiveness of these interventions.

Interpersonal aspects of transition appeared to represent both risk and protective factors for all participants. Positive pupil-teacher relationships and feeling understood appeared to be protective factors. However, negative pupil teacher relationships appeared to be a risk factor for Ben. Peer relationships also appeared to represent both risk and protective factors. Opportunities to develop positive relationships both prior to and following the transition from primary to secondary school appeared to be a protective factor. However, experiencing conflict with peers appeared to be a risk factor. The influence of peers was also noted as an apparent risk factor in Ben's narrative where disengagement from learning appeared to be influenced by peers. Similarly, the influence of peers was seen in Jack's experience of feeling worried in

relation to negative rumours about secondary school shared by his peers prior to transition.

5. Discussion and Reflections

5.1. Introduction

This chapter will attempt to discuss the findings in relation to existing research and theoretical perspectives.

The findings will be discussed in relation to each of the research questions in an attempt to explore and understand both the form and content of the narratives shared by participants in relation to their KS2-3 transition experiences.

The current research adopted a narrative orientated inquiry, which is an open-ended method of inquiry. The themes which emerged through data analysis were examined through an inductive approach but linked to findings of previous research. Whilst this allowed the researcher to counterbalance inductivity against an open-ended method of inquiry, it is likely that some subconscious deductive reasoning may have been applied. As such, this represents a potential limitation to the data analysis procedure.

5.2. Research Question One: What are the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools?

The narratives constructed by participants appeared to show some consistency with romantic saga (Oliver and Jack) and regressive/ tragic plotlines (Ben). The similarities and differences within the structure of each plotline will now be explored by examining shared points of progression and regression across each narrative.

5.2.1 Shared Points of Regression

Pre-transition Worries

Each of the narratives referred to experiencing worries prior to transition. For Oliver and Jack key points of regression appear to be related to pre-transition worries which occurred towards the end of Year 6 and into the summer holiday phase. Ben reflected on not feeling any worries during his Year 6 phase however, pre-transition worries related to anticipated peer conflict appeared to emerge towards the end of his summer holiday phase. These experiences are in line with previous studies which suggest that pre-transition worries are a fairly common occurrence for all pupils (Ashton, 2008; Jindal- Snape, 2008,2010; Jindal-Snape & Cantali, 2019; Jindal-Snape & Foggie, 2008; Zeedyk et al., 2003).

Jack's worries appear to be linked to two phases of regression. Firstly, Jack comments on initial feelings of nervousness which were alleviated following a visit to his new school during Year 6. However, further feelings of worry related to bullying in secondary school appeared to emerge during the Summer Holiday phase. Jack attributes these worries to rumours shared by peers in primary school. Jack's experience here appears consistent with previous research which suggests that prior to transition, young people's impressions of secondary school are often fragmented and partly influenced by information gathered from peers. As such, young people may often develop anticipatory worries which may be linked to 'horror stories' shared by peers (Jindal-Snape & Foggie, 2008; Lucey & Reay, 2000).

Studies suggest that pre-transition worries are often balanced with feelings of excitement in anticipation of factors such as increased academic and social opportunities in secondary school (Lucey & Reay, 2000; Waters et al., 2014a). This appears to be in line with Oliver's narration where pre-transition worries in relation to making friends and feeling understood by teachers were balanced with excitement and optimism in relation to increased academic opportunities and opportunities to make new friends. However, Ben and Jack's narrations suggest that their pre-transition worries in relation to peer conflict and bullying were not balanced with feelings of excitement or optimism. This may be indicative of both Jack and Ben's evaluations of school experience during their Year 6 phase, which appeared to be

comparatively lower than Oliver's. Previous studies also indicate that high levels of reported pre-transition worries may be associated with increased likelihood of reporting a negative KS2-3 transition experience (Jindal-Snape & Cantali, 2019; Rice et al., 2011; Waters et al., 2014a) and poorer social adaptation in the first year of KS3 (Nowland & Qualter, 2020). This appears to be in line with Ben and Jack's narratives which appear to be characterised by comparatively more negative experiences following the transition to Year 7. For example, experiencing conflict with peers and experiencing behavioural sanctions such as fixed-term exclusion. However, a direct link between these pre-transition worries and subsequent experience cannot be established.

Initial Adjustment to Year 7

Each of the narratives indicate an initial period of regression during the Year 7 phase. Within Ben and Jack's narratives, points of regression appear to be related to interpersonal difficulties such as feeling victimised by peers. These difficulties appear to be associated with experiencing subsequent behavioural sanctions such as internal and fixed-term exclusions. These experiences are consistent with previous studies which suggest that indicate that instances of both bullying, and aggression amongst peers often increase during KS2-3 transition, particularly between male pupils (Jindal-snape & Foggie, 2008; Pellegrini & Long, 2020).

Ben's trajectory appears to suggest a process of further regression throughout his KS3 experience, as indicated by further peer conflict, further disengagement from learning (e.g., skipping lessons), and experiencing further behavioural sanctions such as managed moves (this factor will be discussed in greater depth within section 5.3.4.). Previous studies have also suggested that difficulties experienced during KS2-3 transition such as conflict with peers may be associated with a process of disengagement from learning which is sustained over time (O'Connor, et al. 2011; Caslin, 2019; Trotman et al., 2015). However, it is worth noting that Ben appeared to experience similar difficulties during his primary phase, therefore it would be

an over-simplification to suggest that these difficulties were directly linked to his KS2-3 transition experience.

The point of regression at the beginning of Oliver's Year 7 phase appeared to be associated with worries about making new friends and whether he would be understood by staff. This appears consistent with previous studies which suggest that these worries are salient for many young people following transition to KS3 (Dismore & Bailey, 2010; Jindal-Snape & Foggie, 2008; Hammond, 2016). For Oliver, this regression appears to be relatively short and is followed by a point of progression which will be discussed in more depth within the following section.

5.2.2. Shared Points of Progression

Familiarisation with KS3 Setting

Oliver's narrative appears to suggest a significant progression following his experience of summer school. This progression is indicated by Oliver's reflections on the importance of establishing familiarity with new staff and peers, and he directly links these experiences to positive outcomes such as increased feelings of excitement and reducing worries prior to transition. There appears to be little existing research exploring the impact of summer schools on supporting KS2-3 transition experience. However, Oliver's experience is consistent with Tobell (2003) who found that pupils who attended a summer school reported that this experience supported their KS2-3 transition in terms of familiarity with new staff and their new school environment. Oliver's narrative also indicates experiences similar to those found in previous research which suggests that initial transition worries often subside following a period of adjustment in Year 7 (Brown et al., 2004; Graham & Hill, 2003; Symonds & Galton, 2014; Topping, 2011; West et al., 2010). Oliver cites gaining familiarity with formal aspects of the school such

as his timetable, and school rules, as well as getting to know teachers and feeling understood as factors which helped to alleviate these initial worries.

Jack's narrative suggests a significant progression related to familiarisation with his KS3 setting during Year 6. Jack recalls the impact of this visit to his secondary school on reducing his pre-transition worries. However, this period of progression is not sustained over time, as Jack recalls worries about bullying then emerging during the summer holiday phase which he attributes to negative rumours shared by peers. In line with previous studies (Jindal-Snape & Foggie, 2008), this may suggest, the impact of peer influence in relation to pre- transition worries.

5.3. Research question two: What are the risk and protective factors associated with key stage 2-3 transition for young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools?

This section will explore interpretations drawn from the narratives in relation to research question two. The factors identified will be discussed in relation to current literature and theoretical perspectives. As certain factors appear to represent either risk or protective factors for different participants, the factors will be discussed without this differentiation.

5.3.1. Peer Relationships

Each of the participants referred to peer relationships during their narratives. This accords with previous studies which indicate that peer relationships are particularly relevant for young people during KS2-3 transition, more so than organisational and academic aspects of the transition (Jindal-Snape et al., 2020; Spernes, 2022). Young people who report high levels of perceived peer support and peer acceptance have been found to be more likely to report a positive KS2-3 transition experience (Vaz et al., 2015; Waters et al., 2014). For example, Oliver's account suggests that establishing positive

relationships with new friends during summer school helped to reduce pre-transition worries and support positive adjustment in Year 7.

Research suggests that, particularly for males, bullying and aggression amongst peers often increases during the key stage 2-3 transition as pupils attempt to assert dominance within a new peer group (Pellegrini & Long, 2002). Both Ben and Jack refer to several experiences of conflict with peers and experiencing peer victimisation. For both, this appeared to be associated with negative outcomes such as fixed-term exclusion. The identity positioning adopted by both participants when narrating their experiences of peer conflict appear to suggest a victim rather than perpetrator role. Similarly, both participants described their role in peer conflict as being in retaliation to being victimised by others. This is similar to findings by Morgan and Sheffield (2020) who found that note that many young people with SEMH needs who experienced conflict with others appeared to distance themselves from their behaviours in response to the actions of others.

Jack's narration suggests that he initially showed reluctance to establish peer relationships during Year 7. Jack links this initial reluctance to disliking "*having lots of people around me*" (18). However, he goes on to describe eventually making friends. In terms of Resilience, this is notable as peer support has been cited a protective factor in the prevention of bullying during KS2-3 transition (Lester et al., 2012).

The influences of peer relationships are evident in Ben's narrative where he describes engagement in behaviours such as skipping lessons as being peer influenced. When discussing these experiences, Ben also appears to adopt an 'us and them' identity positioning in regard to teachers, with the 'us' representing Ben and his peer group. For some young people, difficulties encountered during KS2-3 transition such as negative pupil-teacher relationships and experiences of bullying can be a catalyst for the creation of an informal peer hierarchy and alliance with anti-establishment peer groups (Farouk, 2017; Thacker, 2017). It has been suggested that alliance with such groups may offer young people an opportunity to feel a sense of belonging

and self-esteem, particularly when they feel unable to obtain positive recognition through traditional routes such as academic achievements or positive pupil-teacher relationships (Farouk, 2017). However, it is worth noting that Ben's narration includes reference to alliance with similar peer groups during his Year 6 phase. As such, it cannot be assumed that this experience is unique to his secondary school experience or related to factors associated with KS2-3 transition. However, Ben's narrative appears to correspond with previous studies which suggest that behaviours which were adopted during KS3 to gain recognition from peers are often sustained throughout the participants school experience and are associated with experiencing negative outcomes such as exclusion (Trotman et al., 2015).

5.3.2. *Pupil-Teacher Relationships*

The findings of the current study appear to correspond with previous research which indicates that pupil-teacher relationships may act as both a risk and protective factor during KS2-3 transition depending on the characteristics of these relationships (Caslin, 2019; Coffey, 2013; Hopwood et al., 2016; Jindal-Snape et al., 2019, 2020; Longobardi et al., 2016).

Oliver reflected upon the relationships he had developed with teaching staff over Years 5 and 6 and cited a sense of closeness and feeling understood as positive aspects of these relationships. He also reflects upon experiencing a similar sense of feeling understood and supported by staff in secondary school which appeared to be associated with a reduction in pre-transition worries and positive engagement with learning. This corresponds with previous studies which suggest the importance of perceived teacher support in supporting positive evaluations of school and academic engagement during KS2-3 transition (Frey et al., 2008; Ganeson & Ehrich, 2009).

The adjustment from having close relationships with staff in primary school to having a greater number of subject specific teachers in secondary school can often be challenging (Tobbell & O'Donnell, 2003). This appears to be the case from Oliver as seen in his pre-transition worries. However, Oliver also

appears to demonstrate an awareness that pupil-teacher relationships in KS3 may not have the same level of closeness as those experienced during KS2 due to practical reasons such as school size. This appears to suggest a 'transfer paradox' which is proposed to be integral to a positive KS2-3 transition, where achievement of age-appropriate autonomy entails a reduction in the level of support experienced in primary school (Hallinan & Hallinan, 1992; Lucey and Reay, 2000).

Young people with SEMH needs have identified negative pupil-teacher relationships as a catalyst for disengagement from learning and challenging behaviours (Caslin, 2019, 2020; Clarke et al., 2011; Cosma & Soni, 2019; Dimitrellou & Male, 2019). Ben's narrative appears to suggest that some pupil-teacher relationships may have influenced negative outcomes during his Year 6 phase such as engagement in challenging behaviours and disengagement with classroom learning. For example, Ben cites relationships with school staff as factor influencing his behaviour. However, Ben also describes his relationships with staff during this time as "*hit and miss*" and is also able to reflect upon positive aspects of pupil-teacher relationships during this time. These more positive relationships appear to be characterised by aspects of support indicative of staff who knew Ben well such as recognising his academic difficulties and pre-empting when he may have needed a break from lessons based on cues from his behaviour. Again, this may emphasise that it is the characteristics of pupil-teacher relationships which act as either as a risk or protective factor during KS2-3 transition. Ben offers little evaluative data in relation to relationships with teachers in general during his KS3 phase. However, his narration offers insights which suggest negative pupil-teacher interactions such as running away from teachers, being shouted at by teachers, and experiencing a fixed-term exclusion which appeared to be related to disagreement with a teacher. It also appears that behaviours which emerged during Year 6 which appeared to be associated with pupil-teacher relationships (e.g., running away from teachers) were sustained across the KS3 phase. This may suggest that a process of disengagement which was already established in Year 6 continued across Key stage 3. However, it is unclear to what extent pupil-teacher relationships

exacerbated this trajectory. For example, Ben did not offer any insight within his narration into additional factors associated with classroom engagement such as academic difficulties. Furthermore, the influence of peers is also noted by Ben as a factor influencing engagement in learning during KS3.

Comparison between these narratives suggest, in line with previous research (Waters et al., 2014), that positive pupil-teacher relationships in KS2 appeared to be associated with positive connections in KS3 and vice versa. This may suggest the importance of young people who are identified as having difficult pupil-teacher relationships during KS2 being supported develop positive relationships with staff during KS2-3 transition in order to avoid further disengagement.

5.3.3. *Reflective Summary*

The factors discussed above appear to suggest the importance of relational factors during KS2-3 transition. However, an important relational factor missing from each narrative is the influence of parents/ guardians. The association between factors such as positive parent-child relationships and parental support during KS2-3 transition has been suggested in previous studies (Vaz et al., 2015; Waters et al., 2014). The informant style interview adopted within the current research was selected to allow participants to highlight the factors they felt were important and were comfortable in sharing. Furthermore, the participants were aware that the focus of the current study was to explore their school experiences. As such, parental factors may not have been viewed as relevant by participants or they may have preferred not to share these factors within the context of the current study.

A further consideration is that each participants chose to have a familiar member of staff present during the interview. As such, the presence of this additional person has implication for the interpretation of the constructed narratives in general. However, the presence of a member of school staff may hold particular significance when interpreting participant views in relation to

relationships in school. For example, it may be that participants felt uncomfortable in discussing particular pupil teacher relationships in the presence of a member of school staff. Furthermore, participants may have felt an obligation to rate current relationships with staff and school experiences in general more favourably due to the presence of this member of staff (See section 6.2.1. for further discussion).

5.3.4. Punitive Responses to Behaviour

Experiences of behavioural sanctions appeared frequently throughout Jack and Ben's narratives and appeared to define entire phases of their school experience. For example, Ben summarises his Year 8 phase as follows: "*Basically, got kicked out, well excluded, eleven times in Year 8*" (5). Jack's summary of his Year 7 phase suggests a similar focus on behavioural sanctions: "*I got expelled about three times and I had loads of internals and about 62 detentions. But other than that, I love Year 7*" (5). Both narratives suggest a trajectory of experiencing frequent behavioural sanctions which appeared to increase in severity over time. This suggests that experiencing repeated punitive responses to behaviour may have offered little value in terms of guidance or as a deterrent. This is similar to findings of previous studies which indicate that punitive responses to behaviour such as detentions are often viewed by young people with SEMH needs as being inconsequential in terms of a deterrent and offering little guidance in relation to meeting behavioural expectations (Caslin, 2021; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). The apparent lack of effectiveness of repeated behavioural sanctions has been emphasised by Oxley (2015) who comments that "If this system was successful in changing behaviour, there would be no need for this cycle of repetition" (p. 115).

Studies have also found that more severe behavioural sanctions such as internal and fixed term exclusions are often viewed as ineffective by young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools. In addition, they are often associated with feelings of frustration due to missed opportunities for

classroom learning and social interaction (Caslin, 2019; Dimitrellou & Male, 2019; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). In contrast to this, Ben and Jack's narratives appear to indicate that experiences of fixed term and internal exclusions were viewed favourably as they provided opportunities for time away from lessons and engaging in preferred activities such as gaming. The ineffectiveness of internal exclusions has been suggested in previous studies which have found that whilst apparent improvements in behaviour and academic engagement are noted within the context of internal exclusion units, these suggested outcomes are often not sustained over time or generalised to the classroom setting (Barker, 2010; Fripps, 2011). This may be seen in Ben's descriptions of two manged moves, where he was situated in an internal exclusion unit. Here, Ben's narrative suggests these experiences offered little immediate or long-term educational value and appear to be characterised by feelings of isolation, missed educational opportunities, and boredom.

The apparent internalisation of negative labels associated with challenging behaviour and experiencing behavioural sanctions has been noted in previous studies exploring the views of young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools (Caslin, 2019; Dimitrellou & Male, 2019; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). It has been suggested that internalisation of these labels can often lead to young people with SEMH needs feeling unfairly stigmatised and defined by these labels (Caslin, 2019). This may be reflected in some of the self-descriptive language used by narrators within the current study, such as 'naughty', 'hot-headed' and 'dumb'. The internalisation of these negative labels has also been linked to some young people feeling disliked and unwanted in school (Sheffield & Morgan, 2017). This feeling of being unwanted in school may be apparent in Ben's use of the term "kicked out" which he uses twice within his narrative to refer to his experience of fixed-term exclusion. Furthermore, the internalisation of the negative narratives of adults may be apparent in Ben's reflection, (which he cites as being relayed to him by teachers) that his time away from school due to COVID lockdown ultimately prevented him being permanently excluded.

5.3.5. *Reflective Summary*

The punitive approaches experienced by each of these participants appear to be aligned with a within-child understanding of behaviour (Frederickson & Cline, 2015). The repetition of these approaches and their increasing severity over time could suggest a response to behaviour where the goal was to influence unwanted behaviours through negative reinforcement (i.e., behavioural sanctions). From a Resilience framework, this response may therefore be seen as discounting the influence of external risk factors on behaviour. For example, the narratives included within the current study which suggest a number of external factors within the young people's immediate environment such as conflict with peers, difficult relationships with staff, experiencing academic challenge were often associated with behaviours which resulted in behavioural sanctions.

5.4. Individual Factors

5.4.1. *Social Skills*

Positive social skills have been identified as being an important factor in supporting outcomes such as positive adjustment and a sense of school connectedness (Wargo-Aikins et al., 2005; Tomada et al., 2005). Oliver's narrative suggests both a motivation to develop new relationships with peers and staff in school and an ability to establish and maintain these relationships over time. Furthermore, the development of these positive relationships appeared to support positive aspects of transition such as increased excitement and a reduction in pre-transition worries. This may suggest the importance of positive social skills as a protective factor supporting Oliver's resilience during KS2-3 transition.

5.4.2. *Dispositional Optimism and Imagined Future Selves*

Oliver's narration suggests experiences of both worries and optimism prior to transition. However, throughout his narrative Oliver appears to adopt a reflective tone which suggests that worries may have often been counterbalanced by dispositional optimism. For example, "*it's a bit sad but you know you've got your summer holidays and you've got to wait for your summer school, which is quite nice*" (3). An important factor supporting this optimism appears to be Oliver's anticipation of the increased academic opportunities in Year 7. This is in line with previous studies which suggest that having opportunities to engage in new and interesting topics and experiencing a more diverse curriculum is an important factor in supporting a positive KS2-3 transition (Ganeson & Ehrich, 2009; Neal & Frederickson, 2016).

Although Ben recalls feeling optimistic about KS2-3 transition due to having siblings in secondary school, his narration suggests a negative view of his future self in the form of worries about peer conflict due to being 'hot-headed'. Similarly, Jack appears to report lower levels of pre-transition optimism such as worries in relation to bullying. Clearly, a reciprocal relationship between these pre-transition worries and experiencing difficulties during KS2-3 transition cannot be assumed. However, these experiences may suggest findings similar to previous research which suggest that factors such as dispositional optimism (Boman & Yates, 2001), and positive views about future selves (Wargo-Aikins et al., 2005) may act as protective factors supporting a positive KS2-3 transition experience.

5.4.3. *Academic Self-Concept*

A systematic review of international studies exploring psychological development during KS2-3 transition by Symonds & Galton (2014) indicates that young people experience varied trajectories of increases, decreases and stability in academic self-concept during KS2-3 transition. These trajectories appear unrelated to variables such as sample size and ethnicity. It has been suggested that pupils construct academic self-concept through information

such as achievement feedback (e.g., grades) and the appraisals of others (e.g., teachers, peers) (Gniewosz, 2012). Due to inherent changes in academic demands, pedagogical approaches, and peer relationships, these sources of feedback may alter during KS2-3 transition (Symonds & Galton, 2014). As such, KS2-3 transition may reflect a period of both instability and reconstruction in relation to academic self-concept (Doddington et al., 1999).

Oliver's narration suggests a period of adjustment denoted by worries in relation to increased academic challenge and being understood by staff. However, this is followed by a period of progression which Oliver appears to associate with factors such as feeling understood by staff, adjustment to mixed-ability sets, and finding motivation in the subjects that he loves. This suggests that these factors may have offered Oliver sources of information that helped him to re-construct a seemingly positive academic self-evaluation during this time of change. For example, Oliver's current levels of positive academic self-concept may be reflected in his wish to move up ability sets, if the correct support was in place. However, studies also suggest the influence of a number of additional sources of information such as peer and parent appraisal on self-evaluation of competency (Gniewosz, 2012). Therefore, these potential protective factors may represent just a selection of a greater number of protective factors which were not alluded to by Oliver during narration.

5.4.4. Reflective Summary

This section suggests the importance of individual protective factors such as social skills, dispositional optimism, and positive views about future selves. However, viewing these factors as inherent, stable constructs may risk adopting a 'within-child' standpoint (Frederickson & Cline, 2015). In keeping with a Resilience framework, it will be important to consider the potential interplay between external factors and the development and maintenance of these suggested internal risk and protective factors. For example, Oliver's narrative suggests a level of positive social skills may have been important in developing and maintaining peer relationships prior to transition. It is also

worth considering the external factors which may have supported the development of these relationships such as experiencing smaller class sizes in primary school and having the opportunity to attend a summer school prior to transition. Furthermore, the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the developmental trajectories of each participant may also be relevant. For example, Jack reports time away from school due to self-isolation towards the end of Year 6. It may be that this impacted on his opportunity to engage in transition preparation, thus impacting on his pre-transition worries. Whilst the extent to which these external factors supported the development of these relationships is unclear, it could suggest the importance of considering the interplay between both internal and environmental protective factors in supporting resilience during KS2-3 transition.

Furthermore, comparisons between internal factors such as dispositional optimism may discount the influence of external factors such as prior school experiences. For example, a key theoretical consideration may be the concept of Hostile Attribution Intent (HIA). HIA is the tendency to attribute hostile intent to others in ambiguous social situations (Verhoef et al., 2019, p.525). Studies exploring HIA in adolescent populations suggest that young people who have been exposed to adverse experiences such as peer rejection and bullying may be more likely to anticipate aggression and hostility in others (Dodge et al., 2003; Lansford et al., 2010). For example, it may be that Jack's pre-transition worries regarding bullying were partially influenced by experiencing the risk factor of peer victimisation in Year 6. Therefore, he may have been more vulnerable to internalising negative pre-transition rumours regarding bullying shared by peers. Given these factors, it may be that Jack was therefore less likely to utilise the protective factor of dispositional optimism to mediate the effects of these worries (Boman & Yates, 2001).

6. Reflections and Implications

6.1. Participant Sample

The current study did not adopt a positivist methodology; therefore, transferability, rather than external validity was sought. Transferability of findings is supported through providing contextual information which allows the reader to determine whether findings may be transferable to their own context (Firestone, 1993; Polit & Beck, 2010). This has been provided in the current study through information regarding participants age, needs, locale, and school history. However, there are a number of issues regarding the participant sample which limits the generalisability of findings.

Information regarding young people's socio-economic status was not made available to the researcher which means the potential impact of socio-economic background upon participant experiences is unknown. Although each participant was identified as being supported via an EHCP plan for SEMH needs, information regarding additional special educational needs was not provided to the researcher. This therefore represents a significant limitation in that the potential impact of additional areas of need (e.g., Cognition and Learning) cannot be accounted for within the current study.

Due to participants volunteering for involvement, it may be that the sample represents young people who felt confident in sharing their views in a formal interview setting with an unfamiliar adult. It is also possible that young people who did not wish to share their views in via an informant style interview may have shared different experiences to those included within the current study if a methodology more accessible to them had been available.

It is also notable that the current study included a small, all-male sample from a White-British ethnic background. It is possible that participants from different genders or ethnic backgrounds other than White British may have experienced varied school experiences and therefore provided very different narratives regarding their KS2-3 transition experience. Furthermore, given

the wide range of individual needs and presentations which can fall under the umbrella term of SEMH (DfE, 2015), this study cannot claim generalisability to a wider SEMH population.

One of the participants (Ben) was previously known to the researcher through the researcher's role as a TEP. The influence of this prior involvement on the narrative constructed on the day cannot be ruled out. For example, the participant's understanding of the role of TEP may have influenced the nature of the information they felt the researcher wanted to hear. Furthermore, Ben may have omitted aspects of their narrative under the assumption that the researcher was already in receipt of this knowledge due to prior involvement. The implications for a potential power imbalance within this dynamic can also not be ignored given that the participant was aware that the researcher held knowledge regarding their personal circumstances prior to data collection. Several steps were taken to address these issues. Firstly, data collection adopted an informant style interview, meaning that only information the participants felt comfortable in sharing was provided within the interview. Secondly, the rules and procedure of NOI were closely followed to avoid the researcher imposing language or their own agenda on the narratives. Finally, differentiation between the researcher's roles as a TEP and researcher were also clearly articulated to this participant and their parent prior to data collection and this information was repeated in person to the participant on the day of the interview.

6.2. Reflections on Data Collection

6.2.1. *Expectations of the Interview*

Jovchelovitch & Bauer (2000) suggest that participants may often approach the interview with hypotheses regarding what they feel the researcher wants to hear and may offer a 'purposeful account' to address the needs of the researcher. For example, the participants were made aware within the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix 7) that one of the hoped-for outcomes of the research was to gain insights to help other young people

experiencing KS2-3 transition in future. Participants may therefore have felt compelled to focus on specific aspects of their KS2-3 transition experience in order to help with addressing this goal.

Jovchelovitch & Bauer (2000) also suggest that researchers should be aware of the 'strategic element' of narratives, whereby participants may attempt to position themselves in a particular light through their narration. The narratives included within the current study include references to experiences which may have been difficult to discuss, particularly with an unfamiliar adult. It may be that the participants wished to portray themselves in a particular light in regard to these events, which may have influenced the content of their narration. Furthermore, it is worth noting that each of the participants chose to have a member of staff with them during the interview. As such, they may have felt compelled to discuss aspects of their school experience more favourably due to the presence of an adult representing the school.

These limitations are acknowledged within the constructivist paradigm adopted by the current study. Constructivism recognises that narratives are socially constructed and influenced by social contexts and the narrator-audience relationship (Murray, 2003). Furthermore, the constructivist paradigm acknowledges the relationship between researcher and participant and how this may impact on the knowledge created (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Furthermore, narrative analysis acknowledges the 'unfinished' nature of any narrative and recognises that meanings drawn by researchers from narrative analysis cannot claim to be final due to their potential for alteration in future narratives (Wertz, et al., 2011).

6.2.2. *The Rules of Narrative Interviewing*

Jovchelovitch & Bauer (2000) also highlight that the rules for a narrative interview outline an ideal procedure which is difficult to achieve in practice. A reflection from the current study is that some participants appeared to respond more readily than others to the Main Narration phase, whereas some participants appeared to benefit from researcher prompts during the

Questioning phase in order to provide richer data and to fill in 'blanks' within their narration. The researcher endeavoured to put participants ease through informal conversation and rapport building prior to the interview. Despite this, the Main Narration phase may have been daunting for young people who were not experienced in being asked to narrate their experiences in this way. In line with the narrative interview guidance, the researcher attempted to limit imposing themselves upon the narration through the use of questions which were grounded in the language used by the participants. On reflection, this was not always possible to adhere to fully 'in the moment' as time spent formulating grounded in participant language may have been detrimental to the 'flow' of the interview. As such, the impact of the researcher's language on the construction of the narratives cannot be fully excluded.

6.3. Reflections on Data Analysis

The methods used to analyse the data were given careful consideration in order to ensure participant views were adequately explored and presented. Two methods of analysis (categorical-content and holistic-form) were chosen in order to explore both the form and content of each narrative. The interpretive nature of these approaches represents a limitation due to the fact that the same set of data may have been interpreted differently by another researcher (Hiles & Čermák, 2017). Namely, the researcher's role as a TEP means that the direction of the current study and interpretations of data will inevitably have been influenced by their prior experiences and own views and beliefs regarding education. As discussed, the Constructivist paradigm of the current study acknowledges the relationship between researcher and the knowledge created (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Stivers (1993) proposes that, in relation to narrative analysis, "There is no such thing as removing the observer from the knowledge acquisition process, since to do so would be like trying to see without eyes" (p. 410). This limitation was addressed throughout the research process through reflexive approaches which will be discussed in the following section. The subjective nature of narrative analysis may also risk the participants voice being lost amongst the interpretations of the researcher (Murray, 2003). In order to ensure transparency, the

researcher attempted to consistently make clear links between all interpretations and the original data, including illustrative extracts.

6.4. Reflexivity During Data Analysis

Hiles et al. (2009) suggest that each stage of an effective NOI should be open to critical reflexivity. In order to ensure critical reflexivity, the researcher kept a reflective diary (see Appendix 19 for an illustrative extract). This involved periodically recording thoughts, actions, and feelings throughout the research process. The purpose of this exercise was to explore, from a constructivist perspective, how these thoughts, feeling, actions may have influenced the researcher's individual standpoint throughout the research process. This diary was referred to prior to the data analysis stage to ensure reflections captured during previous stages were brought to the foreground and considered in the analysis process.

6.4.1. *Holistic-form Analysis*

This issue of transparency was of particular relevance during holistic-form analysis. For example, whilst participant statements denoting points of progression and regression are justified through links to the original data and illustrative extracts, these remain the interpretations of the researcher. On reflection, the visual trajectories presented by the researcher may have been supported by adapting the visual life-grid. For example, it may have been beneficial to allow participants to plot points of progression and regression themselves during the interview process in order to increase credibility and enhance co-construction of findings. Guba and Lincoln (1985) propose that the credibility of findings can be increased through member checks whereby the constructions of the researcher are tested with those they were originally collected from to ensure they represent adequate depictions. It has also been suggested that gaining these reflections from participants may be a source of further theoretical insight (Riessman, 2002). This step was not undertaken in

the current study, therefore, a limitation in terms of credibility is that the narrative trajectories interpreted and presented visually by the researcher may differ from the trajectories the participants intended to convey through their narration. To address this, the researcher strove, in line with (Stivers, 1993), to make clear distinctions throughout the study between their own views and interpretations and those of participants.

Lieblich et al. (1998) suggest that whilst holistic-form analysis is a useful tool for representing sizeable amounts of narrative material in a clear, visual form, the tendency for the approach to reduce large amounts of narrative data may restrict extensive use. Thus, the use of categorical-content analysis alongside this approach was felt to address this issue. As Lieblich et al. (1998) suggest “None of the approaches described in our model, however, is as productive alone as in combination with the other ways of reading a life story”.

6.4.2. *Categorical-content Analysis*

Lieblich et al. (1998) suggest that a potential limitation of categorical-content analysis is that the extraction of categories may discount contextual factors which “convey the richness and depth of the narrative material”. The inclusion of full transcripts may have addressed this issue; however, due to the small sample size and sensitive nature of the topics discussed, it was decided that the inclusion of full transcripts may potentially compromise participants’ anonymity. The importance of anonymity in narrative research has been emphasised by Andrews et al. (2008). Furthermore, it has been suggested that researchers should aim to ensure internal confidentiality (avoiding participants being identified by personal or contextual information), when presenting qualitative data (Tolich, 2004). In line with these considerations, only a sample extract has been included within the current study (see Appendix 20). This is therefore considered to be a potential limitation of the current study.

The open-ended informant style interview used during the data collection was selected as it allows participants to share aspects of the aspects of their narrative which are most important to them and which they feel most comfortable in sharing. The risk and protective factors interpreted through categorical content analysis appear to be largely limited to school-based factors. Previous research suggests that a range of individual and environmental risk and protective factors may influence outcomes during KS2-3 transition (Armstrong et al., 2005; Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008; Masten, 2001). As such, the influence of additional factors which have been suggested as being important influences in KS2-3 transition experiences such as prior-attainment (West et al., 2010) and family support (Jindal-snape et al., 2020; Spernes, 2022) are unknown. Considering the suggested importance of considering risk and protective factors in conjunction with each other, rather than in isolation (Gore & Eckenrode, 1994), the potential lack of data regarding additional factors may be a limitation of the current study. Thus, the risk and protective factors identified through categorical-content analysis are not presented as being exhaustive. They are instead suggested as factors which may interact with a range of additional individual and environmental factors within unique contexts.

6.5. Implications of the Current Research

6.5.1. Implications for Educational Psychologists

It has been suggested that Educational Psychologists are in a unique position in to capture, and advocate for, the views of young people in order to help promote positive changes (Ingram, 2013). The importance of capturing young people's views is also emphasised in legislation and guidance, such as the Children and Families Act (DfE, 2014) and the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015), which stipulates the requirement for the promotion of pupil voice. Tellis-James & Fox (2016) suggest that the use of narrative approaches may helpfully support EPs wishing to elicit the views of young people with SEMH needs. It is argued that the current study may support this

suggestion by demonstrating that rich data, which may help to promote positive outcomes, can be gained by adopting narrative approaches with young people with SEMH needs.

It has been suggested that a challenge for EPs may be in ensuring they provide accurate interpretations of young people's views in order to avoid disempowering them (Ingram, 2013). It is argued that the informant style interview adopted by the current research allowed young people to share the views and experiences they felt most comfortable in sharing, and which felt most relevant to their experiences. Therefore, adopting open ended narrative interviews may support EPs wishing to capture young people's views in an unencumbered manner.

Capturing pupil views may also help to empower young people and improve outcomes in their lives (Smillie & Newtown, 2020). Young people with SEMH needs, particularly those who have experienced PE, can often encounter fragmented and chaotic experiences (Caslin, 2021). Therefore, the use of a narrative methods such as a visual life-path tool may empower these young people make sense of their experiences and provide a sense of meaning and coherence. Holmegaard et al. (2015) state that 'Through narratives, the complexity in our experiences of the world is fixed into a sense of coherence and causality in terms of what caused the events and the experiences and why' (p.4).

EPs have been said to be uniquely placed to support positive outcomes for young people through working systemically (Morgan, 2006). The current study suggests that it may be beneficial for EPs to work at a systems level with schools and settings to develop policies and procedures for supporting young people during the KS2-3 transition process. Here, EPs may have a part to be play in contributing both knowledge and understanding of the evidence base around supporting effective transition as well as facilitating the development and implementation of policy and practice through systemic working with stakeholders.

6.5.2. *Implications for Schools and Settings*

The current study has highlighted a range of potential individual and environmental risk and protective factors which may have implications for young people with SEMH needs during their KS2-3 transition experience. The potential implications of some of these factors will be discussed within this section. However, the current study acknowledges, in line with a resilience framework, that these risk and protective factors do not operate in isolation, and it may be reductive to assume specific risk factors pose comparable levels of risk for all young people (Ungar, 2015). The current study suggests that it may be the interplay between these factors in unique contexts which influences young people's experiences. This may highlight the importance effective pastoral support and communication between primary and secondary settings in ensuring the needs and individual contexts of young people with SEMH needs are understood. This may allow school staff to gain a holistic understanding of the needs of young people who may be susceptible to a difficult KS2-3 transition experience so that bespoke support can be put in place.

The importance of relationships with both staff and peers have been suggested as within the current study as factors influencing the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with SEMH needs. As suggested by previous research (Spernes, 2022), the importance of these relational aspects may often be overlooked by professionals wishing to support KS2-3 transition. Previous research highlights that potentially turbulent nature of KS2-3 transition in terms of social re-adjustment. The current study has also suggested, in line with previous research that difficult relationships with staff and peers in primary school may often continue to play out during the KS2-3 transition process, resulting in negative outcomes for young people (Trotman et al., 2015; West et al., 2014).

Previous research has also suggested the importance of young people being able to form secure attachments with key adults during KS2-3 transition (Jindal-Snape & Foggie, 2008). The current study has also indicated the

importance of key relationships with key members of staff in both primary and secondary school. It may therefore be important that young people who may benefit from additional support with developing positive relationships are identified, through ongoing dialogue between primary and secondary settings. This may allow professionals to offer these young people proactive and ongoing support in being able to develop positive staff and peer relationships and navigate the potential social upheaval experienced during KS2-3 transition in order to avoid negative outcomes. As suggested by previous studies (Jindal-Snape et al., 2020), young people may benefit from planned activities which allow them to develop positive peer relationships with both staff and peers during the KS2-3 transition process. For example, the narrative of one participant within the current study may tentatively suggest the benefits of the opportunity to attend a summer school programme in supporting familiarity and the development of positive relationships during KS2-3 transition. This may suggest the importance of effective monitoring of the impact of transition support programmes and sharing good practice between schools and settings.

The current study may also suggest the limitations of adopting punitive exclusionary approaches adopted by staff in response to behaviours demonstrated by young people with SEMH needs during KS2-3 transition. As discussed, the study also suggests, in line with previous research, the potential benefits of schools gaining an understanding of the contextual influences affecting behaviour and ensuring young people develop positive relationships with staff in school (Moore et al., 2019). Research suggests that when teachers are able to gain contextual understanding of young people's needs, this can often support the use of inclusive, relationship-based approaches to challenging behaviour (Stanforth & Rose, 2020). However, it is acknowledged that teachers face considerable pressures which mean that there may often be little time to routinely embed such practices (Stevenson, 2017). Furthermore, teachers can often feel un-equipped to deal with pupils who demonstrate challenging behaviour (Mowat, 2010; Stanforth & Rose, 2020) and often leave formal training with limited guidance on the use of inclusive, rather than exclusionary practices for addressing challenging

behaviour (DfE, 2016). This may suggest the need for steps such as effective INSET training and adaptations to initial teacher training which allow teaching staff to feel more confident in adopting inclusive, relationship-based responses to young people who demonstrate challenging behaviour. As discussed, pastoral support, communication between primary and secondary settings, and adaptations to school-wide policies may also be beneficial in supporting teaching staff to respond to challenging behaviour in ways which promote inclusion and a sense of connectedness for all pupils.

6.5.3. *Implications for Future Research*

There is currently a lack of research which directly explores the views of young people with SEMH needs (Hickinbotham & Soni, 2021) and it has been claimed that young people with SEMH needs may be the “least empowered and least liked group of all” (Cooper, 2006, p. 39). Considering the potentially negative outcomes faced by young people with SEMH needs during KS2-3 transition, there is a need for further research in this area. It is argued that the current study has demonstrated that narrative approaches supported by a visual life-path tool can be used effectively to gain relatively unencumbered insights into the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with SEMH needs. Therefore, researchers wishing to explore this area further may wish to adopt a narrative approach in order to support the sharing of young people’s views.

The current study has utilised a small, all-male, White-British sample. There is currently little research which has explored the issue of diversity in relation to KS2-3 transition. Therefore, future research which aims to explore the experiences of a diverse range of participants may help to provide useful insights into how transition experiences may vary for young people with SEMH needs from diverse populations.

The lack of data regarding the influence of parental factors is noted as a limitation of the current research. There also appears to be a lack of existing

KS2-3 transition research which explores the views of parents of young people with SEMH needs. Parental factors have been noted as a significant factor influencing KS2-3 transition experiences in general (Darmody et al., 2012; Vaz et al., 2015; Waters et al., 2014). It has also been suggested that KS2-3 transition can represent periods of change for families which may have a reciprocal relationship on the experiences of both parties (Jindal-Snape et al., 2021). Therefore, future research which seeks to explore the experiences of parents of young people with SEMH needs may help to provide insights into the multiple domains within which KS2-3 transition may have an impact.

6.6. Conclusion

The current study attempted to explore and understand the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools. Narrative methods were adopted in order to address these aims and to ensure that participants were able to share their stories freely and to highlight the aspects of their experiences which were most relevant to them.

Holistic-form analysis explored the types of stories shared by young people in relation to their KS2-3 transition experiences. Comparison with existing typologies suggests that their narratives appeared to show some consistency with romantic saga and regressive/ tragic plotlines. However, these should be considered as broad comparisons as each narrative demonstrated varied points of progression and regression. The variability in participants' points of progression and regression were discussed and may highlight the need for a child-centred, contextual understanding of the needs of young people with SEMH needs during KS2-3 transition in order to support positive outcomes. Shared points of regression appeared to be linked to pre-transition worries during participants' Year 6 and Summer Holiday phases and during the initial adjustment to Year 7. Shared points of progression appeared to be linked to participants having opportunities for familiarisation with their secondary school setting.

Using resilience theory as a theoretical framework, Categorical-content analysis then explored the risk and protective factors which appeared to influence young people's KS2-3 transition experience. As with holistic-form analysis, categorical-content analysis indicates the variability in the risk and protective factors which appeared to influence participants' KS2-3 transition experiences. Factors which appeared to be consistent across the narratives included relational factors including relationships with staff and peers. It was discussed that these factors have the potential to act as either risk or protective factors depending on the context and quality of the relationships.

A risk factor which appeared to be salient within two of the narratives was the use of punitive approaches to behaviour management such as internal and fixed term exclusions. It appeared that the use of these approaches was viewed by young people as ineffective and may have been linked to feelings of disengagement and exclusion from school. Categorical-content analysis also suggested the importance of individual protective factors such as social skills, dispositional optimism, and positive views about future selves. However, it was discussed that considering these factors as operating in isolation may risk adopting a 'within-child' standpoint (Frederickson & Cline, 2015). Therefore, these factors were discussed alongside external risk and protective factors such as school context and prior education experiences which may have influenced the development and maintenance of these internal factors.

The researcher hopes that the current study may provide insights and interest for future researchers and professionals wishing to support young people with SEMH needs during KS2-3 transition. In particular, it is hoped that this study highlights the importance of relationships during KS2-3 transition for all young people, but particularly for young people who may find the potential social upheaval of KS2-3 transition difficult to cope with.

The stories shared by young people within the current study are diverse and influenced by a range of differing factors and experiences. It is hoped that this may emphasise the importance of professionals having a holistic and

contextual understanding of young needs prior to and during their KS2-3 transition experience so that individualised support can be embedded.

Each of the narrators within the current study have shared articulate and meaningful insights within their stories. It is hoped that this will emphasise the importance of young people with SEMH needs having opportunities to be active participants in research and the development of policies and practices which may impact their lives.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Search Terms Used within the Initial Search of Literature

POPULATION	CONTEXT	OUTCOME
Pupil	Transition	Experience*
Child* Children*	KS2-3 transition	Understanding
Young people*	Key stage 2-3 transition	Attribution*
Student*	Move	Meaning*
Adolescent*	Transfer	Views
Teenager*	High school	Voice
SEMH	Mainstream	Perspective*
Social Emotional and Mental Health	School	
SEBN	Secondary	
Social Emotional and Behavioural Needs	Primary	
Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties	Post-primary	
EBD	Elementary	
Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties	Middle	
BESD	Junior	
Additional Support Needs		
ASN		

Combination of Search Terms Used in Initial Search of Databases

SEMH OR Social Emotional and Mental Health OR Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties OR EBD OR Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties OR BESD OR Additional Support Needs OR ASN AND Transition OR KS2-3 transition OR Key stage 2-3 transition OR Move OR Transfer OR secondary OR High OR Mainstream OR School OR Primary OR Post-primary OR Elementary OR Middle OR Junior AND Experience* OR Understanding OR Attribution* OR Meaning* OR Views OR Voice OR Perspective*

Appendix 2. Revised Search Terms

POPULATION	CONTEXT	OUTCOME
Pupil	High school	Experience*
Child* Children*	Mainstream	Understanding
“Young people*”	School	Attribution*
Student*	Middle	Meaning*
Adolescent*	Post-primary	Views
Teenager*	Secondary	Voice
SEMH		Perspective*
Social Emotional and Mental Health		
SEBN		
Social Emotional and Behavioural Needs		
Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties		
EBD		
Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties		
BESD		
Additional Support Needs		
ASN		

Combination of Search Terms Used in Revised Search

Experience* OR Understanding OR Attribution* OR Meaning* OR Views OR
Voice OR Perspective* AND Secondary OR High school OR Mainstream OR
School OR Post-primary OR Middle AND SEMH OR Social Emotional and
Mental Health OR Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties OR EBD OR

Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties OR BESD OR Social Emotional and Behavioural Needs OR SEBN OR Additional Support Needs OR ASN OR Pupil* OR Child* OR Children* OR Young people* OR Student* OR Adolescent* OR Teenager*

Appendix 3. Overview of Inclusion and Exclusion of Studies

Secondary age participants explore views of participants in relation to their mainstream secondary school experience

Study explores views of participants in relation to their mainstream secondary school experience

Participants identified as having SEMH needs (or relevant associated label)

Peer reviewed study

Written in English

Conducted within the United Kingdom

Qualitative/ mixed methods design

Study included

Clarke et al. (2011)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nind et al. (2012)	Yes	No	Not specified	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Sellman (2009)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Dimitrellou & Male (2020)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Caslin (2021)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Caslin (2019)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sheffield & Morgan (2017)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Appendix 4. Overview of Critical Appraisal of Studies

Study

	Caslin (2019)	Caslin (2021)	Clarke et al. (2011)	Dimitrellou & May (2019)	Sheffiled & Morgan (2017)
<i>Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?</i>	3	3	3	3	3
<i>Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?</i>	3	3	3	3	3
<i>Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?</i>	3	3	2	3	3

<i>Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?</i>	3	3	2	3	3
<i>Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?</i>	3	3	2	3	3
<i>Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?</i>	2	2	3	2	0
<i>Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?</i>	3	2	2	2	2

<i>Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?</i>	2	2	1	2	3
<i>Is there a clear statement of findings?</i>	2	2	2	3	3
<i>Is the research valuable?</i>	3	3	2	3	3

Outline of CASP Appraisal of Methodological Quality. 3= yes 2= Partially 1= Unclear 0= No

Study: (Caslin, 2019)
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research? 3
Comments: Aims of the research are clearly stated and justified with reference to previous research. Justification for the interpretative research framework used is given.
Is a qualitative methodology appropriate? 3
Comments: Qualitative methodology is appropriate given the study aims is to gain insight into why participants may display what is considered 'difficult' behaviour in the classroom.
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research? 3
Comments: The researcher justified the use of the qualitative approaches adopted (educational life path tool) with reference to a pilot study where the method yielded successful outcomes.
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? 3
Comments: Research was undertaken across three specialist settings in England including a special school for young people with SEMH needs, an alternative provision, and a support centre for children who have experienced permanent exclusion.
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue? 3
Comments: The use of educational life paths alongside semi structured interviews allowed young people to share what they felt were 'critical' moments. This helped to provide insights into factors underpinning 'challenging' behaviour.
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered? 3
Comments: The researcher acknowledges issues of power relations and outlines that rapport building was used to establish trust prior to data collection. The researcher also acknowledges that research was undertaken within an educational setting, and this may have impacted in participant responses.
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? 3

Comments: The researcher acknowledged issues of power, informed consent, and the right to withdraw and clearly outlines how these issues were addressed.
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? 3
Comments: Constructivist Grounded Theory was used to develop a number of themes. The validity of these themes may be supported by the researcher sharing and discussing them with young people to ensure their views were captured accurately.
Is there a clear statement of findings? 2
Comments: The presentation of themes is supported with illustrative extracts. The researcher acknowledges the findings as being a 'snapshot' rather than widely generalisable.
Is the research valuable? 2
Comments: The research provides valuable insights into the experiences of young people with SEMH needs, particularly in relation to the impact of the label of SEMH. The study also highlights that young people with SEMH needs can offer valuable insights into their experiences.

Study: (Caslin, 2021)
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research? 3
Comments: Aims of the research are clearly stated and justified with reference to previous research, and the importance of pupil voice in relation to this population.
Is a qualitative methodology appropriate? 3
Comments: Qualitative methodology is appropriate given the study aims which are to explore young people's individual experiences of the process of permanent exclusion from mainstream schools.
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research? 2
Comments: A range of qualitative methods were used including, graffiti walls, storytelling, and semi-structured interviews. It is unclear whether these activities were conducted in group or individual sessions. As such,

<p>the impact of the presence of other participants on task performance is unclear. The study outlines several themes discussed during these activities including pupil-teacher relationships, experiences of permanent exclusion, SEBD as a label and the concept of pupil voice. It is unclear whether these themes were generated by the participants or pre-selected by the researcher as topics for discussion. Therefore, it is unclear whether the emergence of these themes within participant views and was influenced by the researcher.</p> <p>The researcher justified the use of the qualitative approaches adopted (educational life paths) with reference to a pilot study where the method yielded successful outcomes.</p>
<p>Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? 3</p>
<p>Comments: Research was undertaken across three specialist settings in England including a special school for young people with SEMH needs, an alternative provision, and a support centre for children who have experienced permanent exclusion.</p>
<p>Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue? 3</p>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Data collection methods were discussed with participants prior to collection to allow participants a choice over how they would like to participate. This may have allowed participants who were reluctant to engage in traditional research methods (e.g., formal interviews) an opportunity to contribute through other means.</p> <p>The second stage of research involved semi-structured interviews. Interviews with young people were supported via a visual life-grid which may have helped to support a relaxed, informal interview and allow participants to reflect upon significant events and themes within their education experiences.</p> <p>Separate individual semi-structured interviews were also conducted with young people's parents and current teachers. Although potentially offering richer data in relation to young people's experiences, it may be appropriate</p>

to question whether young people's awareness that these adults were also participating could have impacted their views.
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered? 2
Comments: The researcher acknowledges issues of power relations and outlines that rapport building was used to establish trust prior to data collection.
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? 2
Comments: Issues of informed consent were addressed using process consent, which negotiated continually throughout the research process.
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? 3
Comments: Constructivist Grounded Theory was used to develop a number of themes. The validity of these themes may be supported by the researcher sharing and discussing them with young people to ensure their views were captured accurately.
Is there a clear statement of findings? 2
Comments: The presentation of themes is supported with illustrative extracts and reference to parent and teacher views. The researcher does not acknowledge the limitations of findings.
Is the research valuable? 2
Comments: The research provides valuable insights into the experiences of young people with SEMH needs in mainstream settings. This may provide useful insights for future research, policy, and practice. The researchers acknowledge the small scale of the study in terms of the generalisability of findings.

Study: Clarke et al. (2011)
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research? 3
Comments: Aims of study are clearly outlined. Rationale for providing pupil voice was provided including reference to excluded pupils being marginalised and having a lack of voice.

Is a qualitative methodology appropriate? 3
Comments: The study aims to listen to, and engage with, the educational experiences of a small group of girls with formally identified special educational needs and behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties. Therefore, a qualitative approach was appropriate.
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research? 2
Comments: The choice of visual and verbal methods for eliciting voice were appropriate to the aims of the research. Researchers acknowledge the importance of cultural sensitivity and the use of preferred communication styles and task centred activities to enhance participant capacity/ reduce marginalisation.
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? 2
Comments: A detailed outline of recruitment procedure is not provided. Use of digital media and comic strip style participant information sheets reflected a consideration of a personalised approach to recruitment. Has not discussed how recruitment occurred.
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue? 3
Comments: Researchers justified the chosen methods as being reflective of youth culture and recognised the importance of methodological approaches giving participants a sense of ownership over the project. Methodology and form of data collection are explicitly outlined.
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered? 3
Comments: Researchers acknowledged their role in co-constructing views and that views were not to be considered 'authentic'. They also acknowledged that voice may have been distorted by the medium used and the other participants.
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? 3
Comments: Researchers cite the importance process consent and participants feeling a sense of ownership over the over study and appropriate methods were adopted to achieve this. Participants were given

the right to withdraw and to confidentiality as part of the process of informed consent.
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? 2
Comments: There is limited description of data analysis procedure, and it is therefore unclear how not themes were derived from data. Illustrative extracts are used to support findings.
Is there a clear statement of findings? 3
Comments: Findings are presented thematically with illustrative examples used. Limitations are discussed and the influence of the researcher is acknowledged.
Is the research valuable? 2
Comments: The stud offers useful insights into the educational experiences of young people with SEMH needs. The limitations in terms of generalisability are discussed. Acknowledgement of potential for similar methodology to be used with 'yet to be voiced' population.

Study: Dimitrellou and Male (2019)
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research? 3
Comments: The aims of the study and research questions are clearly outlined.
Is a qualitative methodology appropriate? 3
Comments: A qualitative methodology is relevant to the exploratory nature of the study.
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research? 3
Comments: The use of a mixed methods approach using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were relevant for addressing the research questions.
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? 3
Comments: Outline and rationale for recruitment process are clearly presented. Pupils with needs and experiences relevant to the study were

recruited using purposive sampling and a comparison group are also included. Rationale for the inclusion of pupils SEMH/ moderate learning difficulties (MLD) pupils is clearly presented.
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue? 3
Comments: The use of a structured interview addressed the aims of the research. A pilot study including pupils with SEMH/ MLD was adopted to ensure accessibility.
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered? 1
Comments: The relationship between researcher and participants has not been considered.
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? 3
Comments: Issues relating to ethical approval, informed consent, participant rights, and data storage are clearly outlined.
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? 3
Comments: A clear outline of the data analysis procedure is presented.
Is there a clear statement of findings? 3
Comments: A clear statement of findings is presented thematically. The researcher indicates where a small section of illustrative examples is used to indicate all-participant response which helps to reduce ambiguity. A reflective and balanced discussion of the presented themes is present. Findings are discussed in relation to original research question.
Is the research valuable? 2
Comments: The researchers highlight the study being evidence of pupils with SEND being able to articulate their voice. Researchers highlight the need for further research in this area. Limitations in regard to generalisability due to the small sample size are discussed.

Study: Sheffield and Morgan (2017)

Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research? 3
Comments: Research aims, and research questions are clearly outlined. Reference is made to gaps in existing literature.
Is a qualitative methodology appropriate? 3
Comments: A qualitative methodology is appropriate to the exploratory nature of the study.
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research? 3
Comments: A clear rationale for research design is presented in relation to research aims.
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? 3
Comments: A clear outline and rationale for sampling and recruitment strategy are presented.
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue? 3
Comments: A clear outline and rationale for data collection is presented with links made to the research question.
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered? 0
Comments: The relationship between researcher and participants has not been considered.
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? 2
Comments: Reference is made to British Psychological Society (BPS) ethical guidelines. It is unclear how issues of informed consent, participant rights, confidentiality, and data storage were adhered to.
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? 3
Comments: A detailed and clear outline of the data analysis procedure is presented.
Is there a clear statement of findings? 2
Comments: The findings are presented thematically with illustrative extracts used throughout. The findings are presented in a balanced with reference to conflicting accounts. Limitations of the data are not considered.
Is the research valuable? 2

Comments: Implications for Educational Psychology practice and future research are discussed in detail. The generalisability of findings is not discussed.

Appendix 5. Interpretation of Themes During the Systematic Literature Review

Theme	Study				
	Caslin (2019)	Caslin (2021)	Clarke et al. (2011)	Dimitrellou & Male (2019)	Sheffield and Morgan (2017)
<i>1: Feeling singled out</i>	Participants felt blamed due to the labels attached to them and felt that this influenced how teachers interacted with them	Young people felt that the labels attached to them influenced how teachers interacted with them.		Pupils felt discriminated against by teachers due to having a 'bad' reputation	Participants reported feeling 'different' in the eyes of some teachers due to their past behaviour.

<p>2: <i>Pupil-teacher relationships</i></p>	<p>The way in which teachers responded to pupils acted as a catalyst to 'difficult' behaviour and impacted on relationship building</p>	<p>The way in which teachers responded to pupils acted as a catalyst to 'difficult' behaviour</p>	<p>Pupils felt that teachers enabled them feeling a lack of voice</p>	<p>Young people reported positive relationships with teachers who were fun, engaging and responded to behaviour management in a fair way</p> <p>Participants described negative relationships with teachers who lacked empathy, understanding, and were overly focussed on</p>	<p>Participants felt a sense of injustice due to being unfairly treated by some teachers.</p> <p>Participants highlighted teachers they liked as being understanding, motivating, supportive and having belief in the young person.</p>
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3: Lack of Voice

			academic attainment.	
	Participants did not feel informed or included in decision making	Participants report feeling ignored and not listened to, resulting in disconnection from school, feelings of injustice when 'alternative' means of communication are adopted. Being heard cited as being of central importance	Participants felt their involvement in decision making was limited and decisions were made by those in authority	

4: Peer Relationships

			<p>Participants with SEMH needs reported difficulties socialising as a barrier to effective group work</p> <p>Reported difficulties forming relationships and bullying</p> <p>A minority of pupils with SEMH cited positive peer relationships</p>	<p>Some pupils described having very few friends while others described individual relationship difficulties with peers and experiencing bullying</p> <p>Some participants attributed misbehaviour as being in retaliation to behaviour of others.</p>
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<p>5: <i>Disengagement as a Precursor to 'Difficult' Behaviour</i></p>			<p>Participants reported finding alternative activities to engage in as a consequence of lack of voice.</p>		<p>Boredom/ work being too easy/difficult/ lack of classroom management were linked to engagement in misbehaviour</p>
<p>6: <i>Ineffectiveness of Behaviour sanctions</i></p>		<p>Participants shared frustration around missing school due to exclusion</p>		<p>Participants did not feel behaviour sanctions were educational or a deterrent</p>	<p>Detentions/ missed break were seen as inconsequential. Exclusions were seen as detrimental due to missing out on education/ socialising. This was also linked to</p>

				feelings of injustice when behaviour was a retaliation to behaviour of others
7: Classroom Support			<p>Only a minority commented positively on teacher support, mixed reports about teaching assistant support</p> <p>Some reported resentment at not being given enough support in class and the lack of quality of this support</p>	<p>One to one TA support was seen as important in supporting academic outcomes</p> <p>TA support was also seen as highlighting participants as being 'different'</p>

8: Motivation

			Importance of education for future outcomes a factor influencing enjoyment of school	Exams/ future outcomes were cited as motivators for wanting to change behaviour Family guidance was seen as a motivator Participants also cited internal realisations around the impact of their behaviour as motivators to change
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Appendix 6. Participant Debrief Form



Thank you again for taking part in this study. I know that the issues we have explored may have raised things you would like to talk to someone about so a list of support options have been provided below:

If you would like to talk to an adult in school _____ is available to talk to.

If you do not want to talk to someone you know then the following sources of support and advice may be helpful:

Support Line Telephone Helpline: 01708765200, www.supportline.org.uk
Provides emotional support and information relating to other sources of support throughout the UK.

Childline: 0800 1111, www.childline.org.uk Emotional support for children and young people on issues relating to child abuse, bullying etc.

Get Connected: 0808 808 4994, www.getconnected.org.uk Free telephone and email helpline which can connect a child or young person to any UK helpline where appropriate.

Samaritans: Helpline:116123 www.samaritans.org 24hr service offering emotional support.

COMPASS- X School Health and Well-being service Health and well-being service for all X residents aged 5-19 <https://www.compass-uk.org/services/X-school-health-wellbeing-service/> Tel: 03300 245 204 Email: Xschoolhealth@compass-uk.or

Appendix 7. Participant Information Sheet



School of Psychology
Participant Information Sheet

Title of project: A Narrative Orientated Inquiry exploring the Key Stage 2-3 transition experiences of young people with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs.

Ethical approval number: S1401

Researcher: Gary McCrossan

Researcher contact details: gary.mccrossan@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisors: Nicholas Durbin

Supervisor contact details: nicholas.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk

Hi, my name is Gary McCrossan. I am training to become an Educational Psychologist (someone who works with schools to help them support children and young people). As part of my training, I am doing a research project to explore the experience of moving from primary secondary school for young people who are being supported for social, emotional and mental health needs.

Before you decide if you wish to take part, it is important you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to understand the following information carefully.

Why is this research happening?

We are doing this study to see if we can understand pupils' experiences of moving from primary to secondary school better, to try to help schools make this move easier for young people.

I am really interested in finding out about:

- Your experience of moving from primary to secondary school

- Your experience of secondary school

What will it involve?

If you agree to take part, we will meet in school in a place you feel most comfortable. We will talk about your experience of moving from primary to secondary school (Year 6-7) and your experience of secondary school.

I plan to record the interview using an audio recorder but no one other than me will listen to it and it will be stored securely at all times.

Talking about these experiences may be difficult, so if you would like, a member of staff of your choice will be allowed to check in regularly throughout the interview and be close by to offer support if you need it.

Do I have to take part?

It is your free choice if you want to take part in this study. If you do agree to take part, you are free to stop at any point before or during the study and you do not have to give a reason.

Up to 6 weeks after you take part, you can ask to be removed from the study and anything you shared will be deleted and not used. You will not need to give a reason for this.

It will not be possible to identify you from this study: your name will be replaced by a pseudonym (a different name). The information will be used for research purposes only. It will be stored securely, following the rules of the Data Protection Act.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to ask now. We can also be contacted after you have taken part, at the above address.

If you have any complaints about the study, please contact:

Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee)

stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 8. Information Sheet for Gatekeepers

Title of project: A Narrative Orientated Inquiry exploring the Key Stage 2-3 transition experiences of young people with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet

I am 3rd Year trainee educational psychologist from University of Nottingham, currently on placement in the Centre/South team in X Educational Psychology Service. As part of my doctoral training, I am undertaking a research project focusing on the primary secondary school experiences of young people with Social, emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

A short overview of my proposed research

The study will have a particular focus on primary-secondary transition experiences, which as research and experience tells us, is a crucial time for young people with SEMH needs.

I will be interviewing young people about their experience of transitioning from primary-secondary school.

The interview will last between 30 minutes and an hour (more time will be given if needed). Young people will also have the option for an adult (such as a member of staff) to remain close by to offer support, if needed.

The interview will be audio recorded but will only be listened to by the researcher. The digital audio files will be password protected and stored securely on a password protected laptop which only the researcher has access to.

Why is this research important?

Understanding the KS2-3 transition experiences of young people with SEMH needs may be extremely useful for those wishing to provide early intervention and support for young people with SEMH needs. It is hoped that this data will be of interest to a range of stakeholders within SEND and Inclusion services (including the Ethical Inclusion Partnership, the Educational Entitlement Team, schools and settings) for informing best practice in supporting young people with SEMH needs during this significant transition.

Who do I want to take part?

I am looking for **3-4 young people** to act as participants in this study. See inclusion criteria below:

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Any gender	
Currently supported in school for SEMH needs (e.g., SEND support, EHCP)	Not currently being supported for SEMH needs
Experienced transition from a mainstream UK primary school to a mainstream UK secondary school.	Did not transition from a mainstream UK primary school to a mainstream UK secondary school.
Aged 11-15 (National Curriculum year group 7-10)	Not Aged 11-15 (National curriculum year group 7-10)
Currently enrolled and attending full time education	Not currently in enrolled in full-time education.
Not currently experiencing any significant additional circumstances which may affect well-being (e.g., bereavement, family separation).	Currently experiencing circumstances which may affect well-being.

Not likely to experience distress when discussing/ recalling past school experiences (to be assessed with parents/carers/ staff).	Parents/carers/ staff/ participant feel that pupil may experience stress when discussing/ recalling past school experiences.
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How could you help?

I will require help with:

- Identifying young people who meet the inclusion criteria and providing access to any relevant information in relation to the young person's special educational needs.
- Sending on the study's participant and parent information sheet and consent form to the young people identified and their parents/ carers. (Parents and young people will opt into participation by returning a completed consent form).
- Providing a space within your setting where the interview can take place. This will need to be a quiet room, free from distractions and disturbances. The young person will have the option for a trusted member of staff to be present in order to ensure they feel safe and can ask this member of for support if needed.

Thank you for taking the time to read this request for initial support. If you have any further queries, please don't hesitate to contact me gary.mccrossan@nottingham.ac.uk or:

My academic tutor, Nicholas Durbin nicholas.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk

My placement supervisor_____

Many thanks

Gary McCrossan

If you have any complaints about the study, please contact:

Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee)

stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 9. Parent/ Carer Information Sheet



School of Psychology

Parent/Carer Information Sheet

Title of project: *A Narrative Orientated Inquiry exploring the Key Stage 2-3 transition experiences of young people with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs.*

Ethical approval number: S1401

Researcher: Gary McCrossan

Researcher contact details: gary.mccrossan@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisors: Nicholas Durbin

Supervisor contact details: nicholas.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk

I would like your child to take part in a research study exploring the primary-secondary school transition experiences of young people who are being supported for social, emotional, and mental health needs.

Before you decide if you would like your child to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

If you agree for your child to take part, they will meet with me in school once, in a place they feel most comfortable. They will be asked to talk about their experience of moving from primary to secondary school.

The interview will last between 30 minutes and an hour (more time will be given if needed). Your child will also have the option for an adult (such as a member of staff) to remain close by to offer support, if needed.

The interview will be audio recorded but will only be listened to by the researcher. The digital audio files will be password protected and stored securely on a password protected laptop which only the researcher has access to.

Participation in this study is totally voluntary and your child is under no obligation to take part. Both you, and your child are free to withdraw at any point before, during or up to 6 weeks after the study. All data collected will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. It will be stored in compliance with the Data Protection Act. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to ask now. I can also be contacted after your child's participation at the above address.

If you have any complaints about the study, please contact:

Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee)

stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 10. Participant Consent Form



School of Psychology

Participant Consent Form

Title of project: A Narrative Orientated Inquiry exploring the Key Stage 2-3 transition experiences of young people with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs.

Ethical approval number: S1401

Researcher: Gary McCrossan

Researcher contact details: gary.mccrossan@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisors: Nicholas Durbin

Supervisor contact details: nicholas.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk

The participant should answer these questions independently:

- Have you read and understood the Information Sheet?
YES/NO
- Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about the study?
YES/NO
- Have all your questions been answered satisfactorily (if applicable)?
YES/NO
- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study?
YES/NO

(At any time and without giving a reason)

- I give permission for my data from this study to be shared with other researchers provided that my anonymity is completely protected.
YES/NO

- Do you agree to take part in the study?
YES/NO
- Do you agree to your interview being audio recorded
YES/NO

“This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time.”

Signature of the Participant:

Date:

Name (in block capitals)

I have explained the study to the above participant, and he/she has agreed to take part.

Signature of researcher:

Date:

Appendix 11. Parent/Carer Consent Form



School of Psychology
Parent/ Carer Consent Form

Title of Project: A Narrative Orientated Inquiry exploring the Key Stage 2-3 (KS2-3) transition experiences of young people who have been permanently excluded from mainstream secondary schools.

Ethical approval number: S1401

Researcher: Gary McCrossan

Researcher contact details: gary.mccrossan@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisors: Nicholas Durbin

Supervisor contact details: nicholas.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk

The parent/ carer should answer these questions independently:

- Have you read and understood the Information Sheet?
YES/NO
- Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about the study?
YES/NO
- Have all your questions been answered satisfactorily (if applicable)?
YES/NO
- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study?
YES/NO

(At any time and without giving a reason)

- I give permission for my child's data from this study to be shared with other researchers provided that my anonymity is completely protected.
YES/NO

- Do you agree to your child taking part in the study?
YES/NO
- Do you agree to your child's interview being audio recorded?
YES/NO

“This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time.”

Signature of the Parent/ carer:

Date:

Name (in block capitals)

I have explained the study to the above parent/carer, and he/she has agreed to take part.

Signature of researcher:

Date:

Appendix 12. Confirmation of Ethical Approval

Please note the approval below is for original research focus. It was decided, through discussion with my research supervisor, that due to the methodology and broad research focus remaining the same, updated ethical approval was not required for the updated research title.

SJ/tp

Ref: **S1401**



Thursday 16th December 2021

Dear Nick Durbin and Gary McCrossan, **Ethics Committee Review**

Thank you for submitting an account of your proposed research 'Using Narrative Orientated Inquiry to explore the Key Stage 2-3 (KS2-3) transition experiences of young people who have been permanently excluded from mainstream secondary schools'

That proposal has now been reviewed and we are pleased to tell you it has met with the Committee's approval.

Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you or your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Psychological Society and the University Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns whatever during the conduct of your research, then you should consult those Codes of Practice. The Committee should be informed immediately should any participant complaints or adverse events arise during the study.

Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site. Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Yours sincerely

Professor Stephen Jackson Chair, Ethics Committee

School of Psychology

The University of Nottingham University Park Nottingham NG7 2RD

tel: +44 (0)115 846 7403 or (0)115 951 4344

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a final horizontal stroke.

Appendix 13. Summary and Holistic form Analysis: Oliver

Phase	Summary	Evaluative extracts	Comments
Year 5	Oliver's overall evaluation of Year 5 appears to be positive. Despite some initial challenges a progression is noted which is linked to being supported by having 2 teachers who knew him well.	<p>At the start of year 5 I didn't really have that, so that was like, a bit, I dunno, a bit challenging, with like the work and stuff. But then they all, then I got two teachers to speak with, then I got to really know with the head teacher so that was good. (15)</p> <p>So, I found year 5 like really easy like really chill, like you didn't have any hassle or anything like that. That's a really good year that is Year 5. And like you didn't really need to worry about that much in year 5 and like, it's quite calm and it's not like, you know, hard, kind of. (1)</p>	<p>Initial challenges</p> <p>Progression supported by staff relationships resulting in an overall positive evaluation</p>
Year 6	Oliver describes a shift including as increase in academic pressures, and	Year 6 is where like work starts to get harder and you have a bit of worry about year 7 and stuff. It's still pretty	Regression suggested by

	<p>perceived strictness, in Year 6 as well as worries about transition beginning to emerge. Overall, Oliver appears to rate this year positively.</p> <p>Oliver describes positive aspects of his Year 6 experience such as feeling a sense of pride due to being the oldest in the school and having relationships with teachers who know him well.</p> <p>Shift- Oliver cites specific worries which emerged during Year 6 such as not being able to make friends and not</p>	<p>good it's just a bit, like you've got more work and there's more, it's a bit more stricter, but it's still not that like, hard. (2)</p> <p>You're in your top year, you feel a bit proud about that, like, you're in one of the top years and its quite nice to think that. There's, like it's kinda fine you've been there for quite a while and all the teachers understand you and everything. (9)</p> <p>But Year 6 you get quite proud cos you're like the top year, of like, so you get, you think you're quite proud</p>	<p>Increase in academic pressure/ worries relating to transition beginning to emerge.</p> <p>Positive evaluation: feeling a sense of pride due to being the 'top' year group. Positive evaluation: Feeling understood by teachers.</p> <p>Regression: Worries in relation to transition</p>
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	<p>having the same level of connection/ not being understood by teachers in Year 7.</p> <p>Evaluation- Oliver acknowledges that having the same teachers for two years was a positive experience.</p>	<p>about that 'til the second half you start getting worried about like, going to Year 7. (12)</p> <p>Um, like not being able to make friends or, like, none of the teachers understanding you and missing your old teachers. (11)</p> <p>Yeah, the work but my main worry was like the teachers, cos I was worried I wouldn't have the same connection as my other ones and stuff. (19)</p> <p>We had the same teacher in year 5 and year 6 cos we was in a small school, so they knew us, the year 5 quite well cos they had them for 2 years instead of one. (10)</p> <p>Cos they really understood me cos I had two teachers, I had one in the morning until, when there was two lessons left, then I had another teacher for the other</p>	<p>experienced during Year 6</p> <p>Importance of pupil teacher relationships during years 5-6.</p>
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	<p>Oliver describes finding the increased academic challenge of Year 6 difficult initially. However, he is able to reflect that this helped him feel prepared for the increased academic challenge of Year 7.</p>	<p>lessons, so I had them. I had two teachers, which, like, spent most of my day with, so I was very close with them, cos they helped me a lot. (14)</p> <p>At first, I didn't like it, cos I didn't like it and was like "why am I getting harder work?", but now I feel like it was good that they gave me harder work cos I've got better grips now with like my years now cos it feels the same. So even though it feels hard getting all this hard work by the end of year 6 but it will help you like later on. (18)</p>	<p>Reflection on increased academic challenge in Year 6.</p>
<p>Summer holiday</p>	<p>Oliver describes an initial period of sadness after leaving Year 6 due to missing teachers he had established positive relationships with. However,</p>	<p>And then like when you get to summer it's a bit, when you leave school, it's a bit sad but you know you've got your summer holidays and you've got to wait for your summer school, which is quite nice. (3)</p>	<p>Mixed feelings after leaving Year 6</p>

	<p>these feelings are also mixed with feelings of excitement for the summer break/ summer school.</p> <p>Oliver describes feeling an initial; sense of anxiety when attending summer school due to meeting new people. This nervousness is mixed with feelings of excitement for meeting new friends and the feelings of nervousness appear to reduce once Oliver has met new people.</p> <p>Oliver describes establishing a friendship group during summer school which was maintained over the summer</p>	<p>But when you get to summer school, when you first get in its quite nervous, cos, you walk in and there's loads of new people. It's quite nervous and you get a bit anxious but when you sit down and you're with loads of new people, it's quite nice to talk to them and see what your new friends will be like. (4)</p> <p>My worry was, about going to Year 7, cos I've got like dyslexic and stuff like that, that's what mainly worried me about going to summer school, like I thought I was gonna struggle with the work but it's not that bad. (23)</p> <p>When summer school is over, I think its two weeks, when it's over then you've kind of got your new friends and you get to speak to them on the phone and meet up with them, which is nice, cos when you get to year 7</p>	<p>Regression: Feeling nervous in anticipation of summer school</p> <p>Progression: Feelings of nervousness reduce after meeting new people.</p> <p>Progressions: Establishing a friendship group</p>
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	<p>holidays and into Year 7. This is linked positive anticipation of Year 7.</p> <p>Meeting new teachers is also linked to a positive evaluation of summer school and this is linked to reduced feelings of anxiety prior to starting Year 7.</p> <p>Oliver describes mixed feelings towards the end of summer holidays.</p> <p>Excitement is linked to positive anticipation of new opportunities.</p>	<p>you've got a group of friends already and that's nice to think about. (5)</p> <p>I'd definitely recommend going to it cos, I think, if I didn't go to summer school, I'd be a lot, lot more anxious before, cos like yeah, when you're in summer school you get to know all the teachers and stuff. It's a bit more, I would definitely recommend going to summer school. (21)</p> <p>In summer school I met people and when summer school ended, I just went out with them, and I got their numbers and spoke to them all the time and went trampolining with them and got quite good friends. (24)</p> <p>It was just the day before school was when I worried. (29)</p> <p>was a bit worried, but I knew I would have more opportunities and stuff. (26)</p>	<p>and meeting new teachers in summer school linked to positive anticipation of transition and reduced feelings of anxiety</p> <p>Mixed feelings towards the end of summer holidays</p>
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			Regression: worries in relation to Year 7
Year 7	<p>Oliver describes feelings of excitement and worry at the start of Year 7. Excitement is linked to new opportunities and having a newly established friendship group. Worries are linked to missing staff in primary school and not knowing if secondary staff will understand him or be able to support him as well as primary school staff who knew him well/ understood how best to him.</p>	<p>And Year 7 is like, you're quite happy but you've got mixed emotions about it. You're happy cos you've got your friends and you're like, it's like really nice and stuff. But then when you get there you've got a bit of worry about if you're going to miss your old school or if people won't understand you or stuff like that. Because you've been at your old school for so long, they know you, but when you go to a new school, the teachers have to understand what it's like and how you are and stuff. (6)</p> <p>A bit worried going into my lessons cos there was new teachers and stuff, but after my first 2 days I was fine. (28)</p> <p>Yeah, like I wouldn't have that with anyone else or something cos there's like a lot. My old school in year 6</p>	Mixed feelings at the start of Year 7

	<p>Oliver acknowledges that teachers quickly began to understand him. This is linked to a positive evaluation of things feeling easier and a reduction in initial feelings of worry.</p>	<p>had X people, that's like the size of Year 7 so it's a lot different to having like 600. (16)</p> <p>But soon they'll understand what helps you and what doesn't and stuff. When they understand how you, when you've got your sets and school, when they understand how you're doing and what you struggle at, it's a lot easier. (7)</p> <p>And once the first couple of weeks are over, its fine then you still have a bit of worry, it's just, that feeling goes quite fast, its mainly happy after that. (8)</p> <p>I didn't really like it for the first week or two but then when you understand how everything works and your punishments and stuff, it's nice. (30)</p> <p>A bit worried going into my lessons cos there was new teachers and stuff, but after my first 2 days I was fine. (28)</p>	<p>Progression: Reduction in initial worries as Oliver feels that teachers are able to understand him</p>
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	<p>Increased familiarity with routines and sets helped to reduce initial worries.</p> <p>Oliver also describes increased academic opportunities as helping to reduce initial worries.</p>	<p>I was a bit worried, but I knew I would have more opportunities and stuff. Like, I really love art and at my old school we didn't do like pastels and all this, we just did pencils and stuff... There is definitely a lesson that you'll find that you re gonna really love, like if you've got something a favourite lesson, like DT you'll have loads of loads of things to do in DT, always keep you occupied. (27)</p> <p>Now I know what lessons I've got and now I know what lessons I'm not too keen on and what I am excited for. Like, if I have a day where I've got like 2 lessons that I don't like and then the last lesson I do like, like art. It helps me get through cos I'm like, "uh, I've got English now" but next lessons I've got maths so if I just get</p>	<p>Progression: Increased familiarity with school routines/ staff helping to reduce initial worries</p> <p>Progression: recognition of</p>
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	<p>Oliver's reflection on the upcoming move to Year 8 suggests he is feeling resilient in the face of this challenge.</p>	<p>through English and go maths and have fun and it be a lot easier in maths. It's like, I've just gotta get through this lesson, then I've got maths. (35)</p> <p>I might get a couple of new teachers going to Year 8, but it's fine cos I'll get them to know them quite quick, the same as going into Year 7 I'll get to know them really fast, so. (38)</p> <p>I don't really need to worry about Year 8 because it's not really bothering me. (39)</p>	<p>Increased opportunities</p> <p>Positive reflection on feeling prepared to move up to Year 8.</p>
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Appendix 14. Summary and Holistic-form Analysis: Jack

Phase	Summary	Evaluative extracts	Comments
Year 6	<p>Jack describes not liking Year 6 and cites experiencing fights as reason for not liking school.</p> <p>Jack appears position himself as being quite passive in his Year 6 school experience through his description of being asleep for much of Year 6.</p> <p>Jack describes not feeling excited about the transition to Year 7 due to his general dislike of school at this time. This evaluation appears to be</p>	<p>I didn't like it, I don't know why, I got in to loads of fights, that's it really, that's all I remember really. (1)</p> <p>I didn't really like it, I was sleepy, and I fell asleep a lot; don't know why. (9)</p> <p>No, I just didn't want to go to school. I didn't like school back then and that. (12)</p>	<p>Negative evaluation- Disliking Year 6 Experiencing fights with peers.</p> <p>Not liking Year 6, overall memory is of being sleepy.</p> <p>A general dislike of school. Not linked to specific factors.</p>

	<p>a contrast to his current school experience (e.g., I didn't like school <i>back then...</i>)</p> <p>Jack describes feeling nervous about the transition to Year 7 in the final term of Year 6. These worries appear to be significant as noted by Jack's description of experiencing nightmares about transition.</p> <p>Jack describes how a visit to his secondary school helped these nerves to go. It appears that this was a significant reduction in nerves. Jack links this to being able to attend the school site during a school day and meeting 'everybody'. It is unclear whether this refers to staff or teachers.</p>	<p>Before the summer holidays I was nervous for Year 7, and I had nightmares about it. (2)</p> <p>...and then one time I visited the school, and all the nerves just went and that's all I remember. (2)</p> <p>It was that we went during the school day, and everybody was nice. (13)</p>	<p>Regression- feeling nervous about transition and experiencing nightmares.</p> <p>Progression: pre-transition visit helping to alleviate worries.</p>
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<p>Summer Holidays</p>	<p>Jack offered very little description of his summer holiday phase. However, he recalls feeling nervous in anticipation of transition to Year 7 and links this to hearing negative rumours from peers about being hurt by other children.</p> <p>Jack describes not feeling any excitement in anticipation of year 7 due to a general dislike of school.</p>	<p>All I remember was just sleeping all the time. (14)</p> <p>Summer holidays I was a bit nervous, but I was just sleeping all the time. (3)</p> <p>I don't know, I was just nervous. People just said that people hurt you and that. (11)</p> <p>No, I just didn't want to go to school. I didn't like school back then and that. (12)</p>	<p>Stability- sleeping all the time during summer holiday</p> <p>Regression- nerves linked to rumours shared by peers.</p> <p>A general dislike of school.</p>
<p>Year 7</p>	<p>Jack describes 'loving' year 7 and that it was 'good'. Jack's description here is relatively more emotive than his description of Year 6 suggesting a progression in terms of school experience.</p>	<p>Year 7 was good, but I got in to loads of fights. (4)</p> <p>But other than that, I love Year 7. (5)</p>	<p>Progression- Overall positive evaluation of Year 7</p>

	<p>However, this is countered with Jack’s description of continuing to experience fights with peers.</p> <p>Jack also experienced conflict with peers and links this to the same issues experienced in Year 6 (i.e., responding to the behaviour of others). He also experienced a significant number of behavioural sanctions including fixed-term and internal exclusions.</p> <p>Jack cites receiving 1:1 teaching assistant support as being linked to his “love” of Year 7. Jack cites academic support as being a positive factor related to this support but was unsure of the other areas which this support has been helpful. Jack notes that things were “harder” before he had this support but was unsure of why.</p>	<p>I got expelled about three times and I had loads of internals and about 62 detentions. But other than that, I love Year 7. That’s all I remember really. (5)</p> <p>Jack: They hit me first and but then I turned around and did that (mimed punch). (6)</p> <p>Probably with all the help I’ve been getting from (pointed to TA). Help with my work and stuff. (17)</p>	<p>Regression-experiencing conflict and behaviour sanctions</p> <p>One-to-one TA support linked to positive evaluation of Year 7</p>
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	<p>Jack also cites making friends as something which helped him to “love” Year 7, and he describes trying not to make friends during Year 7 due to not liking a lot of people around him. He then describes eventually making friends in positive terms. This appears to suggest a positive shift and a progression in the narrative.</p>	<p>I tried not to make friends, but I eventually did and it’s alright. Because I don’t like having lots of people around me and that. (18)</p>	<p>Progression-Description of eventually making friends</p>
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Appendix 15. Summary and Holistic form Analysis: Ben

Phase	Summary	Evaluative Extracts	Comments
Year 6	<p>Ben's reflection on this phase is of not liking it. Ben describes running away from teachers and rarely going into lessons which highlights his dislike of this phase. Ben offers very few other insights into his dislike of this phase.</p> <p>Ben's recalls feeling "fine "(13) on the last few weeks of primary school and not having any worries due to having siblings in secondary school already.</p>	<p>I never liked it really. I just basically messed around in Year 6. Just ran away from teachers mainly. There was very few lessons I went to. (1)</p> <p>I was fine because I had my sisters here and my brother. So, I didn't have to be like, nervous, to go up there. (13)</p>	<p>Reflection of disliking Year 6.</p> <p>Stability- Feeling "fine" before transition</p>
Summer Holidays	<p>Ben reflects upon anticipating that 'something' was going to happen in Year 7 due to how 'hot-headed' he was at this time.</p>	<p>I knew something was gonna happen, because of how hot-headed I used to be. Like, I am still hot-headed but not as bad as I used to be. (20)</p>	<p>Regression- Pre-empting negative experiences in Year 7</p>

<p>Year 7</p>	<p>Ben reflects upon being 'naughty' during the first week of Year 7 and links this to getting into a fight with another pupil, for which he received a fixed term exclusion. Ben also describes this fight as being linked to the actions of another pupil and recalls making a conscious decision not to retaliate.</p>	<p>First week of Year 7 I was a bit naughty shall we say because I had a fight on the first week and got excluded. (3)</p> <p>I knew because there was a lad I knew already from primary school who I knew and he just started saying about my weight all week, on the first week of Year 7, so on the Friday I just grabbed him. (21)</p> <p>When he first started saying it, I was gonna fight him just then, but then I thought, nah. (22)</p> <p>There was a person what was still in this school, he didn't like my brother and he</p>	<p>Regression- Experiencing being picked upon by another pupil/ experiencing a fight with another pupil despite trying not to retaliate/ experience of fixed-term exclusion.</p>
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	<p>Ben also describes feeling targeted by other pupils due to other pupils disliking his siblings/ family.</p> <p>Ben describes establishing a positive relationship with a learning mentor during the first week of school. This positive relationship is indicated by Ben seeking this adult out following a fight and his description of their response to his experience of fighting having a reassuring tone.</p>	<p>didn't like our family and he was in Year 11 at the time, and I was in Year 7. He always used to come over to me with his mates and surround me. (25)</p> <p>On the first day Miss (name of teacher) introduced herself to me. (16)</p> <p>When I had the fight in the first week, I went straight to her and spoke to her, and she was like "it's alright". (17)</p>	<p>Regression- being targeted by older pupils</p> <p>Progression: Establishing a positive relationship with a staff member</p>
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	<p>Ben describes feeling “scared” (4) being shouted at by a teacher on his return from fixed term exclusion which he links to a temporary change in his behaviour.</p> <p>Ben evaluates his experience of COVID lockdown positively and also links this not receiving permanent exclusion; however, it is unclear whether this is Ben’s attribution or that of staff.</p>	<p>When I got excluded, I came back and got shouted at by a teacher, so I got scared and then I started being... behaved. (4)</p> <p>I can’t lie to you; I did cry unto the teachers because they did start shouting at me and I’ve never been shouted at by a teacher. They were just shouting at me about my behaviour, and I was just like, “oh dear”. (28)</p> <p>I didn’t come into school in COVID. Well, I had six months of school, so I liked it. (31)</p>	<p>Regression- Being shouted at by a teacher on return from fixed-term exclusion</p> <p>Progression being away from school during COVID lockdown</p>
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		If COVID didn't come, I would have got kicked out in Year 7. That's what the teachers said to me. (30)	
Year 8	<p>Ben reflects upon his experience of Year 8 by describing experiences of managed moves and further fixed term exclusions.</p> <p>Ben links his experience of managed moves to a conflict with a teacher.</p> <p>Ben describes not attending lessons in this school as he did not want to stand out due to wearing the uniform of his current school.</p> <p>Ben describes his return to school as "weird" due to being away from school for 2 weeks.</p>	<p>Year 8, I got, I had to go to a different school. Basically, got kicked out, well excluded, eleven times in Year 8. (5)</p> <p>Ben: I think it was, when I told the teacher to do one and then I kept on swearing and ran away from them. (34)</p> <p>I went to X School, for I think it was a week, I just sat in their ISA... I told them I'm not going to any lessons because I had to wear this (pointed to school blazer), and it just looked weird</p> <p>Weird, because I got excluded for 2 weeks, I stayed at home for one week</p>	Regression- Experiencing managed moves/ fixed term exclusion

		and went to that school for one week. (35)	
Year 9	<p>Ben describes beginning to skip lessons with other pupils during Year 9.</p> <p>Ben describes. A further experience of a managed move and fixed-term exclusion during Year 9. Ben describes this as “alright” due to knowing other pupils and not attending lessons.</p> <p>Ben Appears to describe experiencing fixed-term exclusion in positive terms due to opportunities for gaming.</p>	<p>It’s when we were skipping lessons. We never skip lessons on our own. They usually find us but last time we got caught cos we jumped straight over this brick wall. (39)</p> <p>That was X School this time. There was no teacher in their ISA, I knew people from my primary school, so I was just in the ISA again, it was alright. (38)</p> <p>I liked it because I was proper on my X-Box all the time. (37)</p>	<p>Regression: Beginning to skip lessons</p> <p>Positive evaluation of fixed-term exclusion/ managed move</p>

	<p>Ben describes receiving targeted support and increasing in maturity as having a positive impact on his ability to deal with anger.</p> <p>Ben describes being told about the opportunity to attend a vocational college course for part of his timetable as the best thing about Year 9 as this will get him away from school</p>	<p>It's when I got counselling for my behaviour that helped. (40)</p> <p>Now if someone just calls at me, I just walk away and don't say anything. I think it's just as I've got older. (23)</p> <p>Probably getting told about going to college next year; that gets me away from school. (41)</p>	<p>Progression- impact of targeted support/ maturity on perceived ability to deal with anger.</p> <p>Positive evaluation of opportunity to attend vocational course in future.</p>
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Appendix 16. Categorical Content Analysis: Oliver

Category	Principal Sentence	Sub-category	Comments
Individual risk factors	My worry was, about going to Year 7, cos I've got like dyslexic and stuff like that, that's what mainly worried me about going to summer school, like I thought I was gonna struggle with the work but it's not that bad. (23)	Academic-self Concept	Oliver recalls feeling worried as to whether he would struggle with the work in Year 7 and summer school due to being dyslexic, however, he recalls this feeling of worry reducing once he was able to gain familiarity with the work during summer school.
Individual protective factors	I'm in bottom set for everything so I kinda struggle with everything but it's quite, once you get used to it, it's fine. It's not like I'm dumb or something like that, it's just like, when I learn, I'm learning the same as everyone else, but just, were doing it at a smoother pace so like, I can	Recognition of own needs and the support that works	Oliver is able to reflect upon his academic difficulties but recognises that he has his own learning style and the support that works best for him. This is also evident in Oliver's aspiration to move up

	<p>get more understanding of what's happening. (33)</p> <p>I'd like to go up sets like, but I'm not just going to go straight into it, I want to like be, where summer school made it smooth into Year 7 that's what I want for going up sets. If the teacher said, "do you want to move up a set?" I would want to go in, but I don't know how I would feel about it I would rather go in with everyone else, so I go like, at a pace so I get to have a better understanding. But I would like to go up a set. (34)</p> <p>Now I know what lessons I've got and now I know what lessons I'm not too keen on and what</p>	<p>Positive engagement with preferred subjects.</p>	<p>to a higher set where he recognises the support and pace that would be required to make this move.</p> <p>Oliver appears to have found the subjects he enjoys and is passionate about and these</p>
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	<p>I am excited for. Like, if I have a day where I've got like 2 lessons that I don't like and then the last lesson I do like, like art. It helps me get through cos I'm like, "uh, I've got English now" but next lessons I've got maths so if I just get through English and go maths and have fun and it be a lot easier in maths. It's like, I've just gotta get through this lesson, then I've got maths. (35)</p>		<p>appear to have helped him to see the 'bigger picture' in terms of the curriculum.</p>
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<p>Environmental protective factors</p>	<p>But when you get to summer school, when you first get in its quite nervous, cos, you walk in and there's loads of new people. It's quite nervous and you get a bit anxious but when you sit down and you're with loads of new people, it's quite nice to talk to them and see what your new friends will be like. (4)</p> <p>When summer school is over, I think its two weeks, when it's over then you've kind of got your new friends and you get to speak to them on the phone and meet up with them, which is nice, cos when you get to year 7 you've got a group of friends already and that's nice to think about. (5)</p> <p>I'd definitely recommend going to it cos, I think, if I didn't go to summer school, I'd be a lot, lot more anxious before, cos like yeah, when you're in summer school you get to know all the teachers</p>	<p>Positive impact of summer school</p>	<p>Oliver reflects positively on his experience of summer school. Despite initial anxiety, Oliver describes the positive impact of being able to meet new friends.</p> <p>Oliver also describes friendships made during summer school being maintained throughout the transition process and this having a positive impact due to having an already established friendship group prior to starting Year 7.</p> <p>Oliver also acknowledges the positive impact of being able to make connections with</p>
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	<p>and stuff. It's a bit more, I would definitely recommend going to summer school. (21)</p> <p>But then when you get there you've got a bit of worry about if you're going to miss your old school or if people won't understand you or stuff like that. Because you've been at your old school for so long, they know you, but when you go to a new school, the teachers have to understand what it's like and how you are and stuff. (6)</p> <p>But soon they'll understand what helps you and what doesn't and stuff. When they understand how you, when you've got your sets and school, when they understand how you're doing and what you struggle at, it's a lot easier.</p> <p>I still get support, like my old school.</p>	<p>Continuity of support</p>	<p>new teachers prior to starting Year 7 in September.</p> <p>Oliver describes having initial worries as to whether staff in secondary school would 'understand' him. Oliver contrasts this with the recognition of the positive support he received in primary school being due to staff getting to know him over 2 years. Oliver then reflects that staff getting to know him in terms of how he learns and what he struggles with, made things feel easier.</p>
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	<p>like, when I saw my teachers and I gave them a hug, like, it was a bit sad, cos, like, not gonna see them. (13)</p> <p>At the start of year 5 I didn't really have that, so that was like, a bit, I dunno, a bit challenging, with like the work and stuff. But then they all, then I got two teachers to speak with, then I got on really known with the head teacher so that was good. (15)</p> <p>Yeah, like I wouldn't have that with anyone else or something cos there's like a lot. My old school in year 6 had 106 people, that's like the size of Year 7 so it's a lot different to having like 600. (16)</p> <p>I was worried I wouldn't have the same connection as my other ones and stuff. (19)</p>		<p>also describes things feeling challenging before these positive relationships and associated support were established. Oliver also acknowledges that this support was linked to the small class sizes on his primary setting and that this level of support is no longer available. However, Oliver also reflects that a lower level of teacher support is available.</p> <p>This positive experience with teacher support/relationships during Year 7 appear to have increased Oliver's resilience</p>
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	<p>Like, I know I can't have the help I had in my old school, but I can have like, little bits. (17)</p> <p>I might get a couple of new teachers going to Year 8, but it's fine cos I'll get them to know them quite quick, the same as going into Year 7 I'll get to know them really fast, so. (38)</p> <p>I don't really need to worry about Year 8 because it's not really bothering me. (39)</p> <p>But when I came back to school, I was a bit worried, but I knew I would have more opportunities and stuff, (26)</p> <p>like, I really love art and at my old school we didn't do like pastels and all this, we just did</p>	<p>Increased opportunities</p>	<p>for the move to Year 8. However, the statement of "I wanna stay in Year 7" may be contradictory but it also highlights the positive support received during Year 7.</p> <p>Oliver cites initial worries being balanced by excitement due to the increased opportunities found in secondary school such as</p>
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	<p>pencils and stuff, like we we've got a lot more opportunity, like we didn't have DT didn't my old school, like we can do woodwork and we do food there's a lot more. There is definitely a lesson that you'll find that you re gonna really love, like if you've got something a favourite lesson, like DT you'll have loads of loads of things to do in DT, always keep you occupied. (27)</p> <p>It's just like when you're in Year 5 going into Year 6, it doesn't really bother anyone, you should just think of it like that that with Year 7 if you're in Year 6, just more opportunities, it's just better. (41)</p>		<p>more resources, a wider and more engaging curriculum.</p>
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	<p>At first, I didn't like it, cos I didn't like it and was like "why am I getting harder work?", but now I feel like it was good that they gave me harder work cos I've got better grips now with like my years now cos it feels the same. So even though it feels hard getting all this hard work by the end of year 6 but it will help you like later on.</p>	<p>Preparation for increased academic expectations of Year 7.</p>	<p>Oliver reflects on the initial challenge of being given work that felt more difficult in Year 6 but recognises the importance of this increased challenge in feeling prepared for the increase in academic challenge he encountered in Year 7.</p>
Additional	<p>And once the first couple of weeks are over, its fine then you still have a bit of worry, it's just, that feeling goes quite fast, its mainly happy after that.</p>	<p>Initial worries reducing over time</p>	<p>Oliver describes initial transition worried reducing over the first few weeks of secondary school.</p>

	<p>But Year 6 you get quite proud cos you're like the top year, of like, so you get, you think you're quite proud about that 'til the second half you start getting worried about like, going to Year 7.</p> <p>But then, I was really excited to go to year 7, but at the same time I was just a bit anxious about it cos I didn't know like, what would happen.</p> <p>But then I was there, I didn't really like it for the first week or two but then when you understand how everything works and your punishments and stuff, it's nice.</p> <p>I just kind of missed like, everyone, the teachers, I just thought they wouldn't, I just didn't think they</p>	<p>Initial worries starting during Year 6</p> <p>Feelings of excitement and worry</p>	<p>Oliver describes initial worries starting to emerge during Year 6.</p> <p>Oliver recalls mixed feelings of both excitement and worry in anticipation of KS2-3 transition. Oliver links this reduction in worries over the first few weeks to feeling understood by teachers.</p>
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	would understand me and stuff. Once they've understood you after a couple of weeks then its fine, it's just, its fine.		
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Appendix 17. Categorical Content Analysis: Jack

Category	Principal Sentence	Sub-category	Comments
Individual risk factors	<p>No, I just didn't want to go to school. I didn't like school back then and that. (12)</p> <p>I got in to loads of fights, that's it really, that's all I remember really. (1)</p> <p>Year 7 was good, but I got in to loads of fights. (4)</p> <p>They hit me first and but then I turned around and did that (mimed punch). (6)</p>	<p>Dislike of school in general</p> <p>Experiencing peer conflicts (<i>This may be categorised as both an individual and environmental factor</i>).</p>	<p>Here Jack comments that he had a general feeling of dislike in relation to school which meant that he did not feel any excitement in relation to moving up to starting secondary school.</p> <p>Jack discussed 'getting into fights' several times during his narration in regard to his Year 6 and Year 7 experience. Jack reflected positively on</p>

			<p>getting in to fights during Year 7.</p> <p>In one example, Jack appeared to attribute experiencing fights to responding to the actions of other pupils.</p>
Environmental risk factors	I got expelled about three times and I had loads of internals and about 62 detentions. But other than that, I love Year 7. That's all I remember really. (5)	Experiencing behavioural sanctions	<p>Jack described experiencing a number of behavioural sanctions such as detention and fixed-term exclusion.</p> <p>Jack appeared somewhat unsure of the reasons behind these sanctions.</p>

	<p>Well, you get an internal you get to sit out of lesson (10)</p> <p>I didn't care because I could sleep in longer. (15)</p> <p>Just if loads of people would be mean to me and that. (10)</p> <p>I don't know, I was just nervous. People just said that people hurt you and that. (11)</p>	<p>Behaviour sanctions seen as ineffective</p> <p>Negative stories shared by peers.</p>	<p>Here Jack reflects positively on experiencing fixed term/ internal exclusion due to being able to sleep in longer/ not being in lessons.</p> <p>Jack related pre-transition worries to negative stories shared by peers in relation to secondary school.</p>
Individual protective factors	<p>I tried not to make friends, but I eventually did and it's alright. Because I don't like having lots of people around me and that. (18)</p>	<p>Ability to develop positive peer relationships</p>	<p>Jack describes making friends as being a positive aspect of school.</p>

<p>Environmental protective factors</p>	<p>Before the summer holidays I was nervous for Year 7, and I had nightmares about it and then one time I visited the school, and all the nerves just went and that's all I remember. (2)</p> <p>It was that we went during the school day, and everybody was nice. (13)</p> <p>Probably with all the help I've been getting from (pointed to TA). Help with my work and stuff. (17)</p> <p>Researcher: Help with your work and stuff, was there anything else that (TA) has helped with?</p> <p>Jack: Sometimes, I can't really remember. (18)</p>	<p>Opportunities to gain familiarity with new setting prior to transition.</p> <p>Receiving targeted support</p>	<p>Jack linked having an opportunity to visit his new school and meet staff prior to transition to a reduction in worries and nightmares.</p> <p>Jack linked receiving one-to-one TA support to 'loving' Year 7. Other than help with work, Jack appeared unsure of the other areas in which this support had been beneficial.</p>

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Appendix 18. Categorical Content Analysis: Ben

Category	Principal Sentence	Sub-category	Comments
Risk factors	<p>First week of Year 7, I was a bit naughty shall we say because I had a fight on the first week and got excluded. (3)</p> <p>My sister did. But she was worse than me, proper naughty. (16)</p> <p>I knew something was gonna happen, because of how hot-headed I used to be. Like, I am still hot-headed but not as bad as I used to be (20)</p>	Internalising negative labels/ narratives	Ben describes his behaviour during the first week with the negative label of 'naughty' and links this to experiencing a fight with another pupil. He also uses this construct within his comparison with his sister's behaviour "she was worse than me, proper naughty".
	<p>We didn't mess around with them teachers, we just started messing around with teachers we didn't like (19).</p>	Pupil-teacher relationships	Ben describes the influence of pupil-teacher relationships on his behaviour and that of his peers.

	<p>Year 8, I got, I had to go to a different school. Basically, got kicked out, well excluded, eleven times in Year 8 (5). Year 9, I kept on getting excluded. (6)</p> <p>I moved to a different school for a week again and just started running away from teachers and skipping lessons. (6)</p> <p>There was a few of us, when we used to get angry, we just never listened to the teachers and left them basically. (7)</p> <p>It's just when everyone else goes in (to lessons). It's the same here really. (12)</p>	<p>Experiencing fixed-term exclusion</p> <p>Experiencing a managed move</p> <p>Influence of peers</p>	<p>Ben describes several experiences of fixed-term exclusion during KS3.</p> <p>Ben describes his experiences of two managed moves during KS3.</p> <p>Ben suggests the influence of peers on particular behaviours.</p>
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	<p>I knew because there was a lad I knew already from primary school who I knew and he just started saying about my weight all week, on the first week of Year 7, so on the Friday I just grabbed him. (21)</p> <p>When he first started saying it, I was gonna fight him just then, but then I thought, nah. (22)</p> <p>I got angry, and I flipped the table. It was when this kid he kept on saying something that he knew was annoying and he started making squeaking sounds and I just got angry, so I flipped the table and I put hm up on the wall by his throat. (36)</p>	Experiencing conflicts with peers	Ben describes several experiences of conflicts with peers which resulted in negative outcomes such as experiencing behavioural sanctions.
Protective factors	Now if someone just calls at me, I just walk away and don't say anything. I think it's just as I've got older (23)	Increased self-awareness	Ben reflects upon his personal approach to responding to peer conflicts adapting over time and links this to increased maturity

	<p>When they used to take me out for walks when they knew I was about to, I used to throw pencils at peoples' heads. (11)</p> <p>When I had the fight in the first week, I went straight to her and spoke to her, and she was like "it's alright". (17)</p>	<p>Positive pupil-teacher relationships</p>	<p>Ben reflects on the benefits of supportive relationships with adults in school.</p>
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Appendix 19. Reflective Diary Extracts

Reflective Diary Extract 1: Interview with 'Jack'

Following this interview, my initial thoughts were that some of Jack's narrative appeared to be related to aspects of his experience which, to me, appeared un-related to transition. For example, Jack spoke at length about getting a dog during Year 6. This made me question whether there was a need to reach a joint understanding with participants prior to the interview regarding a conceptualisation of KS2-3 transition. On reflection, I may have been discounting the relevance of these aspects of Jack's transition experience and it may have been my own experiences, conceptualisation of transition and focus as a researcher which meant that I questioned the relevance of these aspects of Jack's story. I note that I did not ask any follow up questions regarding these experiences during Questioning phase. This was partly due to this information being un-related to my exmananet questions. However, it is worth considering whether potentially relevant insights could have been gained from asking follow-up questions. For example, "What was it like getting a dog at this time?" or "Why was playing on your trampoline important to you during Year 6?" From a Constructivist perspective, it was decided that attempting to reach a joint understanding with participants regarding a conceptualisation of KS2-3 transition may risk an unintentional power imbalance and may have also influenced what participants felt that I wanted to hear. As such, potentially relevant and insightful aspects of their stories may have been omitted due to their conceptualisation of what I as the 'audience' felt was relevant.

Reflective Diary Extract 2: Data Analysis

Data analysis appears to suggest that Ben and Jack may have a comparatively more negative KS2-3 transition experience than Oliver. I found that at times, I felt myself unintentionally categorising these participants into these broad categories of positive and negative. I was able to reflect upon the potential bias that this overly reductive shorthand I had arrived at for each

participant may impact on my interpretations of their experience, particularly in terms of Holistic-form analysis. For example, will my initial readings where I unintentionally reached a broad conclusion regarding trajectories influence the narrative plots I eventually produced? To address this, I feel that it will be important to ensure any interpretations can be justified with reference to the original data and plot lines can be backed up with illustrative extracts containing evaluative statements. This will be important in ensuring the plausibility of my interpretations.

Reflective Diary Extract 2: Data Analysis

During data analysis I questioned whether my interpretations as researcher aligned with those of the narrators. During categorical-content analysis, I questioned whether aspects of narratives I categorised as risk factors would be viewed in the same light by narrators. For example, some participants descriptions of behavioural sanctions appeared to be positive i.e., having time away from school, opportunities for gaming etc. However, as a researcher, I interpreted these events as a risk factors. This made me question whether the narrator's themselves would have categorised these aspects similarly and whether my own interpretations were creating a distance between the original narratives. However, I feel that by justifying these events as risk factors due to their apparent impact on the overall form of the story (e.g., apparent negative impact of repeated behavioural sanctions) and linking this to illustrative extracts may help to ensure my interpretations are grounded in the data.

Appendix 20. Sample of a Raw Interview Transcript

2. Year 6 is where like work starts to get harder and you have a bit of worry about year 7 and stuff. It's still pretty good it's just a bit, like you've got more work and there's more, it's a bit more stricter, but it's still not that like, hard.
3. And then like when you get to summer it's a bit, when you leave school, it's a bit sad but you know you've got your summer holidays and you've got to wait for your summer school, which is quite nice.
4. Then you get to make new friends and I think it's a lot different to how it was in year 5 and 6. But when you get to summer school, when you first get in its quite nervous, cos, you walk in and there's loads of new people. It's quite nervous and you get a bit anxious but when you sit down and you're with loads of new people, it's quite nice to talk to them and see what your new friends will be like.
5. When summer school is over, I think its two weeks, when it's over then you've kind of got your new friends and you get to speak to them on the phone and meet up with them, which is nice, cos when you get to year 7 you've got a group of friends already and that's nice to think about.
6. And Year 7 is like, you're quite happy but you've got mixed emotions about it. You're happy cos you've got your friends and you're like, it's like really nice and stuff. But then when you get there you've got a bit of worry about if you're going to miss your old school or if people won't understand you or stuff like that. Because you've been at your old school for so long, they know you, but when you go to a new school, the teachers have to understand what it's like and how you are and stuff.
7. But soon they'll understand what helps you and what doesn't and stuff. When they understand how you, when you've got your sets and school, when they understand how you're doing and what you struggle at, it's a lot easier.