An exploration of inclusion through the voices of young people in Secondary School

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List of Abbreviations

BPS – British Psychology Society

CASP - Critical Appraisal Skills Programme

EP – Educational Psychologist

EPS - Educational Psychology Service

LA – Local Authority

SENCo – Special Educational Needs Coordinator

SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disability

SLR – Systematic Literature Review

RTA – Reflexive Thematic Analysis

TEP – Trainee Educational Psychologist

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Abstract

Inclusion within education is seen as a right for all children and young people (Opertti et al, 2014). However, there appears to be different interpretations of inclusion within the field of research, policy and practice (Goransson & Nilholm, 2014). Within this study inclusion was viewed as the acceptance, participation and achievement of all children and young people (Ainscow et al, 2006). The importance of gathering pupil voice in relation to inclusion is widely acknowledged (Messiou, 2019; Shogren et al, 2015). Children and young people as key stakeholders in inclusion policy and practice can offer unique insights (Shogren et al, 2015) and have the ability to be a catalyst for change (Messiou, 2019). However, children and young people's perceptions and experiences of inclusion have had very little exploration (Koutsouris et al, 2024). Often research has taken a narrow view of inclusion and focused solely on hearing the voices of specific populations of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) (Adderley et al, 2015), ignoring that marginalisation and exclusion can occur for many reasons not solely due to SEND (Messiou, 2012).

The study aimed to explore the voices of young people in relation to their views and experiences of inclusion in their secondary school. Nine semi-structured interviews were undertaken with students in Years 9 and 10 in a mainstream secondary school in the North of England. The data was analysed through Reflexive Thematic Analysis, using an inductive approach. The findings illustrated six themes; 'school as a community', 'relationships matter', 'school systems that promote experiences of inclusion', 'social emotional pressures can impact on our inclusion, 'we all have a role to play', and 'unfairness erodes feelings of inclusion'. Following the presentation of the themes, they are discussed in relation to the previous literature and research on inclusion. The methodological limitations are outlined and addressed. Potential implications for schools, Educational Psychologists (EPs), Local Authorities (LAs) and Government are presented, alongside possible future research.

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1   Introduction

1.1   Focus and rationale of the research

Inclusion although widely acknowledged as important to ensuring the educational rights of all children and young people (Haug, 2017), is a complex construct with multiple definitions (Ainscow et al, 2006; Goransson & Nilholm, 2014), which leads to complexities in inclusion research, policy and practice in schools (Qvortup & Qvortup, 2018). When considering how to support schools with inclusion it is vital that key stakeholders are consulted and that includes children and young people (Shogren et al, 2015). Children and young people are able to provide a unique perspective on their school experience (Cook-Sather, 2006), however, children and young people's views and experiences of inclusion have had very little exploration (Koutsouris et al, 2024). Ainscow et al (1999) argue that through listening to the often hidden voices of children and young people improvements in inclusion in schools can occur. This research aims to listen to the voices of young people within a mainstream secondary school on their views and experiences of inclusion. The research takes the broad, principled view of inclusion as the acceptance, participation and achievement of all children and young people (Ainscow et al, 2006) and acknowledges that exclusion and marginalisation can occur for a number of reasons (Messiou, 2012).

1.2   Positionality of the Researcher

During the Doctoral training the researcher undertook her Year 2 and 3 placements in a Local Authority (LA), Educational Psychology Service (EPS) in the North of England. It was within this LA that the data collection was undertaken. The researcher has completed the analysis and write up of the research whilst working as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) in a different LA EPS in the North of England.

The researcher has prior experience working in both mainstream schools and in specialist educational settings with children and young people with complex Special Educational Needs, including a specialist residential education setting. The researcher developed her interest in inclusion and her own views on what inclusion means to her through these experiences and through the doctoral training. Following a taught session and debate around inclusion in Year 1 of the Doctoral Training the researcher found herself exploring and reflecting on her own views around inclusion. As outlined

in Chapter 2, the researcher takes the view in line with the principled view of inclusion to education and society and aligns with Ainscow et al (2006) that inclusion is a dynamic process that involves the participation, acceptance and achievement of all children and young people. The researcher feels that her values of inclusion and social justice underpin her approach to her work as a TEP.

Through her placement on her doctoral training, and through her current work as a TEP, the researcher has spent time in schools and has been able to begin to develop an understanding of their ethos and practices. The researcher has also undertaken specific casework focusing on supporting children and young people in school. At times the researcher felt frustrated that inclusion was not always at the centre of decisions being made around young people within schools. With the researcher often feeling the contradiction between inclusion and the standards agenda (outlined in section 2.2.3). This led the researcher to question how inclusive policies were put into practice and how the young people themselves experienced these policies.

The researcher attended a small rural secondary school in her own educational journey. Through the process of this research, the researcher reflected on similarities between her own experiences in a rural secondary school and those shared by the participants in their rural secondary school. The researcher is mindful that her experiences in her own educational setting was in another generation and therefore her experiences although they may feel at times similar are not the same. The researcher acknowledges that are a number of different pressures on young people that where not apparent when she attended school, e.g., a global pandemic, social media, cost of living crisis.

1.3   Outline of the research

The research is presented across six chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction. This chapter provides an overview of the focus and rationale of the research, the positioning of the researcher and the structure for the presentation of the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review. This chapter provides an overview of the existing literature into inclusion through a narrative literature review. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is also presented which explores what is known about inclusion from the voices of children and young people. The rationale for the current research is presented alongside the research question.

Chapter 3: Methodology. This chapter begins with the researcher outlining the philosophical standpoint of the research. An explanation of the method undertaken is discussed, alongside other methodologies not used. The sampling and recruitment process, data collection and analysis methods are shared. Finally, the ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the research are highlighted.

Chapter 4: Results. The findings from the Reflexive thematic analysis (TA) are presented.

Chapter 5: Discussion. The findings of the research are interpreted in relation to the research question posed. A methodological review of the research is presented. Followed by the discussion of the possible implications of the research on EPs, Schools, the LA and Government. Possible future research areas are then outlined.

Chapter 6: Conclusion. The final conclusions of the research are outlined.

Chapter 2   Literature Review

2.1   Introduction

Inclusion is a complex construct (Mitchell, 2006; Anderson et al, 2014) and schools are complex systems (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022). The term inclusion is referred to in educational research and international policy (Ainscow et al, 2006) and centres on policy, practice and culture which ensures diverse needs can be met regardless of the basis of these needs (Lambert & Frederickson, 2015). As the British Psychological Society (BPS) (2022) states without inclusive practice within education, an inclusive society is not achievable, instead resulting in divisions within society. However, as Tomlinson (2015) highlights there is still work to be done to ensure an inclusive education system for all. The literature review presented consists of a narrative literature review and a systematic literature review (SLR). The narrative literature review describes the difficulties defining the term inclusion, the historical context of inclusion and inclusive policy today. Two models of inclusion will be outlined, the Ecological Systems Model of Inclusion (Anderson et al, 2014) and the Complex Educational Systems Analysis (CESA) (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022). The narrative review goes on to discuss areas of research into inclusion before outlining pupil voice and discussing the importance of engaging with children and young people regarding their experiences of inclusion. A SLR of the literature investigating what is known about inclusion from the voices of children and young people is presented, followed by the outlining of the rationale and research question.

2.2   Understanding Inclusion

2.2.1   Defining Inclusion

The terms inclusion and inclusive education are frequently used in education policy, practice, and research (Anderson et al, 2014), however there appears to be range of definitions and meanings used (Messiou, 2012) and this can lead to confusion and tensions in the field (Haug, 2017).

Ainscow et al (2006) suggest that definitions of inclusion can take a descriptive form, focused on how inclusion is used in practice, or definitions can be prescriptive and

outline the way the term is intended to be understood and applied. Armstrong et al (2011) critique this distinction arguing that how inclusion is applied is not independent of how policies prescribe the term.

An alternative classification of definitions of inclusion is to view them as narrow or broad. Where narrow definitions outline inclusion in terms of specific populations or groups of children, namely children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) (Haug, 2017), in contrast to broad definitions that refer to the diversity of all learners within the school community (Armstrong et al, 2014). The British Psychological Society's (BPS) (2002) definition of inclusion falls within this broad category. The BPS (2002) state that inclusion centres on children's rights to participate in education and within this is a duty from schools to accept them. This is achieved through the rejection of segregation or exclusion for any reason, increasing all learner's participation in the school of their choice, focusing on meaningful learning and restructuring policies, practice, culture and the curriculum to ensure diverse needs are being met (BPS, 2002). This view of inclusion sees the concept as ensuring the rights of all children to an inclusive learning environment (Opertti et al, 2014).

Qvortup and Qvortup (2018) highlight how differing definitions of inclusion cause difficulties for researchers as there is not an agreed definition to work to as well as having implications for policy makers and those who implement inclusive practice. The inconsistency of definitions can lead to discussions around inclusion becoming stagnant and can impact on the engagement of stakeholders and the understanding of inclusion from the general public (Opertti et al, 2014).

As noted, it is important to have a clear description of inclusion to aid understanding of how to support it and to be able to identify actions that enhance or decrease it (Ainscow et al, 2006). Goransson and Nilholm (2014) in their critical analysis of inclusion research identified four categories of inclusion definitions. The categories are shown in Table 1 with a description of each definition.

Goransson and Nilholm (2014) place these categories as a hierarchy from A up to D, with each category presupposing the category before it. Categories A and B centre inclusion within the narrow definition of special educational needs discourse and

categories C and D places inclusion within the broader general education discourse (Goransson & Nilholm, 2014).

Category of Definition			
A. Placement	**B. Specified Individualised**	**C. General Individualised**	**D. Community**
Refers to inclusion as the placement of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools/classes	Refers to inclusion as meeting the social and academic needs of children with special educational needs	Refers to inclusion as meeting the social and academic needs of *all* pupils	Refers to inclusion as the creation of communities with specific characteristics.

Table 1. Categories of inclusion definition taken from Goransson & Nilholm (2014)

Alternatively, Ainscow et al (2006) identified six ways that inclusion can be conceptualised:

- *Inclusion as a concern with disabled students and others categorised as "having special educational needs"*
- *Inclusion as a response to disciplinary exclusion*
- *Inclusion in relation to all groups seen as vulnerable to exclusion*
- *Inclusion as developing the school for all.*
- *Inclusion as "Education for All"*
- *Inclusion as a principled approach to education and society.*

(*Ainscow et al, 2006, p.15*)

The final interpretation of inclusion as being a "principled approach" views inclusion as a dynamic, continuous process (Messiou, 2012) and involves all children in schools being present, accepted, participating and achieving (Ainscow et al, 2006). This view of inclusion moves away from discussions solely around the location of where children are educated. Within this definition presence refers to the extent children are located in mainstream provisions (Farrell, 2004) and shares similarities with the concept of

integration (Farrell, 2004) (discussed further in section 2.2.2). Schuelka and Engsig (2022) critique the notion of presence in the definition of inclusion as they argue physical attendance does not equate to being included. Acceptance relates to the extent that others within the school community welcome all children as active members of the community (Farrell, 2004). Achievement centres around the extent to which children and young people in the school learn and how they view themselves as learners (Farrell, 2004). Finally, participation in this definition, focuses on the extent to which all children and young people are able to make active contributions in all areas of the school (Farrell, 2004).

Differences in definitions suggest differences in beliefs about what school can and should accomplish (Goransson & Nilholm, 2014). Schuelka (2018) highlights how the term "Inclusive education" is often thought of as educating children with disabilities and although this has and continues to be a primary motivator, inclusion has transcended this narrow definition into a broader conceptualisation (Qvortup & Qvortup, 2018). The refocus to situate inclusion within a wider context than solely special educational needs centres around the view that exclusion and marginalisation occur due to many different reasons (Adderley et al, 2014; Messiou, 2019).

This section has highlighted the large number of varying conceptualisations of inclusion to demonstrate the complexities of defining the term inclusion, with inclusion meaning different things to different people in different contexts. It is important researchers provide a clear outline of the definition they are employing in their research (Anderson et al, 2014; Magnusson, 2019) as without a clear definition it is difficult to evaluate if practices are in fact inclusive (Farrell, 2004). Therefore, the researcher takes the view in line with Ainscow et al (2006) that inclusion is a dynamic process that involves the acceptance, participation, and achievement of all children and young people.

2.2.2   Historical Context of Inclusion in the UK

To understand inclusion, it is important to have an awareness of its history (Qvortup & Qvortup, 2018) and understand how it has developed within the UK over the last 70 years (Opertti et al, 2014). There are significant differences between inclusion and the ideas and practice that came before it (Thomas & Vaughan, 2004).

Educational provision for children with disabilities was first implemented in the 18th century for children with visual and/or hearing impairments (Armstrong, 2007) and these schools laid the foundation for educating children with disabilities for the next 200 years (Lambert & Frederickson, 2015). Termed segregation, this provision saw children and young people with special educational needs being taught away from typically developing peers in special schools (Lambert & Frederickson, 2015). It was not until the 1970 Education Act that all children, regardless of learning difficulty or need, were entitled to an education (Armstrong, 2007).

The Warnock Report (DES, 1978), followed by the Education Act (DSE, 1981) first coined the term "special educational needs" (Shaw, 2017) and challenged the assumption that children with learning difficulty or disability required specialist provision (Armstrong, 2007). The Warnock Report (DES, 1978) encouraged integration into mainstream schools for children with special educational needs (Shaw, 2017). Integration refers to the physical placement of students with special educational needs in mainstream settings (Carrington & Holm, 2005) and is often described as the child being required to fit into the current systems within the mainstream school (Lambert & Frederickson, 2015). The Warnock Committee identified and recommended three different types of integration; locational through the implementation of special units for children with SEN, social where children with SEN integrated at lunch or play times and functional where children with SEN were in mainstream classes, either part or full time (Thomas & Vaughan, 2004). This policy of integration did not eradicate marginalisation or discrimination (Haug, 2017) and Thomas and Vaughan (2004) state that it enabled segregation of children with SEN to continue. A shift from integration to inclusion occurred in the late 1980s and beginning of the 1990s (Thomas & Vaughan, 2004).

It is 30 years since the World Conference on Special Needs Education and the adoption of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). This document has been positioned as the most internationally significant document in the field of inclusion and special education (Ainscow et al, 2019). The statement was agreed by 92 governments and 25 international organisations (Ainscow et al, 2019) and aimed to bring consensus to the

future directions of inclusion and educating children with SEN (UNESCO,1994). Paragraph two of the Salamanca statement states that:

- *"Every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning,*
- *Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs,*
- *Education systems should be designed, and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs,*
- *Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs*
- *Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all…"*

(UNESCO, 1994, pp. viii-ix)

The Salamanca Statement has received criticism for not being explicit enough in defining inclusive education (Magnusson, 2019) and this has led to the wide range of interpretations of inclusion, as highlighted in section 2.2.1.

2.2.3   Current context in England

To further understand inclusion, it is important to consider the current UK context around inclusion within schools. Due to devolution of education within the four UK countries governments, this section will focus solely on the context in England, the country in which this research is being undertaken. The justification for moving towards inclusive schools can be seen as educational, social and economic (Ainscow et al, 2019). Educational justifications centre on the need for teaching to respond to individual difference which will benefit all children (Kalambouka et al, 2007; Ainscow et al, 2019). The social justification for inclusion relates to changing attitudes and creating a non-discriminatory society (Ainscow et al, 2019). This can be for both students and teachers in developing their understanding and value of difference (Anderson et al, 2014). The social driver for inclusion is underpinned by the Equality Act (2010). In

terms of economic justification this argument centres on the view that an education system that is fully inclusive may be more cost-effective (BPS, 2022).

Developing an inclusive education system is impacted by other policies within the education system (Magnusson, 2019). There appears to be a tension within England's education system between the principles signed up to in the Salamanca Statement, of inclusion for all, and the more neo-liberal approaches to education, where output of education is the key driver (Beaton & Spratt, 2019). The standards agenda sees schools operating under pressure to demonstrate impressive results and be rated highly by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) (Beaton & Spratt, 2019). With some critics suggesting this drives schools to reject students who will not provide them with these sought after results (Norwich, 2014; Frederickson & Cline, 2002), therefore undermining inclusion. The pressures on schools from the standards agenda, league tables and Ofsted create a climate where schools are accountable for their actions in terms of the results they achieve, rather than their inclusion (Williams-Brown & Hodkinson, 2021). Williams-Brown and Hodkinson (2021) highlight that within these conditions participation and achievement for all is not achievable as it creates barriers for those children and young people who cannot meet the high achievement expectations. Through the pressures on schools to meet the expectations of the standards agenda, the focus of schools on creating a supportive community has been questioned (Osterman, 2000).

There are however policies within England that promote the values of the Salamanca statement and aim to develop inclusive practices (Beaton & Spratt, 2019). The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0-25 Years (DfE & DoH, 2014) highlights the value of diversity within education and schools and calls for the identification and support of Special Educational Needs to not be viewed as a separate system but built into educational practice (Beaton & Spratt, 2019).

The tensions seen within the current English context further highlights how inclusion is not a simple process, but one that is impacted by ideology, policy, and stakeholders' views (Knight et al, 2023).

2.3   Inclusion Frameworks

A framework is defined as a structure that involves a collection of features that work in partnership (Kelly, 2008). This section will consider inclusion through the presentation of two different frameworks, an Ecological Model of Inclusion (Anderson et al, 2014) and the Complex Educational Systems Analysis (CESA) (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022).

2.3.1   Ecological Model of Inclusion

Anderson et al (2014) conceptualised inclusion through drawing on ecological systems theory developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979). Anderson et al (2014) argue that when researching inclusion researchers need to consider the relationships between individuals, the environment, and societal systems in place. Schools are not operating within their own vacuums but within their community, as well as national, global and historical contexts (Anderson et al, 2014). Inclusion occurs at *"the interface between teacher and pupil; pupil and peers and pupil and the school environment"* (Adderley et al, 2014, p108) therefore suggesting it is vital to consider the varying systems involved in inclusion.

Within the framework, shown in Figure 1, the learner sits at the centre with participating, achieving and the value of the person being the outcomes of inclusion (Anderson et al, 2014). The model views participating as the learner being engaged both socially and academically in multiple aspects of the school environment and achieving as accessing learning and assessments meaningfully to them (Anderson et al, 2014). Value within this model is defined as being accepted, respected and viewed as important (Anderson et al, 2014). The model states that the many facets within the multiple systems of the ecology influence the learner and their experience of inclusion (Anderson et al, 2014). The micro-system is the system that the learner directly interacts with (Anderson et al, 2014), such as their peers, teachers, learning environment. The meso-system is where the elements within the micro-system interact with each other as they do not occur in a vacuum (Anderson et al, 2014). The exo-system refers to the elements that the learner does not directly interact with but still influence their world, such as staffing structures, school ethos, or school policies (Anderson et al, 2014). This is followed by the macro-system, which the learner does not have direct interaction with, but interacts with the other systems, such as the

historical, political and societal contexts at play (Anderson et al, 2014). Finally, the chrono-system relates to the movement of time and within the model relates to the years in education of the learner (Anderson et al, 2014).

Each factor is influenced by other factors within the same and other systems (Anderson et al, 2014). An ecological model of inclusion provides equal emphasis on the individual child's characteristics, the school, and the national context (Kefallioni, 2019) and allows for exploration within and across systems (Kefallioni, 2019).

Figure 1. Ecology of inclusive education (Anderson et al, 2014)
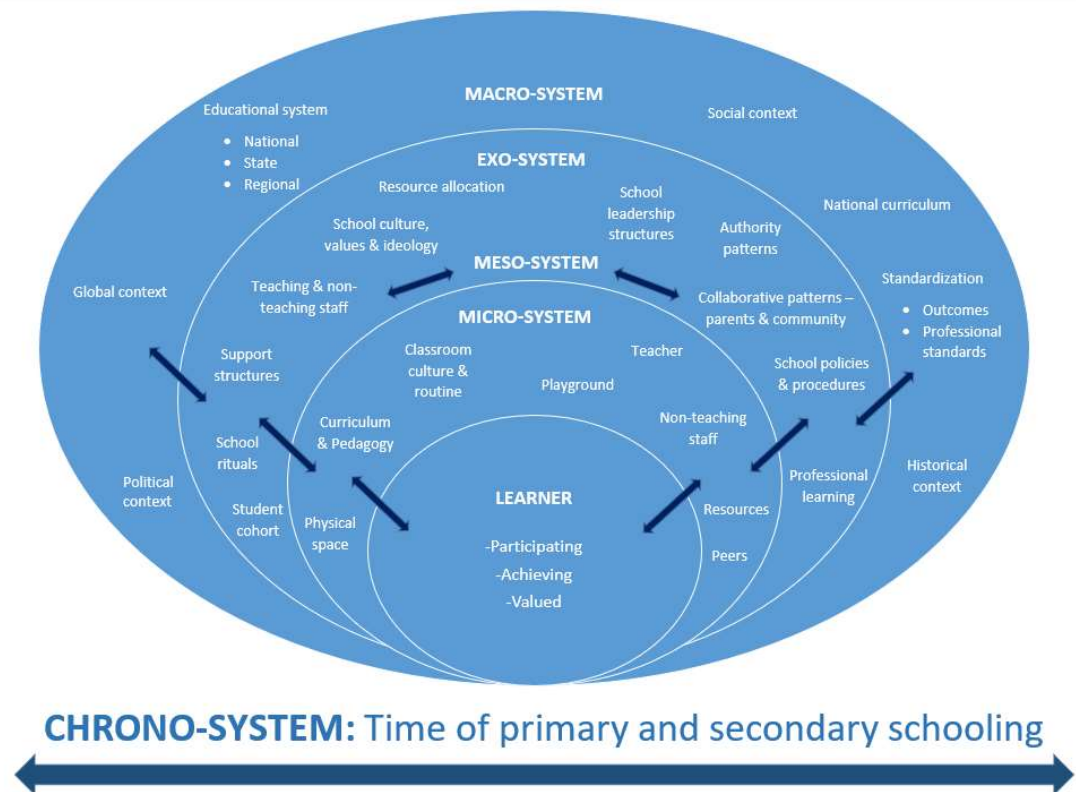
The model acknowledges the complex and somewhat messy systems schools' function within and Anderson et al (2014) suggest that this model does not attempt to simplify this complexity but provides an operational and theoretical framework to position research which can be applied to both qualitative and quantitative research.

2.3.2 Complex Educational Systems Analysis (CESA)

Schuelka and Engsig (2022) developed the CESA framework to support understanding and exploration of inclusion. Within the model inclusion is not seen as a distinct part of education but as education itself (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022), which fits with the broad view of inclusion as for all children and young people. The model is described as multidimensional with vertical and horizontal inclusion occurring across communities (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022). The model is represented in figure 2.

Figure 2. Visual representation of the Complex Educational Systems Analysis Framework
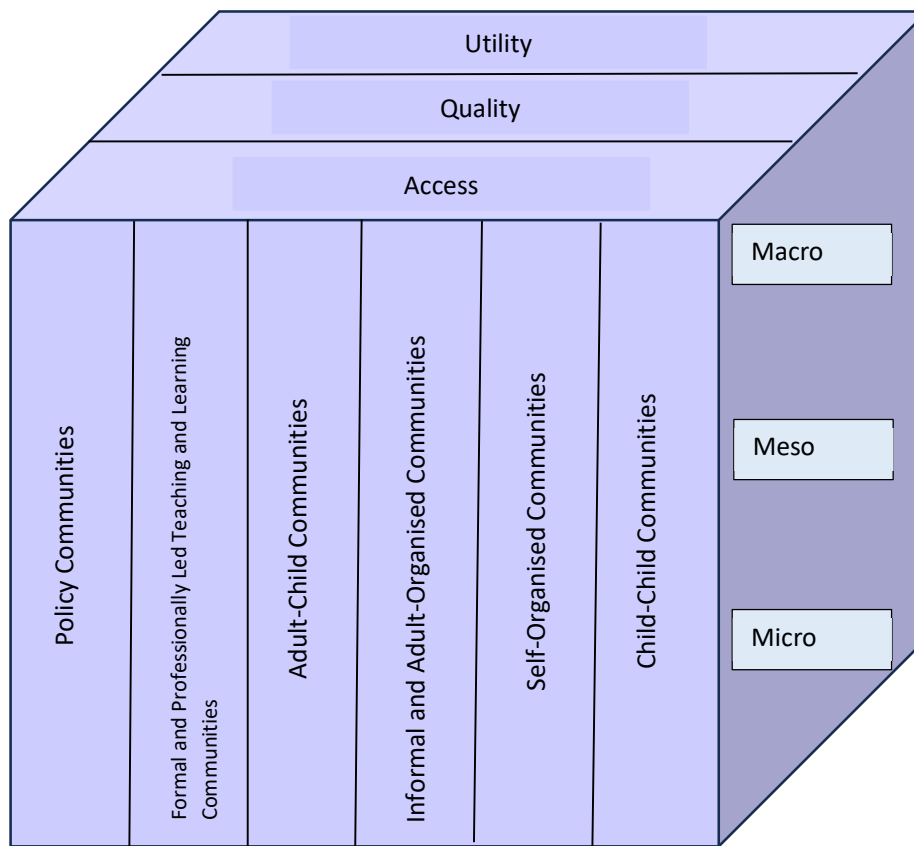
The CESA framework also draws on Bronfenbrenner (1979) ecological systems theory, viewing schools as complex, dynamic, socio-cultural environments (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022). The model draws on the micro-, meso-, and macro- systems within the ecological systems framework. These being the systems that the child directly interacts

with, where the elements of the micro system interact with each other and the overarching societal contexts that have influence on the individual (Anderson et al, 2014). Each of these systems are connected with each community and attribution (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022), which are outlined below.

The horizontal inclusion refers to the multiple communities the child is a part of within school (Schuelka &Engsig, 2022). There are six communities that make up the framework:

- Policy communities are the formal and informal policies that exist within the school and can be from a government level down to classroom level.
- Formal and professionally led teaching and learning communities are structured, teacher led, educational interactions.
- Adult-child communities refer to the adult and child interactions that happen informally.
- Informal and adult organised communities are those where there is no explicit purpose or aim.
- Self-organised communities are those which are organised and managed by the children and young people and do not have input from the adults within school.
- Child-child communities are the interpersonal interactions between children and young people in the school setting.

(Schuelka & Engsig, 2022)

Within the framework is the notion of vertical inclusion, this relates to depth of inclusion (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022). The framework suggests that children and young people can be included to different levels in the communities. Physical inclusion relates to being physically present and social inclusion refers to the active participation of the individual (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022). The experienced level of inclusion relates to the child or young person's subjective experience of being included (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022). Due to inclusion occurring across different levels and different communities, an individual can experience inclusion in one community and at the same time experience exclusion in another (Qvortup & Qvortup, 2018).

The final dimension of the framework is the educational attributes dimension. Access refers to a young person being able to physically access school, the learning materials, and the curriculum, have access to quality teaching, and access to an inclusive school system (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022). The attribution of quality refers to educational quality on offer (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022). The attribution of utility refers to the questioning of the purpose of school and if this aligns with what is offered and the educational outcomes (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022). The framework suggests that these attributes are interconnected and have influence on each other (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022).

Schuelka and Engsig (2022) suggest that the model can be used to support the development of inclusion in schools through working with schools to understand their current systems and structures and build upon what is already there.

2.4   How is inclusion facilitated in schools?

When considering the difficulties in defining inclusion (Messiou, 2012; Haug, 2017) and the complexities and tension within England's education system (Beaton & Spratt, 2019; Koutsouris et al, 2024), it is important to explore how inclusion can be facilitated in schools. Due to the word constraints of this narrative review, a brief overview of a framework to support inclusion at the whole school level will be outlined alongside literature on developing inclusion within the classroom.

One framework to support inclusion in schools is the Index for Inclusion, developed by Booth & Ainscow (2002), which has been applied internationally (Azorin & Aniscow, 2018). This framework aims to support schools on their path to inclusion through exploration and reflection on their culture, policies and practices (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). It is suggested that by undertaking this reflection schools can identify any potential barriers to inclusion (Azorin & Ainscow, 2018). The focus in creating inclusive cultures is on building a community that is accepting and values all, as well as a culture that fosters inclusive values (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Developing inclusive policies within the index focuses on inclusion being central to all school policies (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Finally, evolving inclusive practices refers to how practice should reflect the inclusive policies and cultures within the school, facilitate lessons that are

responsive to student diversity and encourage the active participation of all students. (Booth & Ainscow, 2002).

When considering how to create inclusive classrooms the notion of inclusive pedagogies has been developed. Inclusive pedagogies are the strategies used by teachers to respond to individual learning needs whilst avoiding marginalisation or exclusion through treating individuals differently (Koutsouris et al, 2024). Florian and Black-Hawkin (2011) identified actions teachers can take to implement inclusive teaching within their Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action framework. The framework follows several assumptions. Firstly, the assumption that teachers should shift their focus of inclusion from those identified as having additional needs to the learning of all (Florian & Black-Hawkin, 2011). This should lead to teachers extending learning that is ordinarily available to all, instead of learning that is for the majority with something different for those who struggle (Koutsouris et al, 2024). Florian and Beaton (2018) argue that differentiation can lead to children and young people experiencing exclusion whilst still being present in the classroom. Secondly, the framework assumes that teachers will reject notions of fixed ability, and the idea that the presence of less able students will hold others back (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). This assumption posits that ability grouping should not occur (Koutsouris et al, 2024). The final assumption is that teachers view difference in learning not as a deficit but as a challenge professionally (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). To implement strategies related to these assumptions, teachers should provide autonomy and choice to students in how they learn; consult with students on how they can best support their learning; create conditions that enable group work; seek support and advice from SENCo's and other teachers; trust students to make their own decisions on their learning (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Koutsouris et al (2024) critique the Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action framework through highlighting the contradiction existing between not treating children differently and responding to their individual needs. Therefore, questioning how these opposing ideas can be put into action effectively (Koutsouris et al, 2024).

Finkelstein et al (2021) identified five themes in relation to teacher practices that support inclusion. Collaboration and teamwork refer to how teachers work with other

professionals in the classroom (Finkelstein et al, 2021). This could be other members of staff, the parents/carers of the students or external professionals such as EPs. Instructional practices refer to the methods the teacher takes to ensure learning is individualised, encourages agency, is differentiated, includes choice and supports peer learning (Finkelstein et al, 2021). Organisational practices relate to how classrooms are organised to support access for all students (Finkelstein et al, 2021). Determining progress refers to how teachers assess and monitor the children and young people, for example through Individualised Education Plans or Education, Health and Care Plans and through their choice and use of assessments (Finkelstein et al, 2021). Finally social, emotional and behavioural practices relate to the measures teachers take to ensure a learning environment where social and emotional needs are met (Finkelstein et al, 2021). Finkelstein et al (2021) highlight how this theme is vital to inclusive practice.

A final point to note when considering how schools facilitate inclusion in the classroom is that of Florian and Beaton (2018) who suggest positive experiences of inclusion might be less about the kind of strategies employed by the teacher and more about the way the strategies are carried out. Suggesting that how approaches are introduced and maintained has a potential greater impact than the approach itself (Koutsouris et al, 2024).

This section has briefly outlined different approaches schools can undertake to support to develop inclusion within the setting, both at a whole school level and within the classroom. As with the tensions and dilemmas raised within the definition of inclusion and within the standards agenda, there appears to be tension and dilemmas within how to facilitate inclusive practices in schools.

2.5   Topics in Inclusion Research

This section will discuss the focus of research into inclusion in education. Research around inclusion has focused on exploring empirical factors such as the effectiveness of inclusion (Farrell, 2004) and on exploring the complex social factors that impact on inclusion (Farrell, 2004).

Messiou (2017) in her review of inclusion research carried out between 2005 and 2015 aimed to identify the focus of the research and the types of methodology used. It is important to note that this review was carried out on research published in the International Journal of Inclusive Education therefore omitting any other research on inclusion that was published in other journals. Due to this, the findings should be interpreted with caution, as they do not represent the focus or methodologies of all research that has been undertaken around inclusion during the period examined. Messiou (2017) analysed 604 journal articles and found that research focusing on SEN and disability made the largest proportion of research articles, 15% and 21% respectively. Additionally, Messiou (2017) highlighted that 82% of studies reviewed focused on specific populations, such as ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, or children with behavioural difficulties. This suggests that researchers were employing a narrow definition of inclusion. Only 8% of studies focused on the broader concept of inclusion and considered inclusion in relation to the diversity of all children (Messiou, 2017). Some authors argue that by focusing research on specific populations and aiming to apply findings to remove the barriers to participation in these populations then inclusive practices are improved which provides a benefit to all children and young people (Messiou, 2017). However, if one takes the view of inclusion as a principled approach, relating to the inclusion and diversity of all learners, the approach to solely focus on one category or population is not compatible (Messiou, 2017). Messiou (2017) argues that by creating divisions through this approach to research, progress in developing inclusion and inclusive practices is unlikely to occur.

Messiou (2017) identified that thirty-eight percent of the studies used qualitative methodologies, 12% applied quantitative methodologies and 3% used collaborative methods employing active participation from the participants (Messiou, 2017). Messiou's (2017) review highlighted that most research into inclusion has focused on specific groups of students and has applied qualitative research methods.

Hernandez-Torrano et al (2020) using a bibliometric research methodology reviewed the research literature on inclusion published since the adoption of the Salamanca statement. From 7084 studies, Hernandez-Torrano, Somerton and Helmer (2020) identified that research into inclusion has predominantly focused on teachers'

attitudes towards inclusion and inclusive education, practices, and principles for promoting inclusion, the participation of children with SEN and in-service professional development. These findings are supported by Van Mieghem et al's (2020) meta review of 26 studies of inclusive education where five main themes were identified from the literature. Firstly, attitudes towards inclusive education which included studies focusing on teacher, parents, or peers' attitudes to inclusion. Other themes included teacher's professional development in relation to inclusive education, inclusive practices, participation of students and undertaking research into inclusion (Van Mieghem et al, 2020). The meta-analysis also considered gaps in the research literature and highlighted that future research could explore attitudes of children and young people in relation to inclusion.

This section has highlighted findings from recent reviews into the types of research that has been carried out in the field of inclusion. The findings show that inclusion research is often taking the narrow view of inclusion and focusing in on specific populations of children or focused on the views of adults. Furthermore, research has called for exploration of the views of children and young people in relation to their experiences.

2.6   The role of Educational Psychology and Inclusion

Szulevicz & Tanggard (2017) argue that EPs face challenges in promoting inclusion due to the contradictions evident in definition and policy. Furthermore, historically the role of EPs and in particular the undertaking of psychometric testing led to segregation of students (Szulevicz & Tanggard, 2017) and therefore EPs need to be looking at how as a profession they develop their practice to enable inclusive education.

To create an inclusive education system, it is argued that a shift is needed within EP practice away from focusing on individuals to look at developing inclusive schools and communities (Ainscow, 2019; Forlin, 2010). EPs work at different levels within their role, an individual level, a group level, and a systemic level (Farrell, 2004). The BPS (2022) in their position paper on inclusion state that EPs are able to support schools in their process of inclusion through a number of methods. From modelling acceptance

and promoting inclusive values within their practice to supporting the adults and the children EPs work with to develop inclusive attitudes and values (BPS, 2022). EPs can use the findings of research to support the development of inclusion in their practice and inform policy (Farrell, 2004) and should strive to support schools to enable full participation for all pupils within schools (BPS, 2022).

2.7   Pupil Voice

To support the understanding of inclusion to inform policies within schools, researchers have called for research that considers multiple perspectives (Schuelka, 2018) and this includes the voices of children and young people (Erten & Savage, 2011; Kefallinou, 2019). The following section of the literature review will outline what is meant by pupil voice, its importance and provide a critique of pupil voice research, before discussing pupil voice within the field of inclusion research.

2.7.1   Understanding Pupil Voice

As noted with the term inclusion, the term pupil voice can mean different things in different contexts (Whitty & Wisby, 2007) and Cook-Sather (2006) argues that a fixed definition of the term does not exist. The idea of pupil voice within education comes from the view that children and young people hold unique perspectives on their school experience, and these views should be acknowledged and acted on by the adults around them (Cook-Sather, 2006). Robinson and Taylor (2012) suggest that although sharing of views and experiences is key to pupil voice, children and young people should also be able to evoke change through the sharing of their voices. Pupil voice can therefore be seen as a broad notion (Whitty & Wisby, 2007), encompassing all opportunities children and young people have to share their views of the things that affect them in school (Robinson & Taylor, 2012). Alternatively, it can be seen more narrowly as active participation with the structures and systems that impact on school experience to generate knowledge that enables change to occur (Cook-Sather, 2006).

2.7.2   Importance of gaining Pupil Voice in research

Many researchers have outlined the key driving force in gathering pupil voice is the rights agenda (Lewis et al, 2007; Whitby & Wisby, 2007). Articles 12 of United Nation

(UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child outlines that all children and young people have the right to express their views (UN, 1989). This driver is one of principle, that children should be consulted on matters that impact them (Whitty & Wisby, 2007). Whitty and Wisby (2007) in their review of pupil voice in the UK, suggest that three further arguments can be made for obtaining pupil voice:

- active citizenship – whereby children and young people will learn skills to enable effective participation in society,
- school improvement – whereby pupil voice can support attainment and standards through being consulted around learning or behaviour,
- and personalisation – whereby pupil voice links to developing a user-led education provision in line with consumerism.

(Whitty & Wisby, 2007)

2.7.3   Critique of Gaining Pupil Voice

As Jones and Bubb (2019) state the literature is predominantly in support of gaining pupil voice, with little debate on the moral imperative (Grieg et al, 2014). However, there are many challenges facing those who are aiming to capture pupil voice (Wood, 2011; Facca et al, 2020). In particular when working within educational systems where promoting agency can lead to clashes with educational practices (Greig et al, 2014) and with the power dynamics of the adults (Robinson & Taylor, 2012). This then relates to the ethical dilemma of young people sharing their voices when no direct change occurs as a result (Caslin, 2022), often leading to disillusionment for the children and young people (Messiou, 2019).

A further concern within capturing pupil voice is if the voices captured provide a meaningful representation of children and young people's voices or if it is limited to those individuals whose voices are easier to access (Wood, 2011). Within research in schools, adults within the school often play a key role in supporting recruitment of students to take part and as Caslin (2002) states this raises concerns that it will be those in positions most able to articulate their views who take part.

Adderley et al (2014) highlight a distinction between engaging in dialogue with children and young people on adult initiated areas and topics which are initiated by

the children themselves centring on areas that are important to them. When engaging in solely adult led areas, views can be gathered on a topic, but researchers may end up neglecting areas that are important to the children and young people themselves (Messiou, 2019) or may be reluctant to engage in discussions on a topic of little interest (Wood, 2011).

2.7.4   Pupil Voice and Inclusion

Schuelka (2018) states that exploring inclusive education needs to include experiences, and be investigated in context (Adderley et al, 2015), i.e., in schools. Children and young people are key stakeholders in inclusion and inclusive practices, whose insights and perspectives can be used to inform practice (Shogren et al, 2015). As children and young people experience inclusive policy and practice in their schools daily, they can provide a unique insight into how these policies and practices are experienced (Shogren et al, 2015). Messiou (2019) positions children's voice as a catalyst for developing inclusive practices, supporting to develop and change thinking.

Listening to children and young people's views in essence promotes inclusion (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018) and enables them to have a role in developing inclusive practices in schools (Adderley et al, 2015). Messiou (2012) developed a framework for promoting inclusion that holds pupil voice at the centre, the 4-step framework as shown in figure 3 can be used by schools to promote inclusion (Messiou, 2012).

Step one of the framework requires working collaboratively with pupils to hear their views using a wide range of techniques to elicit their voices. Following on step two involves analysing the pupil voice that has been gathered, to identify areas where inclusion may not be happening. Messiou (2012) states that in this step, adults need to challenge their own assumptions on situations and really hear the voices of the children. Step three requires the information to be shared wider with children and adults within the setting, ensuring anonymity of pupils (Messiou, 2012). Step four is collaboration between children and adults to address the issues that have been raised and decide on the actions that will be taken (Messiou, 2012). Messiou (2012) highlights how this framework is a cyclical process and in line with the view that working to promote inclusion is a continuous process.

Figure 3. A developing framework for promoting inclusion (Messiou, 2012).

When we consider the broad definition of inclusion and its focus on the participation, acceptance, and achievement of all children who may be at risk of marginalisation for multiple reasons, then it is vital that the voices of children and young people are explored and listened to. As key stakeholders within education their experiences should be represented to support deeper understanding of inclusion within schools (Lewis et al, 2007). Tangen (2009) argues that children and young people's perspectives can provide an influential contribution to the inclusion debate*,* as well as supporting us to challenge our own assumptions and perspectives on inclusion (Carrington & Holm, 2005). The literature review will now consider the research exploring pupil voice and inclusion through a SLR.

2.8   Systematic Literature Review

2.8.1   Outline of a Systematic Literature Review

Petticrew and Roberts (2006) define the aims of a systematic literature review as identifying, appraising, and synthesising evidence from the research literature in order

to answer a predetermined question. Although initially systematic literature reviews focused solely on quantitative data, Long et al (2020) highlight that there has been a shift within systematic reviews to include qualitative research due to the recognition of the contribution qualitative research can make.

As discussed so far within the literature review, there is a clear importance of hearing the voices of children and young people around the topic of inclusion. Therefore, the systematic literature presented within this research aims to answer the following question:

What is known about inclusion from the voices of children and young people?

2.8.2   Eligibility criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria are shown in table 2. As the researcher takes a principled approach to defining inclusion and sees this as the achievement, acceptance and participation of all learners, research that solely focused on a specific population of students in school was excluded. Qualitative or mixed method research designs were included as the research question aimed to explore what is known about inclusion from perspectives and voices of children and young people and therefore methodologies that allow for pupil voice to be elicited were included. Studies needed to be written in English and be from a peer reviewed journal publication. Views of children in primary and secondary education were included, whereas views of young people in higher education were not included. This is due to the researcher's role as a TEP supporting in Primary and Secondary educational settings and therefore holding a professional interest in these age groups. Studies that solely focused on the views of educational staff or parents were excluded. The decision was made to only include studies conducted within the UK due to the differing of educational systems around the world and therefore how inclusion may be experienced.

Inclusion	Exclusion
Views of children and young people in primary education	Views of young people in higher education
Views of children and young people in secondary education	Limited to views of adults/parents/carers.
Focus on understanding and experiences of inclusion of all learners	Limited to a specific population e.g., ASD
Qualitative or mixed method methodology	Quantitative only methodology
Peer reviewed articles	Book chapters or grey literature
Studies conducted in the UK	Studies outside of the UK
Written in English	Not written in English

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion criteria used in the SLR

2.8.3 Information Sources and Search Strategy

Searches were initially carried out in March 2022 and repeated in February 2024. Three electronic databases were used in the search: Scopus, Web of Science and EtHos. Truncation versions of word were applied using * to some search terms to capture variations of the key words. Consistent terms were used across all databases and included the search terms child*, pupil*, student* to elicit results relating to children. The terms voice*, view*, experience* and perception* were applied to elicit results relating to the voices of children. The Boolean term OR was used between each synonym or word variation and the Boolean term AND was used between the first and the last search fields. Searches for each database can be found in Appendix 1.

2.8.4 Study Selection

The systematic search of the databases resulted in 1623 records (ERIC: 820, Scopus: 769 and EtHos: 34). 257 duplicates were removed, and 1366 studies were screened at title and abstract for relevance with 1329 studies removed. Reasons for removal included studies not from the UK, studies not in English and studies related to teacher or parents' attitudes to inclusion. 37 studies were reviewed at abstract level and a further 21 studies were removed.

Full text was obtained for 15 studies, the full text of one study was not accessible and therefore unable to be included in the review. The 15 studies were read in full and reviewed against the inclusion and exclusion criteria as outlined in table 2. Eleven studies were excluded from the review following reading at full text level. The reasons for excluding studies included, studies not being in the UK, studies not containing findings of pupil voice from the research, and a study focusing on one specific population of children. See Appendix 2 for further detail on the decisions to include or exclude studies. Four studies met the inclusion criteria and will be included in the review. Figure 4 provides a visual representation of the systematic search strategy

2.8.5   Study Characteristics

Data was extracted from the four studies and is shown in the data extraction table (Table 3). Data extraction included the aims of the research, research design and methods of data collection, data analysis, recruitment and sampling and key findings.

Three of the studies used a qualitative research design and one used a mixed method design, however, Dimiterllou and Male (2020) did not report the findings of their questionnaire data within the study and only reported the analysis of the interview data. Three of the studies were conducted within primary schools, with children ranging from ages four to eleven, and one of the studies, Dimitrellou and Male (2020) was conducted with secondary aged students. Adderley et al (2015), Black Hawkins et al (2022) and Shaw et al (2021) all gathered data through group interviews, with Dimiterllou and Male (2020) using individual interviews. Adderley at al (2015) and Shaw et al (2021) used participatory methods to support their group interviews, e.g., drawing activities, blob tress, photographs. All of the studies analysed their data using thematic analysis, however only Dimitrellou and Male (2020) referenced a specific method for this, Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis method. However, all of the studies did discuss coding data and developing themes from the codes when discussing their analysis methods.

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Figure 4. Flowchart illustrating the systematic search and screening process. (Adapted from Page et al, 2020)

Identification of studies via databases

Identification

Records identified from:
    ERIC (n = 820)
    Scopus (n = 769)
    EthOs (n = 34)

Total (n = 1623)

Records removed *before screening*:
    Duplicate records removed (n = 257)

Screening

Records screened at title
(n =1366)

Records excluded
(n = 1329)

Records screened at abstract
(n = 37)

Records excluded
(n = 21)

Records screened via full text for eligibility
(n = 15)

Unable to obtain paper
(n = 1)

Included

Studies included in review
(n = 4)

Author &Year	Research Questions/ Study Aims	Design	Sample/ Recruitment	Key Findings	Critique/CASP Appraisal
Adderley et al (2015)	To explore children's views around the ways in which teachers promote or hinder inclusion in the classroom. To explore the use of different tools to facilitate pupil voice.	Qualitative research method. Group Interviews, incorporating participatory tools to support facilitation, e.g., blob trees, drawing. Thematic analysis completed by pairs of researchers for each Year groups' interviews. All data then collectively analysed as a group by all researchers.	One school. 48 children from Years 1, 3 and 5. Aged between 5 years and 9 years.	Four key themes emerged that were seen to potentially hinder inclusion: Unfairness. In relation to power between children and teachers, access to resources (food, equipment) and behaviour management. Findings indicated that perceived unfairness damaged children's relationships with teachers and with their peers. Shouting. This was seen in relation to losing items or not following an instruction. One participant response indicated that being himself was what warranted this response from adults. Loneliness. The participants highlighted social aspects of inclusion and discussed playtimes and friendships during the interviews, in particular feelings around being excluded from play. Loneliness within the classroom was also highlighted in relation to choosing partners when doing paired work. This theme was identified across all year groups and genders. Seating plans. This theme was common across all year groups.	8 Yes Responses Clear recruitment processes outlined. Clear explanations of how data was analysed. Some discussion of how the findings relate to existing knowledge, however, does not explore future research or discuss how findings could be generalised to other populations.

Black-Hawkins et al (2022)	What matters to children in developing inclusive classroom communities.	Group discussions using a participation framework to structure the discussions. Discussions were transcribed and analysed for themes.	One class from 7 primary schools. Random sampling to select 8 participants from each class. Aged 4 – 11. Totalled 14 group discussions of 56 participants.	Four themes. Feeling comfortable and being safe. Participants highlighted how feelings of safety and comfort were paramount to their belonging in school and their participation. Learning as the main activity. Participants shared this was the main purpose of attending school. Having friends and working together. Participants highlighted how different relationships contribute to experiences of inclusive classrooms. Sharing values and behaviours. Participants highlighted that sharing values and behaviour contributed to a sense of belonging and their feelings of being attached to a class in school.	8 Yes Responses The specific analysis used was not outlined. Authors did include excerpts from transcripts.
Dimitrellou and Male (2020)	Exploration of the school experiences of secondary-aged pupils with and without SEND to support in facilitating inclusion.	Mixed methods: Questionnaire followed by semi-structured interviews. Interviews were analysed using Braun and Clarke thematic analysis.	3 mainstream secondary schools involved. 37 semi structured interviews: 17 participants were classed as mild learning difficulties, 13 were classed as having social, emotional and mental health needs and 8 participants had no classification of SEND needs.	3 core themes with subthemes were identified. Pupils' perceptions of school ethos Subthemes: Behaviour management, inclusivity Pupils' perceptions of the reasons influencing their sense of school belonging Subthemes: reasons for liking, reasons for not liking Pupils' perceptions of their social relationships Subthemes: Relations with teachers, relations with Teaching Assistants, relations with peers	9 Yes Responses Clear outline of recruitment process. Questionnaire data not shared.

| Shaw et al (2021) | To explore the perceived notions of inclusion of children within a reception classroom in relation to teaching activities they encounter. | Qualitative research design.

Data was gathered using multiple methods. Observations, semi-structured group interviews incorporating a diamond ranking task and a drawing activity.

Interviews were transcribed and observational data was noted. Inductive data analysis – coding raw data and developing themes. | Two schools included.

Reception classes. All children invited to take part.
21 in Riverside Infants
19 in Oak Ridge Primary. | Two dimensions of inclusion were identified.

Dimension 1 – Belonging and relationships
Subthemes: Collaboration and feeling alone
Participants highlighted importance of working/learning with others within feelings of inclusion. Having choice within collaboration was also highlighted. Feeling alone related to not having opportunities to play or work with others and being left out by peers.
Dimension 2 – Democratic pedagogies
Subthemes: Children's interests and Autonomy (content, context and mode of delivery of pedagogical activity).
Participants highlighted feelings of inclusion relating to learning about interests. | 8 Yes Responses

Explicit discussions of consent/dissent with participants.

Further clarification needed around recruitment of school. |

Table 3. Data extraction table for the studies included in the SLR

2.8.6 Quality Appraisal of Papers

The quality of the selected studies was assessed using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) tool. The CASP tool is a 10-question checklist which aims to support researchers to question the appropriateness of research methods as well as how the results are presented and if they are meaningful (Long et al, 2020). It is important to acknowledge that there is debate within qualitative systematic literature reviews around how best to assess the quality of the evidence being synthesised (Long et al, 2020). The CASP is regarded as an appropriate method of appraising the quality of studies within social science research (Laher & Hassem, 2020, Long et al, 2020). Additionally, the CASP tool is recommended as a user-friendly quality appraisal tool for novice researchers (Noyes et al, 2018). Therefore, due to the CASP tool being highlighted as an appropriate tool to use when appraising quality and the researchers limited prior experience of appraising qualitative research it was selected to use within this systematic literature review.

Each study was screened using the CASP tool ten question checklist and an answer of "yes", "no" or "unclear" was given for each question. Appendix 3 contains the checklist and reflective questions considered by the researcher. The CASP guidance indicates that the CASP should not be used as a scoring system (CASP, 2018), therefore table 3 contains comments from the researcher's appraisal and information on how many criteria questions were met, but the researcher has not ranked the studies based on the number of yes responses. Appendix 4 contains a table outlining the quality appraisal for each study.

2.8.7 Results Synthesis

There are numerous synthesis methodologies that could be employed within a qualitative systematic literature review. Dixon-Woods et al (2005) have criticised thematic syntheses in systematic literature reviews due to their lack of transparency, therefore this review has used the steps outlined by Thomas and Harden (2008) to provide transparency. It is important to note that although the steps are being outlined as distinct steps, the process was not linear and overlap and revisiting of steps occurred, as outlined as part of the process by Thomas and Harden (2008). In line with Thomas and Harden (2008), the researcher viewed findings to be the text within the findings or results sections of the studies. The findings sections of each study were extracted into a table in Microsoft Word. Firstly, the researcher repeatedly read the text to familiarise herself with the data. Next

initial codes were generated using line by line coding. Step two involved developing descriptive themes from the codes, with the researcher revisiting the original data to ensure these themes were capturing the data.

Thomas and Hardem (2008) propose step three, where the descriptive themes are developed into analytical themes. This process is described as taking the themes and concepts and developing theory driven themes (Thomas & Hardem, 2008). However, due to this systematic literature review being an exploratory review in relation to what is known about inclusion from the voices of children and young people, the researcher decided to remain at Step 2 with the descriptive themes, as it would enable the voices of this population to be described and thus answer the question posed by the review. Although step 3 was not undertaken, further revision of the themes was undertaken to ensure the themes had clear boundaries and were representative of the data set.

The qualitative synthesis resulted in five themes, with three themes containing further subthemes. The themes and subthemes are presented below alongside quotes from the studies shown in Table 4.

Theme (Subthemes)	Number of papers	Quotes
Relationships (Relationships with Peers & Relationships with Adults)	3	"… children in the study demonstrated the importance they placed on the formation of relationships" (Shaw et al, 2021)

"While you're at school they're like your family and you have to respect them and treat them like your friends and family" (Black-Hawkins et al, 2022)

"… mutually supportive classroom relationships were … through the giving and receiving of help and support from adults and peers: whether being kind to someone who was sad or giving help when someone was 'stuck' with their work" (Black-Hawkins et al, 2022)

"… it depends what cliques you have, because there's obviously cliques in school and it's easier, because I'm with the popular group, so we're all together in a big group." (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020) |

Belonging	3	"Like you're a part of it, if you weren't there it would be like a puzzle and a piece of the puzzle wasn't there" (Black-Hawkins et al, 2022) "I came in year 1 and [the teacher] on my first day asked if anyone wanted to sit next to me at lunch and everyone put their hand up" (Adderley et al, 2015) 'It's quite special to belong to something, because if you didn't belong to anything you would feel quite left out' (Black-Hawkins et al, 2022)
School Ethos (Classroom Practices & Whole School Approaches)	3	"the proximity, or ability to speak to a practitioner, is an important dimension in determining a child's perception of inclusion" (Shaw et al, 2021) "I think [teacher] don't mind us being different because if we're different we don't know the same things" (Black-Hawkins et al, 2022) "They also praised those who they considered to be 'fun' and who employed interactive approaches to teaching and learning. 'They make it easy for you to learn by having some bits of fun, in it.'" (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020).
Barriers to Inclusion (Unfairness & Power Inequality)	2	"… when someone is on the equipment on the wrong day and then the whole class gets their equipment taken away and I don't think that's fair because only the one person should get that equipment taken away not the whole class" (Adderley et al, 2015) "Because you could be in class and get detention for talking, and the next day one person is talking, and they don't get detention for it" (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020) the perception that teachers or school practices were not always fair was of key concern for children across all three year groups and has clear implications for inclusive practices. (Adderley et al, 2015)

		"…involvement in decision making was very limited and that most decisions were made by those in authority, i.e. teachers" (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020)
Well-being	4	'If someone's being mean to you and you think that you don't belong there, you can be thinking about it in class and not listening to the teacher, so you're not learning anything' (10-11 years)." (Black-Hawkins et al, 2022) "… sometimes just tired, sometimes you're moody, you get really annoyed, and you just want to sit there and be quiet, then the teacher picks on you and all of that…" (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020) "… high levels of emotional wellbeing and involvement need to be present if children are to perceive themselves as included in pedagogical activities" (Shaw et al, 2021) "Susan: I hate it when my teacher shouts because I'm very sensitive to shouting. When my mum shouts or my dad shouts I cry." (Adderley et al, 2015) "Aiden … displayed high levels of well-being and involvement whenever he was playing with other children" (Shaw et al, 2021)

Table 4. Themes and examples quotes from the qualitative synthesis undertaken in the SLR.

2.8.7.1   Theme 1: Relationships

The theme of relationships encompasses the views that the relationships within the school environment impact on the feelings and experiences of inclusion and incorporates the subthemes of Relationships with Peers and Relationships with Adults.

Subtheme: Relationships with Peers

Children discussed feelings and experiences of inclusion when they were with peers and more specifically with their friends. The importance of peer relationships was highlighted not only within the classroom but also within the more social elements of the day, e.g., playtimes, lunchtimes, demonstrating how inclusion permeates more than solely the classroom environment. With studies commenting how the children and young people

would often steer conversations to discuss the social elements of the school day, highlighting this was an important area of discussion to them. Children and young people talked about how relationships with peers impacted positively on experiences of inclusion, such as having a friend or being part of a friendship group. Children and young people also discussed the negative aspects of peer relationships on experiences of inclusion and instances of bullying or being left out were shared.

Within the classroom, peer relationships were highlighted as supporting inclusion, through giving and receiving help with learning, supporting to build each other's confidence and by sharing ideas with each other. The reciprocal nature of peers supporting each other was outlined. However, it was acknowledged that peer relationships could also have negative impact on experiences of inclusion and impact on the acceptance, participation, and achievement of others, either through distracting each other during learning when working in groups or failing to engage with the peers in a group and contribute to learning.

Subtheme: Relationships with Adults

This subtheme refers to the children and young people's views on how the relationships with adults in school impact on their achievement, acceptance, and participation. These relationships can lead to positive feelings of inclusion when relationships with adults are regarded as positive. The importance of adults being approachable and consistent were highlighted by the children and young people. However, feelings of exclusion were reported when relationships with teachers in school were not seen as positive. Children discussed the difficulties they experienced when they perceived teachers to have a predetermined view of them, often assuming they would engage in disruptive behaviours and feeling persecuted by the adults in school. Thus, impacting on their experiences of inclusion within the classroom and wider school environment.

2.8.7.2 Theme 2: Belonging

This theme encompassed the view of children and young people that a sense of belonging to their school was a key element of inclusion. Children discussed the importance of being "a part" of something and feeling a connection to their class or to their wider school. Children and young people discussed how feelings around belonging supported their own wellbeing, leading to feelings of comfort and safety, enabling them to participate in school.

The sense of belonging was also echoed in how they perceived adults within the school "belonging" to the children's class, therefore indicating that a sense of belonging is for all within a school environment, not just the children and young people.

2.8.7.3   Theme 3: School Ethos

This theme refers to the views that the ethos of the school impacts on experiences of inclusion. This theme is made up of two subthemes, classroom practices and whole school approaches.

Subtheme: Classroom Practices

The subtheme classroom practices refers to what goes on in the classroom that fosters experiences of inclusion. The children and young people discussed the importance of the approaches taken by the teacher in relation to the lesson content, such as incorporating interests, employing interactive approaches and making learning fun. What happens within the classroom and the approaches to teaching and learning appeared to play a large role in how the children and young people experienced inclusion. The role of Teaching Assistants was also discussed with children and young people sharing that when the support was of a good quality and at the right time, it enabled them to engage with their learning and achieve.

Subtheme: Whole School Approaches

The subtheme whole school approaches refers to how the school develops inclusion and inclusive practice through their wider systems and values. Children and young people highlighted the importance of being seen by the adults in school as well as being valued and trusted by those adults. How the school enabled children and young people to feel safe and comfortable as well as the systems in place to allow children to access the adults within the school were highlighted as important in ensuring inclusion. Some young people also expressed the importance of school valuing differences and differences being seen as a normal part of school life.

2.8.7.4   Theme 4: Barriers to Inclusion

The theme Barriers to Inclusion refers to the views that within schools there are areas that are acting as a barrier to children and young people's experiences of inclusion. This theme is made up of the subthemes Unfairness and Power Inequality.

Subtheme: Unfairness

The subtheme unfairness relates to the occurrences of practice and policy within school that feels unjust to them and impacts on their experiences of inclusion. Children and young people spoke of unfairness across year groups, such as different year groups getting to access resources they could not, or earlier than them, e.g., access to the dining hall.

The children and young people spoke about peers engaging in challenging behaviours within lessons, that distracted the class and teacher away from learning and impacted on their access to the teacher and therefore their learning opportunities. Some children and young people also commented that due to the teacher's time being taken managing behaviour they felt invisible to their teacher and their hard work went unnoticed.

Children and young people discussed their frustrations with behaviour management systems used in schools. Children identified that often sanctions were unfair, e.g., punishing the group for an individual's behaviour or teachers failing to consistently apply the same sanctions to all children. Children and young people also discussed how they felt behaviour policies did not lead to improved behaviours.

Subtheme: Power Inequality

The subtheme power inequality refers to how children and young people voiced the inequalities that existed within the school system. The lack of student voice opportunities was talked about by some children, whilst others discussed that although there were opportunities for student voice to be shared there did not appear to be any meaningful change occurring, with some students appearing to be disillusioned with the system. Children and young people raised that the rules across the school were different for teachers to the students and they did not feel this was fair. It was also raised that certain students, often those with greater access to resources outside of school, were favoured within school, e.g., being given parts in play, or greater attention from teachers.

2.8.7.5 Theme 5: Well-being

The theme well-being refers to the notion that children and young people's well-being can be impacted by their experiences of inclusion. Some children and young people discussed how when they were not experiencing inclusion within school this had a negative impact on their emotions and their well-being. Examples included when children and young people felt socially excluded or isolated by their peers, leading to feelings of loneliness and unhappiness. Children and young people also discussed how the actions of adults or elements of the curriculum within school that impacted their experiences of inclusion could also lead to poorer experiences of well-being. Highlighting that the practices undertaken in school to enable inclusive practice impact on the well-being of children and young people in schools.

Children and young people also discussed that at times how they are feeling can impact on their presence and participation in lessons and ultimately impact on their opportunity for achievement, all elements of inclusion. Children and young people discussed how if they were feeling low or upset about something that has occurred outside of the classroom, for example at home or at a social times, it could stop their ability to concentrate and take part in their learning. Suggesting that when children are experiencing low levels of well-being this impacts on their ability to engage and participate in school and can hinder inclusion.

Therefore, within this theme there appeared to be a notion of a bidirectional relationship between well-being and inclusion, where an individual's well-being and emotions can impact on inclusion occurring and inclusion, or the lack of, has an effect on emotions and well-being.

2.8.8 Discussion

2.8.8.1 Summary

The review highlighted a number of themes in relation to what is known about inclusion from the voices of children and young people. Positive relationships with peers and adults in the school are important in ensuring children and young people experience inclusion and when these break down or are not securely formed it is reported that this impacts negatively on feelings of inclusion. The importance of feeling a sense of belonging to the school impacted on experiences of inclusion and that school ethos was highlighted as key to

developing feelings of inclusion, both in the classroom and the wider school community. Unfairness appeared to be a barrier to inclusion to the children and young people, which when this was seen to occur in different contexts, led to feelings of exclusion. Finally, inclusion appears to have a bi-directional relationship with well-being, where inclusion can foster positive well-being but when well-being is low, this can impact on acceptance, participation, and achievement. The themes referred to interpersonal relationships and systems within the schools, showing children had views around the micro-system, mesosystem, and exosystems as outlined in Anderson et al (2014) ecological model of inclusion. The SLR has shown that children and young people have views around the educational practices they are experiencing and how they experience inclusion within schools and are able to share these when given the opportunity.

2.8.8.2   Limitations

One limitation of the review was due to the researcher being unable to access one article that would have been read at full text level. It is unclear whether this research paper would have met the inclusion criteria of the systematic literature review; however it may mean that the review is missing additional data. Furthermore, due to only four studies meeting the inclusion criteria, the review is based on a small number of studies.

A further limitation to consider relates to the qualitative synthesis process and the acknowledgment that the review has been undertaken by one researcher and therefore may be influenced by the researchers' own experiences. The researcher has aimed to provide a clear account of the methods undertaken throughout the review and in particular the synthesis to ensure transparency for the reader and allow the review to be understood in the context it was carried out. As outlined in the review, the researcher did not undertake step 3 of the Thomas and Harden (2008) synthesis process, therefore the themes are at are a descriptive level. However, it is important to note when discussing their three-step synthesis process, Thomas and Harden (2008) did acknowledge that step 3 is not required in all thematic analysis review syntheses, particularly if the studies are directly concerned with the question posed in the review. Thomas and Harden (2008) state that the processes in step 2 involve 'going beyond' the original studies and requires translating concepts across studies and contexts. Therefore, suggesting value in the approach used.

2.8.8.3   Implications for future research

The review has highlighted how little research has been undertaken in the UK to gather the voices of children and young people regarding inclusion, particularly in relation to the principled definition of inclusion as relating to all learners. If we are to view inclusion as a principled approach as opposed to focusing solely on deficit then further research within this area is needed. Adderley et al (2015) conclude that the development of inclusive practice should be informed through understanding the experiences of children and young people and Black-Hawkins et al (2022) call for more research focusing on pupil voice to support the development of evidence-based practice. Interestingly, three of the four studies focused on primary school aged children with only one study exploring the views of young people in secondary schools, suggesting more research is needed within this age group.

2.9   Rationale and Research Question

Inclusion although a highly valued concept within education (Ainscow et al, 2006) appears to have a number of dilemmas and tensions from its definition to how to implement inclusive practice (Koutsouris et al, 2024, Beaton & Spratt, 2019, Messiou, 2012). It has been argued within the field of inclusion research the importance of engaging with children and young people around their views and experiences as they are key stakeholders in inclusive education (Shogren et al, 2015). Additionally, EPs have a crucial role in advocating for the children and young people they work with and to promote practices that enable their voices to be heard (Greig et al, 2014). The SLR highlighted that children and young people are equipped to share their views, experiences, and perspectives on the topic of inclusion, but little research has been undertaken to hear the voices of children and young people around inclusion.

This study aims to add to the literature on inclusion with pupil voice at the centre, through exploring the ways young people view and experience inclusion in secondary school, a population that was only evident in one study in the SLR. Secondary education has been depicted as a step up across several dimensions; curriculum demands, social demands, increased pressure in terms of the exam culture and an increase in accountability of own learning (Koutsouris et al, 2024). Therefore, exploring the voices of young people in

secondary schools will enable further understanding of how inclusion is experienced in the specific context of secondary education.

Such research could support the planning and implementation of inclusive practice within schools and highlight the value of gaining pupil voice on the subject. The BPS (2002) advocates for psychologists to use their knowledge and skills in research to identify and develop methods for creating inclusive school environments. EPs have an opportunity to support and influence inclusion policy by applying their knowledge and skills of research methods (Farrell, 2004) and by identifying barriers to inclusion EPs can support inclusive practice to be further developed (Adderley et al, 2015).

The research question that will be explored is:

What can the voices of young people tell us about their views and experiences of inclusion in school?

- How do they view and experience inclusion in the classroom environment?
- How do they view and experience inclusion in the wider school environment?

Chapter 3   Methodology

3.1   Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline the methodology undertaken in the research. The chapter begins with a discussion of ontology and epistemology and leads to the researcher outlining the ontological and epistemological positioning of the research. The methodological decisions taken will be outlined in relation to the use of qualitative research, Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) and semi-structured interviews and the reasons for these decisions. The research design will be discussed, including the recruitment and sampling, the development of the interview schedule and the procedure for conducting the interviews. The ethical considerations and the trustworthiness of the research will be discussed. Finally, the procedure used to analyse the data will be outlined.

3.2   Epistemology and Ontology

A number of paradigms underpinned by epistemological and ontological positions exist (Al-Saadi, 2014) and these positions inform the methodological decisions and actions taken in research (Allison & Pomeroy, 2000). Ontology refers to the beliefs that are held about reality (Al-Saadi, 2014) and can be characterised as realist or relativist in nature. A realist ontology assumes that a knowable reality exists, that can be measured accurately and objectively (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Conversely, a relativist ontology assumes that our representations of reality are socially constructed (Sullivan, 2017) and therefore no single reality exists independent of human practices (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge (Allison & Pomeroy, 2000) and how the assumptions around what is meaningful knowledge and how this knowledge can be generated (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This can be viewed as considering if knowledge is objective or subjective in nature.

A positivist paradigm argues that the nature of reality can be uncovered through observation and therefore what we perceive is what exists (Sullivan, Gibson & Riley, 2012). The positivist paradigm has heavily influenced psychological research (Alison & Pommery, 2000; Sullivan, 2017). Within positivism the aim of research is to produce objective knowledge (Willig, 2013) through the application of objective measures (Sullivan, 2017) and

free of bias from the researcher (Willig, 2013). Therefore, this paradigm aligns with a realist ontological stance and an objective epistemological stance.

Social constructionism aligns itself within interpretivism, where the view of a single, knowable reality existing is rejected and instead assumes that there are multiple socially constructed realities (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Social constructionism views knowledge as being constructed (Robson & McCarten, 2016). This positioning can be described as adopting a relativist ontology and a subjective epistemology. Social constructionism argues that any knowledge gained through research can only be seen as one potential view of the world (Sullivan, 2017). Research situated within social constructionism seeks to understand the various ways realities are constructed by individuals (Willig, 2013), through socially constructed methods that are acknowledged to be influenced by social and cultural contexts (Sullivan, 2017).

Critical Realism acknowledges that a real world exists, that research seeks to understand, but these understandings are imperfect (Maxwell, 2018), and an individual's perspectives and assumptions will shape our interpretations (Maxwell, 2018). Critical realism can be seen as taking a realist ontology and a subjective epistemological stance; that is the view that there is an objective reality, but we can never truly know it. Willig (2013) states that critical realists do not make assumptions that their data forms an exact reflection of reality and therefore interpretation is required to further the understanding of underlying structures of the phenomenon being explored.

3.3 Philosophical Positioning of the Research

The current research is positioned within the critical realist paradigm. The researcher acknowledges that an independent reality exists, thus taking a realist ontological position. However, the researcher also acknowledges that she can never truly know this reality and therefore any conclusions drawn within the research are limited by this. The researcher takes the view that language, culture and personal experiences mediate our experiences and understanding of reality (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In relation to the current research question, the researcher feels there is an external reality where young people are

experiencing inclusive policy, however each young person may perceive and experience this in their own unique way.

The research aligns with a subjective epistemological stance, acknowledging that the values, beliefs and experiences of the researcher will influence the design, data collection, analysis and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Therefore, the findings within the research are viewed as one of many possible interpretations, where other researchers may come to different interpretations, which are equally as valid (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

3.4   Quantitative or Qualitative Research

Within research, quantitative and qualitative methods are seen as the two leading methodologies (Dehalwar & Sharma, 2023). The theoretical positioning of the research and the methodology undertaken must be consistent when making methodological choices (Bleiker et al, 2019). Critical realism is a paradigm that is compatible with both qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Bleiker et al, 2019; Maxwell, 2018). Therefore, when identifying whether to employ qualitative or quantitative methods, or both, the research question and research aims (Dehalwar & Sharma, 2023) as well as theoretical positioning (Wagner & Okeke, 2016) should be considered.

Quantitative research methods are most often situated within the positivist paradigm and aim to test pre-existing hypotheses (Roberts & McCartan, 2016). This does not align with the current research, which is exploratory in nature and aiming to explore subjective experiences. The research is aiming to explore an area where very little previous research has been undertaken and therefore is not aiming to test pre-existing hypotheses.

Conversely, qualitative methods are harder to define due to their heterogenous nature (Howitt, 2016). However, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) outline the following as key characteristics of qualitative research; it focuses on rich description, captures individual perspectives, rejects positivism, gets close to real-life experiences and explores the everyday social world. The current research is aiming to gather pupil voice around understanding and experiences of real-life experiences of inclusion in school, part of the everyday social world. The SLR highlighted the lack of research focused on pupil voice in this area, therefore capturing rich descriptions within individual perspectives would work towards filling the gap

in research. Qualitative research in rejecting positivism acknowledges and values the subjectivity of researcher and participant (Robson & McCartan, 2016). As the research is exploring subjective experiences a qualitative approach aligns with this.

For the reasons outlined above the researcher chose to employ a qualitative approach to answer the research question.

3.5   Methodological Choices

The design and methodology applied in research must be compatible with the ontological and epistemological stance of the research (Willig, 2013). The following section will outline the key decisions the researcher has taken in relation to the methodological approach of the research.

3.5.1   Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Reflexive Thematic Analysis was selected as the method in the research and from this point forward will be referred to as RTA. RTA is a method of data analysis that involves developing, analysing and interpreting patterns from a set of data by developing themes through a systematic coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2022). RTA is posited as being an appropriate tool to analyse experiences, perceptions and understandings (Braun & Clarke, 2006), therefore appealed to the researcher as a method of analysis that could support the aim of the research in exploring young people's voices around their understanding and experiences of inclusion.

RTA has been applied across a wide range of disciplines, exploring a range of questions in qualitative research (Terry et al, 2013). RTA is viewed and often discussed within the literature as a flexible theoretical approach. Thematic analysis has received criticism as a research methodology due to research often not explicitly outlining the theoretical assumptions underlying the method (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Terry et al (2013) highlight the importance of ensuring the approach taken in RTA is in line with the ontological and epistemological perspective of the research. This requires the researcher to consider the theoretical positioning of the research and from this leads to a number of key decisions in the approach to RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Within the critical realist positioning of the research, an experiential orientation to RTA was applied. Experiential RTA aims to interpret

the experiences of participants to make sense of and understand their reality (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

When undertaking RTA research, it is important to consider the lens in which language is being viewed (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Hall (1997) identifies three possible positions that language can be viewed as representing. Firstly, the reflective view sees language as reflecting back the truth (Braun & Clarke, 2022) and can be seen as falling in line with a positivist standpoint. Secondly, the intentional view of language sees language as reflecting the individuals unique experience and is therefore the individual's reality (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Finally, the constructionist view sees language as a way to create and construct meaning, which involves an active process rather than a reflection of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

When considering the research question posed the present research views language as an intentional representation. The research aims to explore individuals' experiences of inclusion and views language as a reflection of the individuals own reality. In line with the intentional representation of language, the researcher acknowledges that the participants will have their own unique perspectives. This is in line with experiential RTA which is described as viewing the language used by participants as a means for communicating meaning, which reflects their own feelings, thoughts, or beliefs (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

An inductive RTA approach was undertaken, often described as a "bottom up" or a "data-driven" approach (Braun & Clarke, 2022), where codes and themes are developed using the data as the starting point (Terry et al, 2013). This is in contrast to a deductive RTA where theory drives the approach and provides a lens through which to code the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). An inductive approach was taken as the research is focused on experiences and therefore the codes and themes should be developed from the experiences shared by the participants. However, the researcher acknowledges the fallacy within inductive RTA (Terry et al, 2013) as through the researchers own understanding and experiences of inclusion, they are likely to bring their own lens and knowledge of theory to the analysis. Through applying reflexive RTA this is hoped to be addressed and understood.

A further consideration in relation to conducting RTA centred on the level of which meaning would be coded. Semantic coding aims to capture what has explicitly been shared in the

data (Freeman & Sullivan, 2017), therefore seen as a more surface level or descriptive coding. Alternatively, latent coding aims to capture the implicit meaning within the data (Terry et al, 2013) often described as a deeper or conceptual level of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2022). As previously highlighted the decisions made around the analysis needed to be in line with the research question and theoretical positioning. As the research aims to explore the experiences of young people in secondary schools around inclusion, it was felt that predominantly semantic coding would be in line with this purpose. As Braun and Clarke (2020) state semantic and latent coding does not have to be an either/or choice and should be viewed as a continuum, therefore some latent coding is likely to take place alongside the semantic coding.

3.5.2 Other Methodologies considered

As stated by Braun and Clarke (2021) there can be multiple methodologies that can be applied to analysis, and it is important to consider which approach to take. Other approaches to answering the research question were initially explored before being rejected. It is not the purpose of this section to describe these methods in detail, rather to briefly outline the focus of the method and discuss the researchers' reasons for rejecting the approaches.

3.5.2.1 *Discourse analysis*

Discourse analysis seeks to explore and understand how language is used to construct an individual's version of their experience (Willig, 2013), and takes the assumption that language is action-oriented and therefore unable to neutrally represent reality (Gibson & Hugh-Jones, 2012). As discourse analysis is often positioned within a social constructionist paradigm this approach was rejected due to the research taking a critical realist stance and viewing language as a means of communicating meaning about reality.

3.5.2.2 *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)*

IPA is a qualitative methodology that seeks to understand human experience (Shaw, 2017). IPA draws on phenomenology and hermeneutics in its approach. IPA falls within a critical realist position and therefore would have been a suitable analysis of the interview data. However, as IPA in its nature focuses on individual experiences and the research is focused on a collective. Due to the researcher being relatively new to conducting qualitative

research it was felt that RTA was a more accessible method of analysis that the researcher had prior awareness of and felt more confident in undertaking.

3.5.2.3 Participatory research

Participatory research aims to collaborate with those involved in the research and views those individuals as co-researchers as opposed to participants (Levac et al, 2019). One particular participatory research method is action research. Action research focuses on bringing about social change through the active collaboration between the researcher and those within the system being researched (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020). This is achieved through iterative repeated cycles of action and reflection (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020). The researcher feels this approach aligns with her values and would have been particularly pertinent to the phenomena being explored, inclusion. However, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the operating of schools during this research, such as class or year bubbles and pupils being educated at home, as well as considering the time scales of the research it was felt that there would not be enough time or access to students to adequately apply this approach.

3.5.3 Data Generation Tools

This section explores the potential data collection methods considered and outlines the rationale for selecting semi-structured interviews.

3.5.3.1 Focus Groups

Focus groups involve a group of participants coming together to discuss a specific topic (Nyumba et al, 2018). The group process aims to explore and illuminate participants views through the debate within the group (Kitzinger, 1995) and encourages participants to explore topics in their own words (Kitzinger, 1995). Within focus groups the researcher is seen as the facilitator of the discussion between the participants, taking a peripheral role (Nyumba et al, 2018). Focus groups are described as a tool that can be used to explore attitudes, experiences, and opinions (Kitzinger, 1995). As the research aims to explore the experiences of young people, collecting the data through focus groups would be appropriate.

Focus groups are often used within mixed methods research but can also be applied as an individual data collection tool (Morgan, 1996). As outlined in the SLR (section 2.7) focus

groups have been used in previous studies exploring inclusion (Adderley et al, 2015). This again highlighted their suitability as a data collection tool.

Initially the researcher had favoured the use focus groups as they had hoped the research would be able to explore pupil voice across a diverse range of students. It was felt that focus groups offered an opportunity to gather a larger number of voices. Guest et al (2017) suggest group sizes of between 6-12 individuals, therefore allowing for larger number of voices to be heard, through running more than one focus groups. Additionally, focus groups were favoured due to their potential to allow for group discussions that can elicit responses that may not have emerged through interaction solely with the researcher (Liamputtong, 2011). However, when considering the ethical responsibilities within the research, in particular the minimisation of harm to participants the researcher felt that the topics being discussed may lead some participants to feel uncomfortable sharing their experiences in front of their peers. The researcher was also mindful that as a novice researcher their experience of facilitating focus groups was minimal. Therefore, it was felt that to ensure the safety of the participant's semi-structured interviews were a more suitable data collection method.

3.5.3.2   Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviewing is considered a widely used method of data collection in qualitative research (Di-Cicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006) and is commonly used as a means to support understanding of participants beliefs and experiences (Mann, 2016). Interviews can take the form of structured, unstructured or semi-structured (Di-Cicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Structured interviews involve the researcher asking the interview questions in a set order where no deviation from the interview schedule occurs (Qu & Dumay, 2011). This was not felt to be appropriate to the current research due to exploratory nature of the research in exploring the young people's experiences of inclusion. The use of a rigid interview schedule would not allow for any exploration of areas raised by the participants which were not within the interview schedule. Unstructured interviews take a more conversational form, where questions are developed in response to the experiences shared by the participant (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2016). The researcher enters into the interview with the research aims in mind and areas they may wish to cover, but there is no predetermined interview schedule to follow (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Unstructured interviews were not felt to be

appropriate due to findings suggesting that children and young people often need support to structure their experiences in interviews (Gibson, 2012).

Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility in the questions being asked, the prompts used and the order of question presentation (Rowley, 2012). Semi-structured interviews were chosen for the research, as the research takes an exploratory stance and is interested in exploring the voices of young people and their experiences of inclusion. The use of follow up questions and prompting provide the opportunity for participants to further expand on the information they are sharing (Gibson, 2012). Therefore, allowing for participant experiences to be at the fore through the use of the interview questioning. By having flexibility in the interview, potential exploration of other areas not within the interview schedule can occur, if participants raise any additional areas relevant to the research (Rowley, 2012).

Mann (2016) argues that the frequency of use of interviews in the field of research can lead some researchers to lack criticality in relation to use of interviews and calls for an ongoing commitment of reflexivity by researchers applying this research tool. Within RTA, reflexivity is a central component of the approach, therefore the researcher committed to reflexivity within the study.

3.6   Sampling and Participants

3.6.1   Context of the research and stakeholder engagement

The research was undertaken in a LA Maintained Secondary School in a rural county in the North of England where the researcher was on placement as a TEP. To ensure confidentiality the school will be referred to using the pseudonym Meadowside High School.

Meadowside High School was recruited through the following process. Once ethical approval from the University of Nottingham's Ethics Committee was granted (Appendix 5), emails containing information on the research project were sent to all Head Teachers of Secondary Schools in the locality area the researcher was on placement as a TEP. The emails contained a Research Information Sheet (Appendix 6) outlining the aims of the research, the data collection method and procedures and contact details for those wishing to gain further information or to take part. Emails were initially sent out in June 2021, due to no responses,

follow up emails were sent again in July 2021, and September 2021. Following the emails sent in September 2021, the Special Educational Need Coordinator (SENCo) from Meadowside High School contacted me via telephone to express the Head Teacher's interest in taking part in the study. A meeting was arranged to discuss the research further, attended by the SENCo and the Pastoral Manager and following this meeting, permission was granted by Meadowside High School for the research to take place in their setting.

At the time of the research Meadowside High School had 487 pupils on roll and provided education for students in national curriculum Years 7-11. School data shared with the researcher indicates that 89.7% of the population of the school identify as White British, with 0.7% of the school having English as an additional language. There were 18.5% of the school population who were eligible for free school meals.

When considering the school context of Meadowside High School, the school could be considered an unusual school. Government data indicates that the average number of secondary school pupils on roll in England is 986 pupils (DfE 2024), therefore with less than 500 students on roll Meadowside is well below the average. The school data also indicates that the school population is not diverse, being predominantly white British. This raises concerns around how representative of a mainstream secondary schools Meadowside High School is. The possible limitations of this are discussed further within section 5.3.1. However, the school context of having a small number of students on roll in the school could also be seen as a positive in relation to sampling of participants. The SENCo and Pastoral Manager are likely to have had a good knowledge of all students attending the school due to it being a small cohort and therefore able to use this knowledge in supporting the selection of students to meet the researchers aim of gathering data from a diverse group of participants (see section 3.6.2).

Due to the school context where the research was undertaken the use of case study methodology could be suggested as an alternative methodology for the research. Case study methodology aims to explore in depth a particular phenomenon within a bounded context (Schoch, 2020). Within case study methodology multiple sources of evidence (Harrison et al, 2017) which incorporate multiple perspectives (Schoch, 2020) are collected to inform the case study. If employing a case study methodology, methods to gather data from multiple sources and perspectives to explore the phenomena of inclusion within a

secondary school setting would have been employed, such as gathering the voices of the adults in school and analysing school policy documents, alongside interviews with the young people. As the current research is focused on exploring the voices of young people on inclusion in school a case study methodology was not undertaken, as it would have moved the focus away from solely hearing the voices of young people on the topic of inclusion.

3.6.2   Sampling and Recruitment

When choosing a sampling technique, it is important to first outline the target population (Taherdoost, 2016). Within the current research the target population was young people attending a mainstream Secondary School. In qualitative research non-probability sampling is often the sampling method of choice (Taherdoost, 2016). Purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on the judgment of the researcher to meet the needs of the research (Robson & McCarten, 2016). Cohen et al (2011) discuss how maximum variation sampling can be used with purposive sampling to ensure a sample possesses a varied range of characteristics within a population. As the research was interested in the views of all learners on inclusion a varied sample of the young people within the school was hoped for. Therefore, discussions were held with the SENCo and Pastoral Manager around sampling and a participation continuum was shared to support the recruitment of a diverse group, as shown in figure 5.

Young people in National Curriculum Years 9 or 10 were included in the study. The reason for recruiting participants in Years 9 and 10 was to gather voices across Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Due to the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic it was felt that for Year 7 and 8 pupils, a large majority of their experiences in the school environment would have been impacted due to National Lockdowns and therefore were not included. Year 11 pupils were also excluded from the research due to it being their final year of study and the impact participating could have on their learning and exam preparation.

The researcher acknowledges the subjective nature of the participation continuum and the perceptions of the SENCo and Pastoral Manager will have impacted on the selection of participants and if different members of staff had conducted the sampling, then different participants may have been selected to approach to take part. However, as the aim was to

provide a variation in the participants this is likely to have been achieved despite the subjective nature.

Figure 5: Diagram to show participant sampling shared with Meadowside High School's SENCo and Pastoral Manager
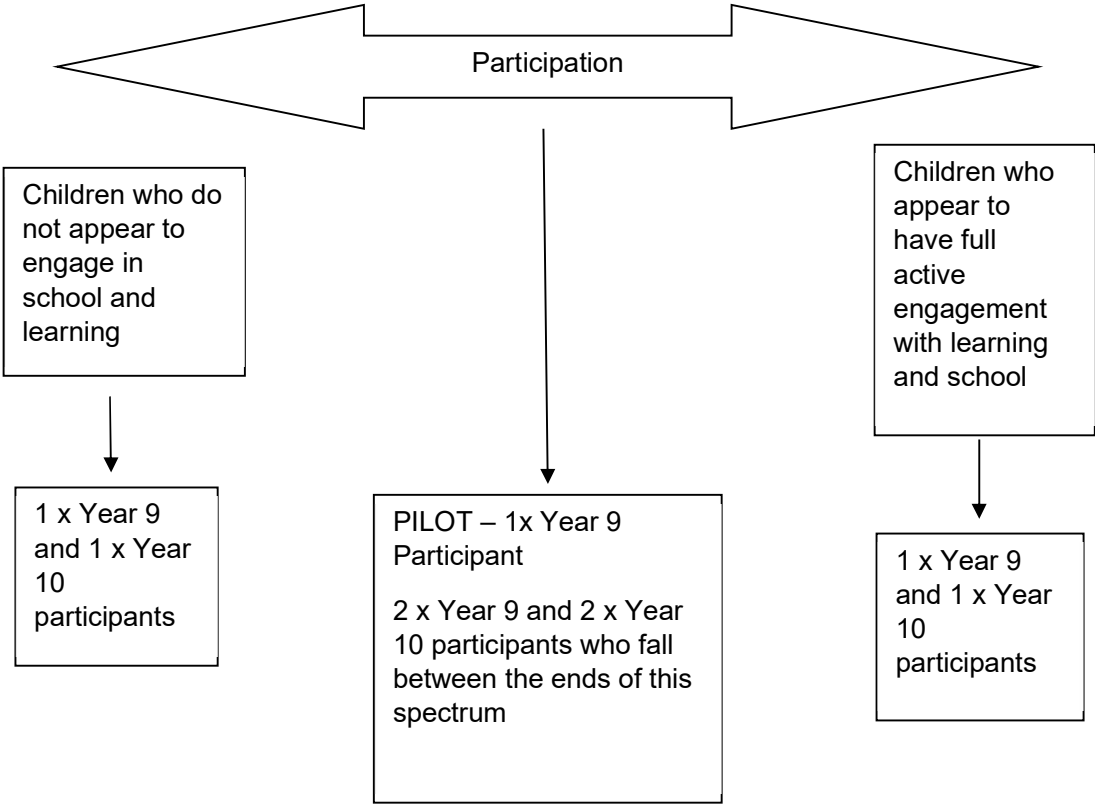
Theoretical and practical considerations influence the decisions around sample size in research (Robinson, 2014). Terry et al (2013) outline that sample size when conducting thematic analysis is often a debatable area. Nine participants were recruited for the research as this number fits within Mann's (2019) guide of between 6 to 12 participants for a qualitative study using semi-structured interview, as well as meeting the practical considerations of the time available to transcribe, analyse and report the research.

3.6.3 Participants

Table 5 outlines the participants who took part in the research, all participants have been assigned a pseudonym. Five participants were in Year 9 and four participants were in Year 10. Five participants were female, three from Year 9 and two from Year 10 and four

participants were male, two from each year group. All participants were between the ages of thirteen years and fifteen years old. All participants were from a White British background and had all transitioned to Meadowside High School in Year 7 from their Primary Schools. Five of the participants were on the school's Special Educational Needs Register, with two participants having an Education, Health and Care Plan in place to support their educational needs. Due to the small number of pupils attending Meadowside High School, specific characteristics relating to each participant have not been shared to ensure their anonymity.

Participant	Year Group	Gender
Michelle	Year 9	Female
Debbie	Year 10	Female
Katie	Year 9	Female
Heather	Year 9	Female
Samuel	Year 10	Male
Hugo	Year 9	Male
William	Year 10	Male
Peggy	Year 10	Female
Matt	Year 9	Male

Table 5: Participant information including pseudonym, year group and gender

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

3.7.1 Development of the Interview Schedule

The interview schedule was developed in consideration with Kallio et al (2016) framework for developing semi-structured interview schedules. The framework outlines the following considerations for researchers:

- to identify if the studies aim, and research questions can be met through the use of semi-structured interviews.
- the importance of the researcher having a comprehensive understanding of the topic area.

- Using the knowledge and literature on semi-structured interviews to inform the design.
- To pilot the interview schedule.
- To include the interview guide within the research paper.

The rationale for using semi-structured interviews was outlined in section 3.5.6, therefore, this section will focus on the other considerations within the framework.

Questions presented in an interview should encourage the participants to engage in conversation around a topic (Rowley, 2012). The interview schedule was informed through consideration of the literature around inclusion. This included developing questions around the various aspects of school, including the school environment, classroom environment, lessons, teachers and peers.

The interview schedule was made up of nine open ended questions, with a final tenth question to capture anything in addition participants wished to share on the topic. This number is in line with guidance from DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) of between five to ten questions in total. Follow up prompt questions were also recorded on the interview schedule with the purpose of supporting the interviewee to explore and share their views on the main questions (Rowley, 2012). Rowley (2012) suggests between two and four follow up prompt questions and that these should be applied when the interviewer feels they are necessary. Prompt questions were generated for the first eight interview questions. Further prompting language was also included on the interview schedule to remind and support the interviewer in using language to draw further information from the participants as and when deemed appropriate.

The interview schedule was discussed during research tutorials with the researchers University of Nottingham Academic Tutor and discussed with a fellow TEP undertaking the researcher's University course, to gather their feedback before trialling in the pilot interview. Kallio et al (2016) highlight this as an additional method of piloting the interview, by using the expertise of researchers outside of the study.

The researcher chose to undertake a pilot study, to support in the development of the interview schedule. Through piloting the questions, the researcher would be able to amend

any questions that did not elicit the participants experiences (Malmqvist et al, 2019) and adapt any ambiguous language in the questions (Kallio et al, 2016).

The final interview schedule is shown in Appendix 12.

3.7.2   Pilot Study

The pilot interview was held in the school's meeting room, a small room with a round table and three chairs. The researcher had a copy of the interview schedule on an electronic tablet device on the table to refer to. Following time spent revisiting the participant information sheet and gaining the participant's consent, rapport was built with the participant and the audio recording device was explained. The device was turned on prior to asking the first question from the interview schedule. The pilot interview was 38 minutes long and following this a number of feedback questions were asked to gather the views of the participant on the interview process. Questions explored how the participant had felt during the interview, questions the participants felt were unclear, any questions they felt would have been better to ask. The feedback from the participant was that some of the language used was unknown to her, e.g., the word peer. The researcher was able to amend this language following the feedback.

As pilot interviews enable the researcher to trial their questions as well as their interviewing style (Howitt, 2019), on reflection the researcher felt that they were too focused on trialling the questions than considering the researcher's own interviewer style. As Howitt (2019) indicate a threat to the validity of an interview can be the researcher focusing too heavily on the interview schedule to the detriment of the interview. The primary role of the researcher in an interview is to be an active listener (Howitt, 2019). A further reflection was on the researcher's interaction with the young person and from transcribing the interview the researcher reflected they spoke too much and filled in silences, rather than as McGrath et al (2019) suggest letting silences be the catalyst for further sharing by the participant.

The pilot interview was a valuable tool and enabled reflection on the interview questions asked as well as on the researchers' skills in interviewing others. Following some restructuring of the order of questions and the language used in the questions a final interview schedule was developed.

3.7.3 Interviews

The participants took part in one face to face interview. The interviews were held in the same meeting room at Meadowside High School as the pilot interview. The participant information sheet had highlighted that participants could have a trusted adult attend the interview with them, and the SENCo had spoken to the participants to identify if anyone would like this the happen; none of the participants requested this.

As with the procedure undertaken in the pilot interview, the participant information sheet and the consent form were revisited. The participants were reminded that their participation was voluntary, they could stop at any time and how they could withdraw from the study following the interview. None of the participants chose to withdraw from the research at this point or at any point during the interview or post interview.

Rapport is described as a crucial factor in supporting data collection in qualitative interviews to build trust with the participant and to support them to share a rich picture of their views or experiences of the topic in question (McGrath et al, 2019). The researcher spent time building rapport with the participants through engaging in general conversation and drew on skills developed in her role as a TEP to support rapport building. The researcher felt that it was important to support the participants to feel as comfortable as possible in an unusual situation of speaking with and being recorded by a stranger.

The audio recording device was explained to the participants and was turned on following rapport building. The device was placed on the table between the researcher and the participant. The device was turned off following the completion of the interview schedule and when the participants verbally indicated that they had nothing further to share. The researcher had a copy of the interview schedule on an electronic tablet device on the table. It is important to note that further probe questions or clarification questions were used when deemed appropriate by the researcher within each interview.

In line with the ethics application submitted to the University of Nottingham's Ethics Committee, the researcher monitored the mood of the participants to ensure no distress was being caused by participants sharing their experiences. At no point during the interviews was it felt that high levels of distress were being experienced by the participants and therefore no interviews were terminated.

Following the completion of the interview, the debrief sheet was shared with the participant. The researcher spent time reading through the sheet with the participant and ensured time for the participants to ask any further questions. The participants were asked if they were still happy to consent to taking part in the research and reminded of their right to withdraw.

The interviews lasted between 31 minutes and 110 minutes in total. The interview lasting 110 minutes included the young person requesting two toilet breaks and the need to recap on what was being discussed prior to the toilet break.

3.8   Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the research was granted by The University of Nottingham Ethics Committee (Appendix 5) and was informed by The British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Ethics (BPS, 2021). Key ethical considerations that were taken as part of the research will be outlined below.

3.8.1   Informed Consent

For informed consent to be obtained, the participant is required to have been provided with information about their chance to participate, know about the right to withdraw, know what their role in the research will be and know what the intended outcomes are (Lewis, 2002). A parent information sheet (Appendix 7) and a pupil information sheet (Appendix 8) were developed using the BPS (2021) guidelines to ensure relevant information was shared to support informed decision making about participating. These were shared by the SENCo of the school with the parents and young people, along with parental consent forms (Appendix 9). Due to the participants being under the age of 16, parental consent was gained as in line with BPS (2021) guidance. Parental consent forms were returned to the school SENCo and securely emailed to the researcher. Consent from the young people was gathered (Appendix 10) following the researcher reading through the pupil information sheet and providing an opportunity for the young people to ask any questions. Consent was viewed as an ongoing process throughout the research and participants were reminded of their right to withdraw their data from the study during the debrief and the debrief

information sheet (Appendix 11) contained further information around how to withdraw from the study.

3.8.2   Confidentiality

The parental and participant information sheets informed participants around the steps being taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Interviews were recorded by an audio recorder and the data from the recording device was stored securely in an electronic password protected folder. All data was deleted two weeks after each interview was transcribed. Participants were reminded of the confidentiality and anonymity steps when discussing the information sheet prior to the interview. It was made clear to participants that the researcher would need to adhere to safeguarding procedures and informed that if there were concerns around safety or the participant or others the researcher would need to act on this information. To ensure anonymity all participant names were changed to pseudonyms, and any reference to names of others, of local places or where information thought to identify the participant were omitted from the transcripts.

3.8.3   Potential for Harm

It was hoped that the interview would be a positive experience for the participants as they were providing an opportunity to share their experiences of school and have their voice heard. The researcher was mindful that although there was perceived to be a minimal risk of harm to those taking part, the topics being discussed, such as the learning, the classroom, the wider school environment and relationships with staff and peers could potentially bring up a range of responses from the participants. To account for this the participants were encouraged to share only information that they felt comfortable to share, and this was discussed at the start of the interview when going through the pupil information sheet. The researcher liaised with the SENCo at Meadowside High School to ensure there was a member of staff within the school who participants could speak with following their involvement in the research. This was the Pastoral Manager for the school, as she had attended the initial meeting and was aware of the research. This information was shared on the parent and participant information sheets and on the debrief sheet.

3.8.4   Power

Kurtovatz (2017) highlights the fundamental power inequalities that exist between researchers and participants, as well as the power exerted through the context of the

research (BPS, 2021) for example research undertaken in a young person's school setting. As Kurtovatz (2017) states it is vital to reduce this power distance between the researcher and the participant to support valid and reliable data collection. As outlined above, when meeting with each participant, time was taken to explore the information sheet, the consent form and their right to withdraw. Time for the young person to ask any questions was also given. These steps are identified as important practice in the BPS Code of Human Ethics (BPS, 2021). Additionally, having some choice over time or location can support with power imbalance (Kurtovatz, 2017), when arranging the interviews, the SENCo explored with the participants any lessons they would not want to miss, furthermore the researcher aimed to avoid interviews impacting on participants breaktimes.

3.9   Trustworthiness of the research

Validity and reliability have been questioned as terms to evaluate qualitative research (Amankwaa, 2016; Frost & Bailey-Rodriguez, 2017), due to their focus within quantitative methods of objectivity and controlling of biases (Yardley, 2015). Instead, it is suggested that to ensure good quality research within qualitative methodologies, the trustworthiness of the study should instead be examined (Golafshani, 2003). Stahl and King (2020) define trustworthiness as the sense of confidence gained by a reader on what has been reported in the research. Challenges exist in evaluating the trustworthiness of qualitative research due to the numerous amounts of methods, underpinned by different theoretical positions (Yardley, 2015), which make it hard to develop specific criteria that would be applicable to these methods (Yardley, 2015). Yardley (2015) suggest four areas for researchers to consider in relation to the trustworthiness of their research and has been applied to a range of qualitative methods. These are the sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, coherence and transparency and the impact and importance (Yardley, 2015). Yardley (2015) states there are multiple ways these areas can be addressed. Stahl and King (2020) highlight the responsibility of the researcher to clearly demonstrate actions taken to promote trustworthiness. The four areas of trustworthiness, and the steps taken by the researcher to attempt to address any potential threats to the trustworthiness of the study are outlined below. In addition to the four areas outlined by Yardley (2015), the researcher has also

considered the 15-point checklist outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022) for quality RTA (see Appendix 15).

3.9.1   Sensitivity to context

Sensitivity to context refers to how the researcher has considered the relevant theoretical literature, the socio-cultural setting and ethical issues (Yardley, 2015). The researcher engaged with the existing literature around inclusion and through identifying the gaps in research from the SLR developed the research question and aims. The researcher explored the current policies within England in relation to inclusion and education to further understand the socio-cultural context of the research. The research outlined the ethical considerations taken in relation to the participants within the study in section 3.8. This included the possibility of power imbalance and how the researcher took steps to reduce the power imbalance. However, the researcher is mindful that this is likely to not have been completely removed and could have influenced the experiences the participants shared.

3.9.2   Commitment and rigour

Commitment and rigour refer to how the researcher has engaged in-depth with the topic and participants (Yardley, 2015). As stated in section 1.2, the researcher has been interested in the complexities of inclusion prior to her undertaking her Doctoral training. The researcher has engaged with the literature around inclusion to inform the current study. The participant selection is explicitly described within the methodology, with justifications for the decisions made for the inclusion criteria which was shared with the SENCo and Pastoral Manager at Meadowside High School. The researcher was a novice in RTA, and this required her to take steps to develop her knowledge of the method. This was done through attending taught input at university, reading extensively around the topic, in particular the processes outlined in Braun and Clarke (2022) and through attending research supervision. The researcher made links with other researchers on the course using RTA, to enable sharing of knowledge of the topic and to provide opportunities to discuss the analysis process and experience feedback on coding and themes.

3.9.3   Coherence and transparency

Coherence refers to how the study is understood as a stable whole and this links to how the theoretical positioning, research question and methodology, and interpretation fit together

(Yardley, 2015). The theoretical positioning of critical realism has been outlined, and how this impacted on the methodological choices taken within this methodology section.

Transparency refers to how the researcher is honest and open in the research processes they have used (Cena et al, 2024). The researcher has shared key information around participants, the context of the school, and the data collection and analysis procedures undertaken, within this methodology chapter. Whilst being mindful of ensuring confidentiality and anonymity for the participants and school. Excerpts of the analysis process are available in the Appendices, alongside the interview schedule. The researcher has engaged in a reflexive diary throughout the research, which has allowed for exploration of thoughts and feelings that may have influenced the research. Exerts of this are shared in Appendix 18. The researcher has also been honest and open about the challenges they faced during the research and the extended timeframe taken to complete the research and engaged reflexively on the potential impact of this on the data analysis and write up.

3.9.4   Impact and importance

Impact and importance refer to how the findings of the research are able to make a difference, either practically, theoretically, or socio-culturally (Yardley, 2015). The aim of the research was to generate knowledge in an area that has had very little previous research undertaken. Through exploring the experiences of inclusion of young people within secondary school it was hoped that the findings would support practically in identify implications for stakeholders when considering inclusion policy. These notions will be reexplored within the discussion.

3.10   Reflexivity of the Researcher

Braun and Clarke (2023) highlight the importance of the researcher not only outlining their theoretical positioning but also outlining their reflexivity when undertaking RTA. Reflexivity refers to the awareness of the researcher that their values, beliefs and knowledge will shape the research process (Willig, 2013). Wilkinson (1988) identified different aspects of reflexivity to consider; the personal, the functional and the disciplinary.

Personal reflexivity refers to the researcher expressing their interests and values and identity (Wilkinson, 1998). Through this expression they can consider how these beliefs and

values shape the research decisions and knowledge produced (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The researcher has addressed personal reflexivity through outlining their interest and motivation for undertaking the research topic in section 1.2. The researcher feels it is important to note that the study was designed, and the data collected during the researcher's taught doctoral training (2019-2022). However, the analysis and write up was undertaken in 2024. The researcher has experienced a number of significant life events during that time and although she feels the values and beliefs that underpinned the research are still relevant to her position, as a mother she now has an additional interest in ensuring inclusive education, for her own child.

Functional reflexivity refers to how the methodological decisions taken and the subsequent research design impact the research and the findings produced (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The methodology chapter provides explanations of the choices faced by the researcher when designing the study, such as methodological approach and data collection tools. The researcher has attempted to outline the reasons for the choices which were made.

Disciplinary reflexivity refers to how knowledge production is shaped by its own academic discipline (Wilkinson, 1988). In addition to the information shared in section 1.2, the researcher has previously studied an undergraduate degree in psychology, where her dissertation focused on quantitative research methods, within a positivist paradigm. Therefore, when studying for the doctorate in Educational Psychology the researcher was introduced to qualitative research methods, a less familiar discipline to her. The researcher has noted within her reflexive diary the realisation of positivism creep, a term described by Braun and Clarke (2022) as when values of positivist research are unknowingly applied to qualitative research.

As well as being a researcher within this research study, the researcher also undertakes the role of a TEP, within an LA. The researcher is mindful of the impact of this discipline on the research, as her role often requires her to gather the voice of children and young people. The researcher acknowledges that the skills and knowledge from her TEP role, may impact on the data collection and analysis. Additionally, the TEP role of supporting inclusion in schools is also likely to influence the research due to her knowledge of inclusion in EP practice.

A reflexive diary was kept during the research process, allowing the researcher to consider reflexivity within all three of Wilkinson's (1988) areas of reflexivity. However, it is important to note that reflexivity is never a true self-awareness as it is an ongoing process that has no ending (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

3.11 Data Analysis

The data was analysed using inductive RTA guided by Braun and Clarke (2022). The process of conducting the RTA process is outlined in the sections below. It is important to note that although these sections have been written separately and therefore could be seen as a linear process, as discussed within the research design section, RTA involves constant movement between phases.

As the interview schedule did not differ greatly from the pilot interview the researcher felt it was appropriate to include the data collected in the pilot interview within the analysis.

3.11.1 Phase 1: Familiarisation

Transcription, the reproduction of spoken of word in written format (McGrath et al, 2019), was undertaken for each interview by the researcher. In line with guidance from Lester et al (2019) verbatim transcripts of the recordings were produced in order to provide an accurate record of the interviews. It was felt that through the process of transcription the researcher was able to begin the familiarisation stage, immersing herself in the data. Following the transcription of all interviews, each interview was listened to whilst reading the transcript to check for errors as well as providing further opportunity for immersion of the data. The transcripts were read one further time without the audio. During the transcription process the researcher recorded ideas or notions that came to her around the data set into the reflexive analysis diary.

3.11.2 Phase 2: Coding

Initially all transcripts were uploaded into NVivo Pro 11, an electronic database designed to support with coding and analysis of textual data. Initial coding began in February 2022, using line by line coding and inductive coding. The researcher was unable to complete the analysis of the data at that time and returned to the analysis in February 2024. Due to the amount of time that had elapsed the researcher felt the coding process needed to begin again. Initially

the researcher revisited the familiarisation stage, where the transcripts were re-read multiple times and the code list created in NVivo Pro 11 was read. Through this process the researcher felt that the NVivo programme did not align with how she wanted to be able to move through the data, therefore data was coded using a table for each transcript in Microsoft Word. Again, line by line coding was undertaking for each transcript, using an inductive approach. See Appendix 13 for examples of coding. The codes were reviewed and refined through repetition of the coding process. As advised by Braun and Clarke (2022) the transcripts were coded in a different order to allow for an opportunity of additional views and insights to form. During these iterations of coding, the data assigned to a code was considered to ensure that it was reflective of the data. Through the process of coding, codes were grouped and recoded where appropriate, which allowed for a more manageable number of codes.

3.11.3 Phase 3: Generating Initial Themes

In line with Braun and Clark (2019), themes are viewed as patterns of shared meaning that are connected to a central organising concept. During this stage of the analysis, the researcher moved away from the data set and focused on the codes that had been developed. The codes were explored to identify any potential areas where there was similarity of meaning and these similarities were clustered together to form candidate themes. A candidate theme can be viewed as a potential theme that will undergo further consideration to identify if it will be a final theme (Braun & Clark, 2022). This process was fluid and involved the codes being handwritten on paper and the researcher being able to physically move codes and explore how different codes grouped together in clusters of shared meaning. The researcher used thematic mapping to support in the generation of the candidate themes (see Appendix 14 for examples of the mapping process) as this allowed her to explore a visual representation of the candidate themes and see how they may relate to each other, identify any potential overlaps, and see the story of the analysis developing (Braun & Clark, 2022). Candidate themes were considered in relation to if they had meaningfully captured an idea with a clear central organising concept.

3.11.4 Phase 4: Developing and Reviewing Themes

Following the development and consideration of candidate themes these themes were further developed and reviewed. The candidate themes were reviewed by reading all the

data related to the codes within the themes to see if they were a good fit to the theme and codes were removed or moved to another potential theme if not. In this phase the researcher considered the following as guided by Braun and Clark (2022):

- if the theme had clear boundaries,
- if the data provided evidence for the theme,
- if there was enough meaningful evidence within the data set,
- if the data was coherently related to the central concept and,
- if the theme was communicating something of importance.

Some candidate themes were further developed, others were noted to be codes rather than a theme and some were felt to need collapsing or moving to create a new potential candidate theme with another initial candidate theme. As Braun and Clark (2022) state this part of the process blurs with parts of Phase 3, where the candidate themes are forming. (See Appendix 15 for an example of the considerations of candidate themes and the developing and reviewing phase.)

Following this, the researcher returned to the full data set and reread the transcripts and reviewed the themes to ensure they made sense with the whole data set. Further revisions of themes were made during this process.

The reviewed themes were shared with their research supervisor and a fellow researcher from the researcher's University cohort who had experience of using RTA, to provide an opportunity to articulate the researcher's thought processes and to hear other insights and perspectives on the data.

3.11.5 Phase 5: Refining, Defining and Naming Themes

During this phase of the analysis a theme definition was written for each theme, which incorporates the central organising concept and outlines the boundaries of the theme. Theme names were reviewed to ensure the names represented the concept of the theme. Appendix 16 contains a table with final themes.

3.11.6 Phase 6: Writing Up

When conducting RTA, the writing of the report is more than just the reporting of the analysis findings, the decisions and method of analysis undertaken is also key to locating the

approach taken (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Therefore, this chapter has contained information relating to the decisions taken by the researcher when designing the research and a thorough explanation of the decisions underpinning the type of RTA undertaken, as well as the process of the analysis. The findings are then presented in Chapter 4, with the discussion section presented in a separate chapter (Chapter 5). Themes and any subthemes are presented alongside data extracts from the transcripts.

3.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodology of the research and the procedural details undertaken by the researcher. The research has been positioned within a critical realist stance and the research design and decisions undertaken in line with the stance have been described. The research is employing a qualitative methodology as this will allow for the research aims to be explored. Through exploration of methodological approaches, RTA was outlined as the chosen method, which will take an experiential inductive form, utilizing mainly semantic coding, although it is acknowledged some latent coding may occur. Following exploration of data collection methods, semi-structured interviews were chosen due to their flexible nature enabling experiences and beliefs to be shared (Mann, 2016). The chapter has provided a detailed description of the research design, in relation to participants and sampling, data collection procedures and a detailed descriptions the analysis of the data. Ethical considerations in relation to confidentiality, consent, right to withdraw, reduction of harm, and power were discussed. The steps taken to ensure trustworthiness of the research have also been outline. Chapter 4 aims to present the findings from the analysis of the data.

Chapter 4   Results

4.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the RTA of the data undertaken to answer the research question "What can the voices of young people tell us about their views and experiences of inclusion in school?" The analysis was carried out as described in section 3.11. The chapter will provide a brief overview of the young people who took part, present the thematic map and outline each theme and related subthemes where applicable. The chapter will end with a summary of the findings.

4.2   Overview of Participants

Nine young people took part in the research, all aged between 13 years and 15 years. Five were in Year 9 and four were in Year 10. Five of the young people were female, and four were male. All the young people taking part were from a White British background. All had attended the school since their Year 7 transition from primary school. Five of the young people were on the schools Special Educational Needs register, with two of those having an Education Health and Care Plan in place.

As outlined in section 3.6.3, all the young people who took part have been assigned a pseudonym to ensure anonymity and this is shown in Table 6.

Pseudonym	Gender	Year Group
Michelle	Female	10
Debbie	Female	9
Katie	Female	9
Heather	Female	9
Samuel	Male	10
Hugo	Male	9
William	Male	10
Peggy	Female	10
Matt	Male	9

Table 6. Overview of participants, including pseudonym, gender and year group.

As discussed in section 3.6.3 further information around the characteristics of the young people who took part has been given generally to ensure their anonymity, due to the small sample size and small school the research was conducted in.

4.3   Themes

Six themes were developed through the RTA process with five themes containing subthemes. Figure 6 shows a thematic map of the themes developed through the analysis. A table outlining the theme, its central concept and the codes within the theme can be found in Appendix 16.

Data extracts from the semi-structured interview transcripts have been used to illustrate themes. These extracts are presented in italics and include the participants pseudonym in brackets.

Figure 6. Thematic Map

Peer relationships

Relationships with adults

Teachers' role

Own role

Relationships matter

We all have a role to play

Peers' role

School as a community

What can the voices of young people tell us about their views and experiences of inclusion in school?

Policies

Unfairness erodes feelings of inclusion

School systems that promote experiences of inclusion

Covid-19 pandemic

Lack of resources

Social emotional pressures can impact on our inclusion

Physical spaces

Communication of information

We are all treated differently

How others see you

Education is not free from emotion

81

4.3.1 Theme 1: School as a community

The theme school as a community captures the notion that feeling a sense of belonging to the school community was seen by the young people as part of experiencing inclusion. Some of the young people discussed their views around inclusion explicitly as being part of the community or the school, whereas other young people made more general reference to experiencing inclusion as being part of something.

*"like being a part of like the school, like the community" (*William)

"you're like feel, well kind of like welcomed if you know what I mean, like if you feel you're a part of like er the school" (Michelle)

"to be part of something" (Peggy)

The familiarity of people within the school was highlighted with many young people discussing the idea of "*knowing everyone."* Suggesting that the participants felt acquainted with the majority of the school population and felt this was the same for others attending the school. It also suggests that they themselves felt known by others in the school, which also supports a sense of being a part of the school community.

"well everyone knows everyone at this school" (Debbie)

"you know almost everyone at the school" (Heather)

This notion of knowing has been interpreted as being aware and acquainted with others at a more superficial level, where the young people are familiar with and recognise others rather than holding a deep connection or meaningful relationship with them.

The quotes from Katie and Michelle specifically indicate that the "*knowing*" of others relates to the students knowing each other, the students knowing the adults and the adults knowing the students within the school. Suggesting the importance of both peer and adult familiarity when considering feelings of belonging to the school community.

"I know everyone like and the teachers you pass them and you know them all" (Michelle)

"like all the teachers know your name and pretty much all the students do" (Katie)

The young people made references to how their school's specific context fostered this sense of community. The size of the school, at around 500 students, was seen as supportive for developing familiarity with others within the school.

"we only have like 500 children in this school it's not it makes it a lot less difficult as you can recognise lots of people really quickly" (Samuel)

"like our school everyone knows each other even like if well its coz we are a quite a small school obviously so like everyone knows each other even if you are not like in the same friendship group" (Michelle)

Additionally, the school being located within a small rural community, where individuals are likely to know each other outside of the school environment and have family links, also appeared to be a factor in helping to foster a sense of school as a community.

"I mean a lot of people know each other from outside of school so that helps inclusion inside of school so like most people are like sisters or brothers or cousins so most people are like related somehow but yeah that helps" (Katie)

"lots of them come from rural areas so like [location] and a few come from [location] yeah lots come from farming backgrounds and live in small villages everyone knows erm yeah it's it's everyone's nice" (Samuel)

Overall, this theme suggests that the young people were aware of their school community and felt a sense of belonging to it. This sense of belonging was supported by feeling that everyone was a part of this community and everyone was aware of the others within the community and they were aware of them.

4.3.2   Theme 2: Relationships matter

The theme relationships matter captures the notion that the relationships with others in school impact on feelings and experiences of inclusion. These relationships can both foster feelings and experiences of inclusion and the lack of these relationships can discourage feelings and experiences of inclusion. Within this theme two subthemes were developed:

- Peer Relationships
- Relationships with adults

4.3.2.1   Subtheme: Peer Relationships

The subtheme peer relationships explores the perception that the relationships the participants have with their peers is an important part of school life for them. These peer relationships allowed for the young people to experience inclusion through feelings of acceptance from others and being able to participate in social activities.

All of the young people discussed the importance of the social element of school and having time to spend with their friends.

*"break times and lunch times are the best thing its like you know you get to have a mess about with your friends outside" (*Matt)

"then there is like the social part with all your friends and other people like I think the social time is the best" (Peggy)

"for me that's the I think that's the times I enjoy as I'm mostly with me friends who I don't really see in like the school day" (Hugo)

The young people shared how they viewed the time with friends as the best or favourite part of their day. Suggesting they value the opportunity to participate in the social elements of the school day and they value the time with friends.

Some participants discussed how their friendships had a positive impact on their happiness and their school enjoyment.

"I mean this is probably the best year that I have had in school I have a whole new group of friends" (Heather)

"I've just got happier because I met this boy [name] who's my best friend now and I have this massive friend group well not massive but I'm much happier now because I have people to spend time with other than myself" (William)

*"in secondary school I have liked it a bit more especially in year 9 as I have lots of very good friends" (*Samuel)

These quotes from Heather, William and Samuel highlight how they perceive that their happiness or enjoyment of school is related to having good friendships. Suggesting that having friendships is important and valued by them.

Some participants also shared how their friendships supported their mental health and well-being both through providing opportunities to relax and de-stress from the pressures of learning and through opportunities to regulate their emotions.

"recently I have had an English assessment on one of the characters on our book we are reading so it is actually nice to be able to go and spend time and relax with your friends" (Peggy)

"then like being with my friends is a good thing 'coz it makes like 'coz I have anxiety sometime so seeing them like makes it a bit better" (Debbie)

Some participants did highlight that friendships can have a detrimental impact on participation and achievement in the classroom, with friends causing distractions as young people want to spend time socialising with their friends rather than participating in their learning.

"some people like if they know there is like their friends in that room they won't do the work and they will just like talk and mess around with their friends" (Hugo)

"I can talk and work so I just talk and work erm but if you are with your friends and you are chatty and you have a lot to tell them especially on a Monday erm (laugh)"
(Debbie)

"like the thing that can get in the way is their friends in a way because you will want to be talking to your friends at the same time as in being in the class because we all get put together with our friends like talk together and then you will want to erm talk"
(Peggy)

The above quotes highlight how important the social elements of school are to the participants and that they do not happen in isolation but are incorporated into the learning aspects of school.

Participants also discussed the challenges they faced in building their friendships and the notion that it can take time to build genuine and positive friendships. Participants discussed their experiences of how friendships change over time, expressing feelings of uncertainty around friendships when they transitioned to school in Year 7 and feeling that friendships were more difficult to build, suggesting they were not fully experiencing inclusion at that time.

"when I was in year 7 I like really didn't have like much confidence coz I didn't know anyone but I think as the years go by you get more confident and you begin to know more people" (Michelle)

"for a bit in year 7 er I think I didn't really know much people and that wasn't very good but then when I got past year 7 it started to get better" (Katie)

"some people like my friends didn't have many friends at the start of school" (Heather)

Michelle and Katie's quotes outline that for them these difficulties were overcome as they moved through the school to other year groups and Heather's quote appears to suggest that although her friends initially didn't have many friends they do now as they are Heather's friends. This suggests that at the outset of starting secondary school these relationships may not be present, and this may be a barrier for young people experiencing inclusion with their peers.

4.3.2.2 Subtheme: Relationships with adults

The subtheme relationships with adults explores the notion that the relationships with the adults in school impact on the feelings and experiences of inclusion of the participants. When these relationships are positive it can enable feelings and experiences of inclusion.

Participants shared how adults within the school provide help to the students in school when needed.

"they are [adults in school] they help you if you need something they will do their best to try and get it and erm they will give you support if you need it" (Samuel)

"they [adults in school] help when you need help they ask if you need help" (William)

"they [adults in school] are like always ready to help someone" (Michelle)

The above quotes suggest that adults take a supportive role in the school and will offer this help at times without being directly asked, suggesting an awareness of the young people in school and any difficulties they may be experiencing.

The perception that adults within the school take a genuine interest in getting to know the young people was discussed by some of the participants.

"we know the teachers well now and they know who we are best friends with and they know more about us and they actually have a conversation with you" (Peggy)

"they [teachers] often ask how are you doing and like honestly like mean it and like yeah they interact with you" (Katie)

The quotes from Peggy and Katie suggest that how the adults in school interact with the young people is important for the development of positive relationships. Feeling that adults see them, have an understanding of who they are, and genuinely want to engage in discussion with them appears to foster these relationships.

Feeling that they can trust adults within the school was also highlighted by some of the participants.

"you can go to any of them but it is usually form tutors or pastoral but it just depends on who you trust more" (Debbie)

"there's people you can trust" (Peggy)

These quotes suggest that there are certain adults within the school setting that are viewed as trusted, but that not all adults fall within this category. This may be due to the strength of the relationship that participant had with the adult. Some of the participants discussed the trusting relationships they had with specific adults in the school. Samuel when discussing his relationship with his form tutor indicated that having a trusting relationship with them enabled him to share more with that teacher compared to other teachers in the school.

"I trust them [form tutor] a bit more with telling them things rather than like telling the French teacher" (Samuel)

Heather when discussing who she seeks support from in school shared a particular adult in school. (The topic of the experience being discussed has been removed to ensure anonymity).

"I talk to Miss X [Teaching Assistant] a lot erm she erm well she helped me in year 7 as well erm coz [removed to ensure anonymity] because I wasn't having a very good time but she erm she helped me a lot" (Heather)

This suggests that she trusts this adult and their relationship has built over time following the support initially provided when Heather was in Year 7.

4.3.3   Theme 3: We all have a role to play

The theme we all have a role to play relates to the notion that within the classroom the actions taken by different individuals can impact positively and negatively on feelings and experiences of inclusion. Within this theme, three subthemes were developed:

- Adults' role

- Peers' role

- Own role

4.3.3.1 Subtheme: Adults Role

The subtheme adults' role explores the way in which the actions the adults take in relation to teaching and learning enables the participants to experience inclusion as well as those actions that can hinder experiences of inclusion.

Teachers were described as supporting the participants to experience inclusion through the way they encourage them to participate in their learning. Participants discussed how when they experienced this encouragement it enabled them to feel more engaged in their learning.

"I changed DT teachers because one had left and he started to encourage me to do it like and got me into it more" (Hugo)

"I like my maths teacher she is very encouraging and erm you know she she gets she makes you do your work" (Debbie)

"they encourage them to do it erm even if it is not in work like a few weeks ago we went on a trip to [local outdoor centre] to go climbing and that was really good and we got told to try climbing even if we didn't want to and that was they still tried to get us to do it and encouraged us to try to do things we have not done before" (Samuel)

The quote from Samuel highlights how this encouragement can support engagement not only within the classroom curriculum but also in the learning experiences outside of the classroom.

In addition to how they encourage the participants the way the teachers advocate and promote their subject and aim to instil an ethos around the importance of learning was noted by the participants.

"they want to do their jobs and they want to make us want to love that subject and it is just lovely coz it's like I enjoy many of my lessons because of the teachers" (Peggy)

"it's more of a teacher who is showing you that you want to be there not that you have to be there you know you have to learn it is like do you want to learn this is your opportunity to learn she really shows that" (Matt)

"that's like the whole focus of the school to try it's the students and it's to try and help the students thrive and things and get to where they need to be" (Samuel)

The above quotes highlight the importance of how teachers frame learning to the young people and suggests that when teachers are actively engaging in these processes it allows the young people to participate in their learning and enjoy it.

How learning was planned and presented was highlighted by the participants as important in supporting their learning through gaining their interest, making the learning fun and providing a variety of teaching methods.

"they try to make the work a bit funner" (Heather)

"she [Maths Teacher] sort of makes it a bit more interesting but gets the information down you as well" (Matt)

"they don't just talk all the time, they get videos up so it helps us visualise and they write on the boards and they like draw diagrams if you need it" (Katie)

Being flexible within a lesson and adapting the plan when needed based on what was happening during the class was also described by some of the participants as being supportive to their learning needs. This suggests teachers being mindful of their planning alongside what is happening in real time supports students' experiences of inclusion.

"they [teachers] don't stick to the lesson plan they swap and change within their lesson to like erm help us if we are struggling" (Katie)

Teacher's allowing a level of autonomy was also discussed by some of the participants and was seen as enabling them to make choices in their own learning, ensuring they were not passive in the learning process.

"like PE sometimes we can choose like our activities what we want to do for like that term and stuff" (Hugo)

"in maths it's [homework] given as an option so Sir says he would like us to do it and it would help to do it but if you really don't want to do it then say so" (Peggy)

"we can do whatever we want with our books like however it helps them remember and stuff so they can like write extra information on" (Katie)

These different examples of being given ownership and autonomy in their learning indicate that autonomy can be given in lots of different ways within the school.

Participants discussed how learning was differentiated to meet their learning ability, allowing them to engage in learning activities that were at an appropriate level to them.

"so they make it for like your what your abilities are" (Heather)

"they have like different levels of work for people as we are not set in everything yet we are just set in like science maths and languages at the moment so things like English we have like different things so like I might do something different to someone else and they might do something different to me" (Debbie)

However, there was a contrast with some participants noting that at times differentiation of learning did not happen and they felt this had a negative impact on their learning experience.

"I feel that sometimes that the school lacks in that and they don't they just give everyone the same work that someone at the bottom scale needs when others need to be challenged" (Debbie)

"In erm maths and sciences and stuff like that I am in actual like sets erm so they are a bit better as you can do work that is for us but we do harder work in the other classes which is annoying" (Heather)

In the above quotes, Debbie is seeking to be challenged more in her learning and feels that lack of differentiation is stopping that from happening. Whereas Heather is finding that when differentiation is not occurring, she finds the learning too difficult and this impacts on her enjoyment in those lessons. These examples highlight how differentiation is important to these young people to enable their participation and achievement in learning.

In addition to differentiating learning participants discussed teachers making adaptions to support their own specific individual needs. These adaptions can be consistent across lessons, as in Heather's case, but also be made flexibly to support an individual in a specific moment in time.

"I have like pink paper coz I find that easy to read on coz I'm not very good at some colours" (Heather)

"then in Art not that long ago I was in a bad mood and she [Art Teacher] wanted to see me the next day and she was like she was she was saying I could put you in the other room for that lesson for you to do your work in" (Hugo)

Hugo discussed how his art teacher had suggested an alternative space for him to focus on his learning when he was finding it difficult to regulate his emotions in his class. Hugo went on to share how he had found this helpful and had supported him to complete his learning.

4.3.3.2 Subtheme: Peers' Role
The subtheme peers' role relates to how the actions of peers within the classroom environment can support or be a barrier to experiencing inclusion within the classroom.

Participants discussed how peers can play a supportive role in their learning, through helping them with their work directly and allowing for discussion and debate with others. This help and support was seen as a reciprocal process with help being given by peers but also by the participants themselves to others, as highlighted in the quote from Katie.

"like we get to talk together and explain stuff together and like history for example we like the table I'm on we explain our reasons and what we think and what happened and that and we are able to just talk" (Peggy)

"helping each other with their work sheets" (Heather)

"I think in some lessons it is also about your ability range especially in top set so they sit you next to people they think can help you and you can help them" (Debbie)

However, participants also identified that the actions peers take in the classroom can play a detrimental role on their learning, impacting on their opportunities for participation and achievement. Some participants described peers being distracting through talking to others.

"I find that in a lot of classes there is a lot of chatting and interruptions" (Debbie)

"sometimes it can get too chatty" (Katie)

The above quotes suggest that at times the young people chatting with each other can distract from learning in the classroom, however for these young people it did not appear to be too impactful on their learning. Alternatively, some participants described much more of a detrimental effect of peers' actions, sharing more explicit experiences and suggesting a much larger impact on their learning.

"people shouting screaming wanting attention there's always this big group in my class that always just are always talking and they are always talking or whispering and distracting the teacher" (William)

"because I'm in bottom set its all the people who mess around erm so it's it's all of the naughty people who don't really listen so we don't do that much work in the classes as they are being sent out for being rude" (Heather)

"I was in a class with erm not so many bright people and they obviously as we know they think it is funny to erm talk laugh shout across the classroom even throwing pens across the classroom all laughing" (Matt)

Heather and Matt's quotes outlined that they were in classes with others who may struggle with their learning, and this may be a contributing factor to why there appears to be a difference in tone around the disruption peers can cause in learning from the experiences of Debbie and Katie. This suggests that the level of disruption from peers may be different in different classes across the school.

4.3.3.3   Subtheme: Own Role

The subtheme own role explores the actions the participants themselves take in relation to their learning that can help or hinder their experiences of inclusion. Participants discussed times when their attitude to learning and their motivation can impact on their participation and achievement in their lessons.

"I just like give up when I've been asked to do a lot at once it's just got a bit boring and too hard" (Heather)

"people like me who want to do well erm but like have that like lack of motivation I am definitely having that lack of motivation at the moment which is really bad but some people never have that motivation to do the work and to enjoy it and find it interesting" (Matt)

"if like if I don't like a subject I just get bored and especially if I'm not doing it for G.C.S.E then I know like I won't need it subjects that I don't like and aren't as important I will just chat" (Debbie)

Participants discussed becoming bored within lessons and this then leading them to stop engaging in their learning. Furthermore, there was the notion that some subjects

are seen as not important if they are not being continued on to G.C.S.E level, which can impact on how students engage, participate and achieve in those classes.

4.3.4 Theme 4: School systems that promote experiences of Inclusion

This theme captures the notion that there are a number of systems within school that promote experiences of inclusion for the participants. Within the theme three subthemes were developed:

- Policies
- Physical Spaces
- Communication

4.3.4.1 Subtheme: Policies

The subtheme policies explores the view that different policies the school put into practice support experiences of inclusion to occur for the participants. One such policy described was the uniform policy, with participants discussing how everyone wearing the same items leads to inclusion through allowing everyone to be seen on the same level. This idea that no one is higher or lower than anyone else suggests a sense of everyone being accepted and part of the school.

"everyone wears the exact same uniform so nobody feels higher or lower than anyone else and they just feel the same" (Michelle)

"so everyone sort of looks equal you know no fancy shoes or anything" (Matt)

The reward systems in place in school were discussed by some participants and they highlighted that these systems enabled a fair way to select which students would receive rewards. These rewards were linked to the whole school reward policy, where positive points were given for desirable behaviours and negative points for behaviours deemed undesirable. Through having systems that participants felt were fair and

allowed for everyone to be a part of the process, even if they did not always get access to the reward, seem to be favoured by the participants.

"like we have this thing where they pick out the name from a bowl of people who haven't got any negatives that week" (Peggy)

"everyone got the option to have their name in the hat but I just didn't get picked but erm yeah it stopped teachers just picking who they wanted" (Michelle)

Opportunities facilitated by the school that allow for pupils to build relationships with others was also noted by the participants. Participants discussed the afterschool clubs held by the school as a place that fostered the development of relationships

"I have been to after school clubs and I have made like some like friends" (Hugo)

"things like clubs in school where you can go and get to know people more better and talk to them and then you might start talking out of the club and become friends" (Peggy)

By facilitating these clubs within the school's offer, the school is supporting the acceptance, participation and achievement of the students attending them. Additionally, the quote below from Katie, suggests that the school also factor in supporting the development of relationships through how they plan classes and providing opportunities for students to meet lots of people, particularly during their transition to the school in Year 7.

"they try to change up the classes often so you can meet new people like especially in year 7 they want you to meet new people" (Katie)

4.3.4.2   Subtheme: Physical Spaces

The subtheme physical spaces explores how the physical environment of the school can be seen as supporting the participants to experience feelings of inclusion. Having a designated safe space in school was highlighted by many participants as important and something that they have used when needed. There were different reasons for using a

safe space, such as to avoid the noise in other areas of the school, when feeling uncomfortable in the main school environment and when peer relationships had broken down.

"room 5 and that's like a place where people who don't like the noise of the hall go in there to eat and I go in there to eat sometimes if the hall is too busy" (Matt)

"they have a protected and safe place for like er people who feel uncomfortable to go to that's at like room 5 I have been there before just like in year 7 when I was new and felt a bit uncomfortable and that was good" (Samuel)

"me and my friends fell out with these two girls and it was quite horrible so pastoral gave us a room we could go into at lunch which is actually the geography room (laugh) which is ironic erm so we sit in there every lunch" (Debbie)

Debbie's quote highlights how physical spaces of safety can be created when needs arise suggesting that the school is able to use spaces flexibly to meet the needs of their students.

The quote below from Katie below also highlights that physical spaces are not only there to support feelings of safety but also offer opportunities for students to experience social inclusion and develop peer relationships.

"then there are places like pastoral where if you have nowhere to go you can join with anyone you want to see like you can speak to teachers but there's like other people who you might not have met and you will be included in their friendships" (Katie)

Samuel highlighted how he feels having designated places within school to foster social inclusion was important to him.

"I think it's good having somewhere to go to feel included" (Samuel)

4.3.4.3 Subtheme: Communication of information

The subtheme communication of information relates to how information is shared within the school that enables the participants to experience inclusion.

Communication across the adults in school was seen as a positive and used to support participants in the school with their learning needs and their pastoral needs.

"I think Miss X [SENCo] did and they told him [English Teacher] I had dyslexia" (Heather)

"like coz they do watch and the teacher will just say like can you pull them out and see what's up" (Peggy)

"if you have a uniform issue that you can't control they will just note it for the other teachers so they won't be going on at you all day" (Debbie)

"they can report it well not report it but give it to the person who can help with" (William)

Communication of information was not only focused on communication across adults in the school but also in how the students were able to communicate their views and experiences to the adults in school. Several participants discussed the Student Leadership Team and how that enables pupil voice to be heard within the school.

"well we have got the student leadership team I'm on it so for like younger students if they are not brave enough to go to the teacher or you don't think they have the relationship with the teachers yet they can go to the older students and then they can erm put their thoughts forward and the teachers listen to them" (Katie)

"the student leadership team erm they are the people in year 10 and 11 erm who are erm told who you can tell to make changes and things so erm yeah if you have not like a complaint but you want to change something you talk to them rather than a teacher about it" (Samuel)

The opportunity for students to communicate their voices was seen as a powerful tool and the idea of it coming from a collective added to the perceived power of the student leadership team.

"you can talk to a student leadership team its more powerful you get listened to more as its coming from the students" (Samuel)

Some participants described the Student Leadership Team as providing more than mere communication of views and indicated a bigger role in developing ideas and decision making within the school.

"they are part of this group that like er has ideas for the school that can help like around the school in other ways than other students" (William)

"They have all the students with the erm like helping thing where they like help make decisions I forgot what it's called but they have like red ties" (Heather)

This subtheme highlights how communication, both across adults and between the students and adults in school was valued by participants.

4.3.5   Theme 5: Social emotional pressures can impact on our inclusion

This theme captures the notion that there are a number of social and emotional pressures that can impact on young people's experience of inclusion, impacting on their participation, feelings of acceptance and their achievement. Within this theme two subthemes were developed:

- How others see you
- Education is not free from emotion

4.3.5.1   Subtheme: How others see you

This subtheme relates to the concept that a view of you is held by others in the school which can impact on your opportunities for acceptance, participation and achievement.

Young people discussed that views can be formed by adults early on in their school experience and that these judgements follow the individual throughout their time in school, impacting on their access to opportunities.

"when they look at the test in year 7 at the very start you get judged on the results and you sort of get seen as this person is very clever this person is not not so much" (Matt)

"something what they did in year 7 which was really bad and then they don't get given a chance to officially like redeem themselves and like they done their punishment and like teachers holding a grudge against someone" (Peggy)

The quotes from Matt and Peggy suggest that these views can be formed by adults around an individual's academic potential as well as around an individual's behaviour.

Some participants discussed the idea that these views are individual to different adults within school, and they may be seen in a different light by different people, as described in the quote by Debbie below.

"Like every single teacher has a different view of me so like my maths teacher thinks I am amazing and like I never talk and get good grades and my music teacher however thinks I'm like this animal (laugh) who just like talks" (Debbie)

The notion that views about you are held by other students was also discussed by some participants. This was described as others judging the participants, either for their appearance, belongings or for the actions they engage in, and this was seen as being negative judgments.

"I don't think being alone is a bad thing but you get judged for it like it is just like a high school thing like you get called a loner you know or if you just sit there and read a book you get called a nerd and stuff" (Debbie)

"people [students in school] can be judged on what they wear" (Matt)

The notion of others holding a view of you also links to participants holding concerns around doing something that may cause others to make a judgement about them. Participants spoke of experiencing anxiety or fear around the reactions of their peers to their learning needs and how this impacted on their approach to learning in the classroom.

"I don't like asking in front of the class because like well you just think they are going to make fun of me because of that and they are just going to say like how have you not understood that is it easy" (Peggy)

"I get a bit worried about picking them up [work related to your target level] because in case people make fun of me for having some of the lower targets and like yeah sometimes I secretly pick up the easier one because I just can't do the harder ones and everyone is saying the easy ones are too easy" (Heather)

The quotes from Heather and Peggy suggest that they do not feel able to take part fully in their learning due to the pressure they feel from the potential negative reactions of others around them and a fear of how this could lead others to view them negatively.

4.3.5.2   Subtheme: Education is not free from emotion

This subtheme focuses on the participants views that learning has an emotional element, both through the academic pressures placed on them and also through the social elements of school. This then can impact on the participants emotional well-being, and this can lead to difficulties in feeling and experiencing inclusion.

Participants highlighted that school can be a challenging environment.

"year 10 and 11 is just stressful I say" (Peggy)

"the learning side of school is very very difficult" (Matt)

Some participants discussed their own experiences of times when the challenges of learning and the classroom environment have impacted on their own well-being.

"like some of the students who are in my class like annoy me or say things that annoy me it erm it puts me in a bad mood for that lesson and then I had a test not long ago and I had to do it the next day because someone had annoyed me and then when I am not annoyed I get on really well with working and stuff in lessons" (Hugo)

Hugo shared his experience of finding others within the classroom impacting his mood, which in turn impacted on his ability to engage in his learning. Whilst Matt shared his experience of finding "negatives", a part of the schools' behaviour policy where any behaviour deemed undesirable or lack of required equipment is recorded, as being upsetting for him.

"I get really upset about it and you know I explain why you know I really do care you know about it erm and I especially did in year 7 and 8 its been like prime goal like if I got a negative it was like the end of the world that is how I have always felt and that can make me really sad" (Matt)

The above quotes demonstrate that social and emotional pressures can come from interactions with others within school as well as from the systems within school.

Other participants noted their observations of how other young people in the school may experience difficulties with the social and emotional pressures of school, and how that can impact on their experiences of acceptance, participation and achievement.

"if people are really nervous around other people they might not do the same things because they don't feel they can" (William)

"I think a lot of young people at this school have anxiety about things I see that quite often I see a lot of people getting taken out to pastoral or people getting upset at break times or lunch times" (Debbie)

Participants also shared that social and emotional pressures can not only come from within the school setting but also from outside of it. Some participants discussed the

impact of home on school experience and the effects it can have on feelings of inclusion.

"some people go through things at home erm which I do agree they should get some sort of you know er like what is the word like erm treated differently and maybe have a few more exceptions in certain things … home is a big part of your life influencing you" (Debbie)

Peggy discussed a family member becoming ill, this part of the discussion has not been included due to the potential risk of it making her identifiable, however the following quote highlights how this event outside of school impacted on her well-being and her ability to participate in school.

"I was just thrown into [month the incident happened] feeling horrible and I didn't want to do anything" (Peggy)

Overall, this theme has highlighted that there are a range of social emotional pressures participants can experience that can impact on their feelings of acceptance, participation, and achievement. These pressures can occur due to interactions with adults and peers, from systems working within the school and from events outside of the school in participant's home lives.

4.3.6   Theme 6: Unfairness erodes feelings of inclusion

The theme unfairness erodes feelings of inclusion captures the notion that the participants felt there were aspects of school that are unfair, and this leads to feelings of inequality for students, which in turn impact on their experiences of inclusion. Within this theme three subthemes were developed:

- We are treated differently
- The Covid-19 pandemic
- Lack of resources

4.3.6.1   Subtheme: We are treated differently

This subtheme captures the notion of perceived unfairness in that the participants felt that there were students in school who were treated differently at times and in certain situations. The view of differing behavioural standards expected from different students within the school was raised. Participants highlighted other students in school being treated differently, either to themselves or to their friends and the apparent unfairness of this.

"some of the naughty kids er they they get positivises for stuff that you know I because I I I'm not a bad person but there are some who are and that is the same for every school but they tend to give them a lot of support for being bad or for doing things that are just expected of you in school whereas I I follow that and I just get you know erm ignored if that makes sense" (Debbie)

"he does that [referring to the actions of another student] but when I do it I get into trouble" (William)

"like one of my friends in year 10 who is in my class like he gets told to go out of the classroom when he has not really done out and then there is like the person who was like provoking him he gets to say in the classroom and then my friend has got sent out and then I don't really understand what has going on really" (Hugo)

Debbie's experiences of feeling that she follows the rules but does not feel acknowledged for this appear to indicate a sense of different approaches being taken for some students. William and Hugo both highlighted times when behaviours from some students received different responses depending on who had engaged in the behaviour. This notion of different approaches being taken may link to adults making reasonable adjustments to support student specific needs however this raises questions around how this is understood and interpreted by other students in school.

This view of perceived unfairness around access to opportunities within the school setting was also discussed. Within this a contradiction appeared to exist in relation to

views that opportunities were more likely to be provided to perceived high achievers or perceived low achievers.

"I *mean there is a slight unfairness on who goes on trips and stuff the ones who struggle a bit more they sometimes go out on more school trips and erm I think it's on Monday they go on like walks and stuff"* (Katie)

"if you really struggle with a lot of things I don't think you get that much opportunity to do things ... it was certain students in my class the really clever ones got to go show this new teacher like around school" (Matt)

Although different perception of who was provided with more opportunities in school, this highlights that the young people felt that within school individuals are treated differently and a sense of inequality was there.

4.3.6.2 Subtheme: The Covid-19 Pandemic

This subtheme captured the idea that an element of unfairness that has impacted on experiences of inclusion are beyond schools' control and was due to extraneous factors, namely the Covid-19 pandemic.

"yeah well because of covid and stuff we haven't been able to do a lot of things because I am only in year 9 and it started in year 7 and then obviously we had lockdown in year 8 so it erm wasn't good timing for stuff so I haven't experienced too much" (Debbie)

"we just got brought up to year 9 and some of the stuff that you were meant to have learnt in year 7 had to be relearnt in year 8 and year 9 because you haven't been able to do it year 7" (Peggy)

"I missed half of year 7 and we had a lock down in year 8 so I missed more in year 7 but I did miss quite a bit of school before the first lockdown because my parents had to isolate a lot as there wasn't any tests or things back then" (Samuel)

The extracts above highlight that the Covid-19 pandemic has affected opportunities for the young people to participate in a varied curriculum within school and the lockdowns

impacting on their access to the school. Participants shared that they felt they had missed out on parts of their learning in the years affected and are having to catch up on things they felt they would have already known, if Covid-19 had not occurred.

The quote from Hugo highlights how although lockdowns and the restrictions that had been in place have been lifted, the impact of the pandemic is still being felt with it taking time to readjust to school life, after time learning from home.

"its like erm getting used to being in lessons again and then it is just trying to remember all the rules and stuff because we have not been back in school for that long" (Hugo)

4.3.6.3   Subtheme: Lack of resources

The subtheme lack of resources explores the way that the participants feel their opportunities for inclusion can be hindered by the lack of resources available within school. This was discussed by some participants as being due to the lack of financial resources available in school, impacting on access to experiences and access to equipment to support learning.

"the school system isn't doesn't have much money because they spend it on resources or fixing stuff what students have broken" (Peggy)

"I guess as it is a small school we don't always feel we get an opportunity as bigger schools as obviously things like that so we don't always get to go on big school trips and we don't have like laptops like other schools or iPads as we don't have the funding for it so I suppose we get a bit left out from that" (Debbie)

Participants also discussed the lack of physical resources in the school. With Hugo sharing that he has been unable to take part in an activity in one of his subjects as they currently do not have the correct equipment to support it. Again, suggesting that lack of resources can impact on access to and participation in learning. Matt also discussed the lack of equipment to engage with at break and lunch times, suggesting that the lack of resources can impact on the social elements of school.

"Like in XXX Adventure [name of a lesson – name removed to ensure anonymity] we have been going on well mostly walking as we are waiting for some of the equipment to come like the trailer for like the mountain bikes to go on and stuff" (Hugo).

"I feel very sorry for people because there's nothing well its high school not primary school so we don't have like skipping ropes out so like we aren't allowed to play on a trim trail as there's no trim trail rail (laugh) there's not like a little woody area or a bush for hiding it's it's more just slab of concrete" (Matt)

4.4   Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the findings from the Reflexive Thematic Analysis undertaken to explore "What the voices of young people can tell us about their views and experiences of inclusion in school?". Six themes were developed in the analysis and have been outlined:

- school as a community
- relationships matter
- we all have a role
- school systems that promote experiences of inclusion
- social emotional pressures can impact on our inclusion
- unfairness erodes feelings of inclusion

The next chapter will discuss the findings in relation to current literature and explore the implications of these findings in relation to School practice, Educational Psychology practice and potential future research.

Chapter 5   Discussion

5.1   Introduction

This research aimed to explore young people's views and experiences of inclusion within their secondary school. These experiences are important to understand as children and young people are key stakeholders in inclusive education (Shogren et al, 2015; Messiou 2012), in that they are directly experiencing the policies and practices being put in place. The SLR (section 2.8) highlighted that there has been little research undertaken to gather the views of young people in schools on this topic in secondary schools.

This chapter aims to discuss the findings of the research (Chapter 4) with the theory and literature outlined in Chapter 2, to answer the question 'What can the voices of young people tell us about how they view and experience inclusion in secondary school? Following the discussion of the research question, a methodological review will be presented. The chapter also will consider the potential implications of this research for Schools, EP practice and LAs and wider Government. Finally, the chapter will outline suggestions for possible future research.

5.2   What can the voices of young people in Secondary School tell us about how they view and experience inclusion?

The research aimed to explore two sub questions to support answering the overall research question:

- How do young people view and experience inclusion in the classroom?
- How do young people view and experience inclusion in the wider school environment?

From the analysis it became clear to the researcher that attempting to separate the experiences within the classroom from the experiences within the wider school was attempting to compartmentalize a complex system that these young people are part of and therefore risked losing the richness of the data. Often themes explored wider dimensions than solely experiences in the classroom or experiences outside of the

classroom. This led to the researcher deciding to combine these questions for the discussion, and focus on exploring *'how do young people view and experience inclusion within the classroom and the wider school environment?'*

Overall, there were six themes that related to this question; 'school as a community', 'relationships matter', 'we all have a role to play, 'school systems that promote experiences of inclusion', 'social and emotional pressures can impact on our inclusion' and 'unfairness erodes feelings of inclusion.' These themes will be discussed in turn in relation to the literature.

5.2.1   School as a community

The theme school as a community refers to how the young people viewed being part of their school community as experiencing inclusion. The idea of inclusion as being part of the school was raised several times. This links to previous research that has found that school belonging was linked to positive feelings of inclusion (Black-Hawkins et al, 2022, Shaw et al, 2021 & Dimitrellou & Male, 2020). This can be understood through considering the CESA model (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022) in terms of the different levels of inclusion a young person may experience; physical, social and experienced. The young people's views and experiences of being part of a school community can be seen as being within the experienced level, where recognising others and being recognised helped to form the community and thus a sense of belonging and inclusion.

Community occurs when the members of a group experience personal relatedness (Osterman, 2000). All of the young people discussed the notion of 'knowing' everyone else in the school. As stated in chapter 4, 'knowing' was interpreted as having an awareness of others, without holding deep connections or relationships with these individuals. The idea of 'knowing' encompassed both the children and adults in the school and there was a sense of reciprocity given. The sense of 'knowing' felt by the young people would fall withing the micro-system of the Ecological Model of Inclusion (Anderson et al, 2014) the system where the young person has direct interaction with others within the school. The young people discussed how many students knew each other outside of school or were possibly related to one another and how this was also a factor in supporting a sense of 'knowing' each other, this could be seen as part of the

social context of the school and therefore within the macro-system of the Ecological Model of Inclusion (Anderson et al, 2014).

The importance of building a school community is reflected within the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Within the Index for Inclusion there are many difference aspects to building an inclusive school community, however the first step outlined is to ensure everyone is made to feel welcomed. The young people spoke about others knowing their names, knowing other people's names and being able to recognise others when in the corridors of school. This familiarity of others appeared to be a common experience across all the young people and was framed positively by the young people. This could be seen as suggesting that the familiarity made a more welcoming school environment for them, as they felt seen by others in the school. Black-Hawkins et al (2022) identified children having familiarity with others as supportive to having a sense of belonging to school. Acceptance is described as the welcoming of all into the school community by those within the school community (Farrell, 2004, Ainscow et al, 2006). Therefore, suggesting that through the 'knowing' of others and being known themselves supported feelings of acceptance for the young people.

5.2.2   Relationships matter

Subthemes: Relationships with peers and Relationships with adults.

The theme relationships matter encompassed the notion that the relationships in the school setting played a role in experiences of inclusion. This was in terms of the relationships the young people held with their peers and relationships they held with the adults in school. Experiences of positive relationships were seen as promoting feelings of inclusion, whereas experiences where relationships had been difficult to form indicated times those young people had not felt inclusion. This is in line with previous research exploring the views of children and young people around their experiences of inclusion in schools (Adderley et al, 2015; Black-Hawkins et al, 2022; Dimitrellou et al, 2020 & Shaw et al, 2017) with relationships being a key area children and young people felt impacted their experiences of inclusion.

The findings of the study indicated that when the young people experienced positive peer relationships their experiences of acceptance and participation were also positive, illustrating the importance of positive peer relationships in schools. The young people discussed the importance of being able to interact socially with their peers and about how this supported their emotional well-being and happiness. Interestingly, Adderley et al (2015) noted that although not explicitly asked as they were focusing on classroom activities, the children in their study repeatedly moved the subject to talk about their experiences of peer relationships, highlighting how important this area was to them.

In regards to the adult relationships in school, the young people spoke of supportive and trusting relationships. The adults in school were acknowledged as helpful and approachable. This is in line with previous research from Dimitrellou and Male (2020), where young people identified staff being approachable, friendly and helpful as elements of the school that supported their experiences of inclusion.

The relationships with peers and adults can be seen as the young people interacting with elements of the micro-system around them (Anderson et al, 2014). When considering experiences of inclusion through the Ecological model of inclusion (Anderson et al, 2014) the quality of these relationships impact on whether the young people are experiencing acceptance from others or to use the model's terminology feeling 'valued'. Additionally, in relation to the adult relationships the exo-system of the model can be thought about to aid understanding of the findings, in terms of the potential policies, practices and values instilled within the school culture supporting these positive relationships to build.

Within the CESA model (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022) a child-child community and an adult-child community are suggested, which encapsulate all interactions between an individual and their peers and adults respectively. The findings of the study suggest that as Qvortup and Qvortup (2018) state children and young people can be experiencing inclusion within different elements of the school communities. The model also outlines social inclusion as a level of inclusion that can be experienced. The findings of the study suggest that when positive peer or adult relationships are in place

the young people were reaching the experienced level of inclusion within the CESA model, where they are feeling included.

5.2.3   We all have a role to play

Subthemes: Adults role, Peers Role, Own role.

The theme 'we all have a role to play' highlighted the different actions that individuals can take within the learning environment that can support or hinder experience of inclusion. The participants discussed that the teacher, their peers and themselves all play a role in creating and fostering an inclusive learning environment.

The way teachers encouraged students, championed their subject, allowed for flexibility and autonomy, planned and presented learning in creative and fun ways, were aware of how to support individual needs and acknowledged social and emotional pressures were all highlighted as factors that supported experiences of inclusion by the young people. This is in line with previous research which outlined teachers approaches to delivering learning that was interesting and fun (Black-Hawkins et al, 2022; Dimitrellou & Male, 2020) and provided choice and autonomy (Shaw et al, 2021) were seen by children and young people as inclusive practices.

These actions appear to link with some of the areas of inclusive teacher practice outlined by Finkelstein et al (2021). Many the actions discussed by the participants relate to the area of instructional support (Finkelstein et al, 2021): flexibility, autonomy and differentiation of learning. The social and emotional support offered by teachers in the classroom was discussed, with one participant explaining how a teacher had noticed their distress, due to others in the room and offered a safe space within the learning environment for them. Finkelstein et al (2021) position the social, emotional and behavioural support from teachers in the classroom as vital to inclusive practice.

There has been debate in inclusion literature around the idea of differentiation and grouping by ability and the tension this cause when considering the principles and values of inclusion (Koutsouris et al, 2024). Within this study, the participants spoke about how when differentiation was not occurring this led to feeling work was too

difficult or not challenging enough, therefore, impacting on their participation and achievement. This suggested that the young people valued differentiation in their learning and could be seen as viewing inclusion within the "general differences" perspective (Koutsouris et al, 2024).

These actions undertaken by teachers can be viewed as falling withing the micro-system of the ecological model of inclusion (Anderson et al, 2014), in terms of the classroom culture, curriculum presented, and the teachers approach to support. These actions are also influenced by the exo-system, in terms of the school policies and school culture, which impact on teacher approaches. How the adults supported inclusion in the classroom can be also considered in terms of the CESA model (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022) and the formal and professionally led teaching and learning community.

The role of young people in enabling or hindering inclusion in the classroom was also raised by the participants. This notion has previously been highlighted by findings from Black-Hawkins et al (2022) who identified children felt a shared responsibility in creating supportive and inclusive learning environments. The way peers enabled inclusion was through providing learning support by helping each other with work and engaging in learning discussions, and this support was seen as reciprocal. This view of reciprocity has been discussed in previous research (Black-Hawkins et al, 2022) as was the view of peers supporting the participation and achievement of others is in line with previous research (Adderley et al, 2015; Shaw et al, 2020). Hindering actions related to how young people can disrupt the learning of others, and the different degrees of disruption that can occur, from chatting with friends to challenging behaviour that takes the teacher away from teaching. Previous research from Dimitrellou and Male (2020) found similar findings with participants reporting their negative experiences of peers disrupting their learning and the focus of the teacher being shifted from teaching and learning to behaviour management.

The actions of young people in developing inclusive classrooms can be understood through considering the Ecological Model of Inclusion (Anderson et al, 2014). Peers are part of the micro-system; the system an individual has direct contact with. The meso-system is where the interaction between peers and teachers occurs, and these

interactions were described as sometimes leading to the disruption on learning that young people in this study felt impacted on their opportunities, their ability to participate and their ability to achieve.

5.2.4   School systems that promote experiences of inclusion

Polices, Physical spaces and Communication of Information

The theme school systems that promote experiences of inclusion suggests that there are systems functioning within the school environment that enable young people to experience inclusion. Policies that supported inclusion that were raised by the young people were the uniform policy, the reward systems and those practices that supported opportunities to develop peer relationships, such as afterschool clubs or planned changes of class groups. The impact of policies on the experiences of inclusion can be viewed through the Ecological Model of Inclusion (Anderson et al, 2014). School policies can be seen as sitting within the exo-system and maintain an influence over the young people's school experiences.

The idea of having physical safe spaces that the young people could access was highlighted by the young people. The use of these spaces could be for different reasons, such as sensory needs, friendship breakdowns or to avoid uncomfortable feelings associated with the main school environment. It was also noted how these spaces as well as supporting well-being can also support social inclusion. Additionally, the flexibility of spaces and the opportunity within the school to create additional safe spaces when needed was shared as a positive. The Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) advocates for schools to support diversity through ensuring pastoral support is in place to remove barriers to attendance and to minimise bullying. The steps taken by the school in using these safe spaces can be seen as following the Index for Inclusion, through ensuring opportunities to develop positive relationships, avoid negative social situations and create a calming environment.

The systems that supported the communication of information within the school were also highlighted by the young people as supporting their inclusion. Communication of information between adults in school was seen as enabling all adults to support

individual needs, either learning needs or pastoral needs. The studies within the SLR did not share any findings in relation to the impact of information being communicated across adults in the school. Three of the SLR studies were conducted in primary school settings where children are likely to remain with the same teacher and in the same classroom for the majority of their day. Within a secondary school there are multiple room and teacher changes across the day and therefore the importance of information sharing and the experiences of this happening may have been more noticeable to the young people in this study.

The young people discussed the opportunity within the school to share pupil voice through the policy of the student leadership team, enabling them to communicate their views to adults in the school and participate in decisions within the school. This finding contrasts with findings from previous research from the SLR. Dimitrellou and Male (2020) found that young people in their study did not view their opportunities for student voice positively, with some participants being unaware of it happening and others sharing they felt it did not bring about meaningful change. The participants shared feelings that the ultimate power was still with the adults and often ideas and suggestions were ignored (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020). The notion of capturing pupil voice and then not acting on it has been suggested by some to be due to when the voice clashes with the educational policies in place (Greig et al, 2014), and when pupil voice is not acted upon disillusionment with the process occurs (Messiou, 2019). However, within the current study the young people spoke more positively around being able to share pupil voice and that it could enable change to happen. It may be that by having the clear system in place of the Student Leadership Team enabled more understanding of pupil voice and demonstrated pupil voice was valued by the management team within the school. The Student Leadership Team would be seen as sitting within the policy community within the CESA model (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022). Furthermore, the young people in this research appeared to suggest the opportunity to share pupil voice was within the experienced level of inclusion for them.

5.2.5   Social emotional pressures can impact on our inclusion

Subthemes: How others see you and Education is not free from emotions

The findings of the current research illustrate that the young people experienced different social and emotional pressure which impacted on their acceptance, participation and achievement in school. The young people described some of these pressures coming from how they were viewed or perceived by the adults as well as the other young people within the school environment. When young people had experienced this with adults in school, it could be in relation to academic potential or focused on behaviour. This links to previous research exploring experiences of inclusion identified in the SLR, that highlighted that children and young people had experienced feelings of being labelled and discriminated against by adults within the school (Dimitrellou & Male, 2020; Adderley et al, 2015).

When young people experienced the pressure from how they were viewed by their peers, this was in relation to them feeling judged around their appearance, personal possession or their actions. This sense of feeling judged by peers was not identified in the research within the SLR, however references were made by participants in Dimitrellou and Male's (2020) study to bullying impacting their experiences of inclusion in school. Within the current research the notion of bullying was not explicitly shared by the participants, however comments from participants around their concerns people may 'make fun' of them or referencing name calling, could be seen as fear of and/or occurrences of bullying. Therefore, suggesting some similarities to findings in previous research.

The participants within this study highlighted how their worries of other peers judging them impacts on their ability to take part in learning. This supports findings from Black-Hawkins et al (2022) whose participants discussed experiencing feelings of uncomfortableness in relation to social interaction in the classroom, which then impacted on their engagement with learning. When considering this finding through the lends of the Ecological Model of Inclusion (Anderson et al, 2014), peers are part of the micro-system around the young person and their participation, achievement and value. The micro-system plays an influential role as this is the system the individual has direct contact with (Anderson et al, 2014). The young people within this study have expressed how the pressure of actual or potential judgments from peers stop them

from feeling valued, from participating in school life and therefore impacting on opportunities to achieve.

The CESA Model (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022) states that an individual can be included and excluded simultaneously within the different communities that make up the complex school system. When considering that social emotional pressures from peers can impact on young people engaging in differentiated learning, the young people may have been experiencing inclusion within the formally and professionally led teaching and learning community, whilst also experiencing exclusion within the child-child community.

It is important to also consider this finding in relation to the inclusive pedagogies that have been suggested to enable inclusion in the classroom. Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) in their Pedagogical approach to Action framework argue that learning should be extended to all, rather than differentiating. The young people discussed work being differentiated or tailored to them and expressed that this can cause discomfort, with fears of others judging them for being a lower ability. This finding relates to Florian and Beaton's (2018) view that differentiation leads to exclusion through highlighting differences and othering children.

Within this theme, participants also highlighted experiences of learning in the classroom that can result in feeling social and emotional pressures, faced from the academic work and the social interactions that occur around learning. This is in line with previous research from Black-Hawkins et al (2022) where children and young people shared their experiences of how negative social interactions in the classroom hindered their ability to engage in the learning. Finkelstein et al (2021) identified five areas of teacher practice that supported inclusion in the classroom, the fifth area related to teachers undertaking actions to make sure they meet social and emotional needs. This research illustrates that social and emotional pressures occur in the classroom and therefore highlights the importances of teachers managing these pressures to ensure their students feel accepted, can fully participate and achieve.

The social emotional pressures linked with home were also discussed by some participants, in relation to how that then impacted them in school. Within an

ecological systems model, home life would be part of the microsystem. However, the Ecological Model of Inclusion (Anderson et al, 2014) does not include a student's home within the model. Anderson et al (2014) discuss how schools operate as part of their community and the wider national and global contexts and research should explore the relationships between the individual, the environment and societal systems. Adderley et al (2015) outline that schools need to consider how to avoid marginalising students due to practices that may evoke emotions relating to negative aspects of their home life. Young people within the current research have highlighted how experiences within home can impact on their inclusion within school. Therefore, consideration should be given to including home as part of micro and macro systems within the model when applying the model as a framework to support the understanding and implementation of inclusion.

5.2.6   Unfairness erodes feelings of inclusion

Subthemes: We are treated differently, The Covid-19 Pandemic and Lack of resources

The theme unfairness erodes feelings of inclusion related to how the young people felt that aspects of school were unfair and when they experienced this unfairness it impacted on their views and experiences of school as an inclusive environment.

The theme illustrated that the young people at times felt other students could be treated differently and this felt unfair to them. This unfairness appeared to relate to differences in opportunities for extracurricular activities and differences in how the behaviour management system was applied. This could be understood through considering the CESA model (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022). The young people's views and experiences of feeling they are treated differently to others can be seen as being within the experienced level of the model. The experienced level relates to the subjective experience of being included (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022) and the young people shared that at times of feeling treated differently to others they were not experiencing inclusion.

The idea that opportunities were given to either those who were deemed high achievers or to those who appeared to struggle with education was also illustrated in research by Dimitrellou and Male (2020). The idea that behaviour management

systems can be unfair and may be applied differently depending on the young person has also been shown in previous research. Adderley et al (2015) and Dimitrellou and Male (2020) both reported that children and young people felt discriminated against by adults within school at times and felt that behaviour management systems were not always equally applied. These findings suggests that inconsistencies in approaches hinder feelings and experiences of inclusion, as others are seen as having preferential treatment, or being victimised. However, one explanation may be that at times adults within school are attempting to make reasonable adjustments to support the specific needs of students. However, this raises questions of how this is communicated in the wider school and what the other young people's understanding and interpretation of this is. It could be that by perhaps adults attempting to act inclusively by adjusting practice, negatively impact on how others feel about their inclusion. As Florian and Beaton (2018) suggest successful inclusion practices may be more down to how they are delivered than the approach itself.

The young people discussed the unfairness of Covid-19 and its impact on their experiences of inclusion in relation to opportunities for participation and achievement. As well as the additional pressures of returning to the school environment. Research following the Covid-19 pandemic has suggested that children and young people's academic achievement has been negatively impacted by the pandemic (Education Endowment Foundation, 2021). The long-term effects of the pandemic on educational outcomes and social emotional wellbeing of children are still being understood (Harmey & Moss, 2023). As previous research exploring the voices of children and young people in relation to experiences of inclusion has been carried out prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, these findings can be useful in helping to understand the impact of the pandemic on young people's experiences of inclusion.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic could be viewed within the attributes dimension of the CESA model (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022), in particular the access dimension. The access dimension relates to how children and young people are able to physically access school as well as access learning materials, the curriculum and quality teaching (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022). The young people discussed how their access to physical school stopped suddenly when the pandemic arrived. They also discussed how they

felt they had missed aspects of their learning and had missed opportunities to access a varied curriculum. The young people highlighted how their access to an inclusive school system was impacted by the Covid19 pandemic and how this felt unfair.

When considering the Ecological Model of Inclusion (Anderson et al, 2014) in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of systems can be seen as part of the young people's experiences of unfairness and their impact on their experiences of inclusion. The macro-system, although a system where the young people would experience no direct interaction with (Anderson et al, 2014), is where the political system sits and therefore the decisions being taken on how the country reacted to the Covid-19 pandemic, in particular school closures or remote learning. The school policies and procedures are within the exo-system and would have been impacted by the macro-system and the guidance from the government. These policies and procedures in response to the pandemic would then impact on the micro- and meso-systems as the young people directly interacted with their school environment.

The young people also discussed how a lack of resources in the school impacted on their ability to engage in their learning or to support social times. Some young people discussed that this was at times due to lack of financial resources the school had access to. An example of how a lack of resources was impacting on participating fully in a specific subject was shared. These findings can be thought about in relation to the educational attributes within the CESA model (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022). Part of the attribution of access relates to being able to access the learning materials needed to access the curriculum and the attribution of quality refers to the educational quality on offer (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022). When schools do not have appropriate equipment in place to access the curriculum it questions the access children have to the curriculum and the quality of the education they are receiving. Within the ecological model of inclusion (Anderson et al, 2014) the finances allocated to schools and how schools apply their finances fall within the exo-system and the macro-system. Although children and young people do not directly interact with these systems the effects of these decisions impact on their engagement with the learning environment in the micro-system.

5.2.7 Overall discussion of themes

This research aimed to explore what the voices of young people could tell us about their views and experiences of inclusion in secondary school. The findings of the current study add to the existing literature into the voices of children and young people on their experiences of inclusion, which to date has been limited in the UK. Each theme has been discussed individually in relation to the literature outlined in Chapter 2. This section aims to draw together the findings of the study to answer the overall research question.

The developing of inclusive school communities has been seen as a dichotomy with the standards agenda pressures on schools (Osterman, 2000; Beaton & Spratt, 2019). However, the findings illustrate that there are elements within schools that support young people to experience feelings of inclusion. These include having access to positive peer and adult relationships, a sense of school community and belonging, specific systems which encourage pupil voice and support feelings of safety, and teaching and learning practices employed in the classroom. The findings have also shown aspects of school that can hinder experiences of inclusion. The social and emotion pressures young people experience from school and home, policy or practices that appear unfair and teaching and learning practices that are not supportive of individual needs were all shared by the participants.

It feels important to note a contradiction that appeared within the findings in relation to the teaching and learning practices. The young people shared how they felt their learning was better when they were placed in ability groups for lessons and when not in those groups, that tasks were differentiated to their level of ability. However, the young people also shared that they felt uncomfortable engaging in this learning as they worried about other young people's perceptions of them. This suggests that the young people valued their learning being tailored to their individual need but at the same time did not want to be seen as different to their peers. This supports the view of the CESA model (Schuelka & Engsig, 2022), which suggests there are multiple communities within the school environment a young person can be included or excluded from and therefore they may be experiencing inclusion in one community, the teaching and learning community whilst feeling excluded from another community, the child-child

community. Additionally, some young people shared how they felt frustrated when learning was not differentiated as they did not feel challenged by the learning when it was the same for everyone. Again, this supports the view of tensions occurring in how to implement teaching and learning strategies that are effective for supporting the inclusion of all (Koutsouris et al, 2024).

Overall, the findings show that young people are able to share their views and experiences on school in relation to inclusion and provide a unique insight into their own experiences, as advocated by a number of researchers in the field of inclusion.

5.3   Methodological Review

5.3.1   Participant Sample

There are a number of factors to consider in relation to the sample size. The sample of nine participants in the current research is a small sample, however this sample size does fall within the suggested range of appropriate sample size for RTA (Mann, 2019). The participant sample was made up of five females and four males, therefore providing experiences from across genders.

However, there are also limitations to the participant sample which should be considered when interpreting the findings. The school which the sample of participants was taken from is a relatively small sized secondary school, with under 500 students in total. The school is from a rural area in the north of England, where students attending were from a predominantly white British background. School records indicate 89.7% of the school identify as white British, with 18.5% of pupils eligible for free school meals and 0.7% of students have English as an Additional Language. It is important to consider the context in which the data was collected when considering the transferability of the research. A key question is how representative is the sample of the young people attending secondary schools in England? All the participants who took part in the research identified as White British with English as their first language and lived in a rural area. Therefore, the findings are likely to provide understanding of experiences of inclusion for students from a White British background and may be less likely to be relevant to the experiences of young people in more diverse secondary schools, and in particular students from other ethnicities. Caution should be taken in

applying the findings to understanding experiences in contexts different to the one this study was undertaken in.

As noted within the methodology section 3.6 prospective participants were approached by the schools SENCo and Pastoral Manager based on a subjective scale of participation shared by the researcher, which aimed to gather a diverse range of students. Although it is acknowledged that other participants may have been selected if different members of staff had been involved in the recruitment process, it is felt that this would still have enabled a diverse sample of participants. However, it must be acknowledged that those who were approached and subsequently agreed to take part in the research, may be students who felt more comfortable sharing their views and experiences. As noted by Woods (2011) it is vital to question if the voices captured meaningfully represent the population or if they were actually just the voices that were the easiest to capture.

5.3.2   Data Collection

The interview schedule was developed through discussions with the researchers first research supervisor (in Year 2 of the university course) and with another student undertaking the doctorate course. The development of the schedule is described in section 3.7.1. It is important to consider if the questions within the interview schedule were capturing the data they were intended to. One criticism of the interview schedule is that the questions may be seen as exploring young people's experiences of school in general and therefore may not actually provide a rich data picture of young people's experiences of inclusion. However, the current literature around inclusion was used to develop the questions, keeping the researcher's acknowledged definition of inclusion at the forefront. That being that inclusion involves the acceptance, achievement and participation of all learners within education (Ainscow, 2006). The aim of the interview schedule was to draw out the experiences of inclusion from the young people being interviewed, and as inclusion is embedded in everyday school experiences it was felt broad questions around these arenas and follow up prompt questions would enable this to occur.

A further limitation within the data collection procedure is the power imbalance that occurs between researchers and their participants (Kurtovatz, 2017). The researcher took steps to aim to reduce power imbalances (see section 3.8.4), such as allowing some choice around the time of the interview to avoid favoured lessons and through taking time to build rapport with the participants. However, it must be acknowledged that the researcher was an adult outsider to the participants and was also introduced to the participants by the SENCo, a member of staff who can be seen as someone who held authority within the school. Therefore, despite the attempts to address power imbalances, it should be acknowledged that participants may not have felt that they could fully share their views and experiences, particularly those that were negative.

It is also important to consider the skills of the interviewer when considering potential limitations of the research. The researcher acknowledges that she is a novice researcher and had limited prior experiences of conducting semi-structured interviews. However, through their role as a TEP, they are experienced in gathering views from young people and therefore this was felt to be supportive in conducting the interviews. A reflexive diary was kept throughout the data collection and analysis processes (exerts of this can be seen in Appendix 20). The researcher acknowledges that initially they felt that they may have found silences uncomfortable and may have moved on to another question too quickly. It was also noted during transcription that at times she reflected what she was hearing back to the young people, speaking too much and having a potential impact on what the young people shared. On reflection, through listening to the recordings during the transcription process, the researcher felt her skills did develop as she gained more confidence in conducting the interviews. However, this lack of experience should be considered in terms of the data collected and the potential richness of it.

Finally, a key consideration that should be taken when interpreting this research is the societal context the data was collected in. The Covid-19 pandemic led to what is often described as unprecedented changes in many aspects of life, with a significant impact on schools. The participant selection centred on students in Years 9 and 10, with the view that they will have experienced some of the school setting without the impact of Covid, however it is important to acknowledge the frequent changes and disruption

the pandemic caused on these young people school experience. It is important to consider this context when looking at the findings of the research.

5.3.3   Data Analysis

The data was analysed through RTA which was felt to be the most suitable methodology for answering the research question as RTA is suitable for analysing experiences, perceptions and understandings (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This was also felt to fit with the critical realist positioning of the research. As noted within the methodology a number of methodological decisions need to be taken when using RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2022). An experiential method of RTA was applied which used an inductive approach, where coding used the data as the starting point as opposed to theory (Terry et al, 2013). However, the researcher acknowledges that the literature review and the SLR were undertaken prior to the analysis and therefore, this is likely to have impacted on the analysis process. The researcher was aware of the findings of previous research, and this may have led to the researcher to be more aware of experiences that supported or contradicted prior research findings.

In addition to the researcher's awareness of prior research, she holds an interest in inclusion and acknowledges her own views, experiences and beliefs may have impacted on the analysis. Sections 1.2 and 3.10 provided an overview of the reflexivity of the researcher and the acknowledgement that the school the research occurred in was a similar setting to the one the researcher attended during her secondary school education. The researcher acknowledges that she may have been more aware or experiences she felt were similar to her own experiences of school and inclusion. The use of the research diary was there to support the researcher to be reflexive through the analysis process. The researcher acknowledges that this is one possible interpretation of the data, influenced by what she has brought to the research.

A further limitation is that due to needing to ensure the anonymity of the participants within the research and the impact of this on Phase six of the analysis, the write up. Although this is not felt to have impacted on the coding process, it has impacted on

the interview quotes that could be used to support in the explanation of the findings and therefore show the depth of the data.

5.4   Dissemination of the research

The researcher agreed with the SENCo at the school that the findings of the research will be shared with the school. As the interviews were held in 2021, with students in Year 9 and 10, these students will have now left the school and therefore unfortunately the research findings cannot be shared with them directly. When considering Messiou's (2012) model of supporting inclusion through the gaining of pupil voice, only stages one, gathering pupil voice, and stage two, analysis of pupil voice, were part of the research. It was hoped from the initial discussions regarding the research with the school that they could use the findings to support steps three, sharing the findings with the wider community, and stage four, working with young people to address any issues that are impacting inclusion. However, it is hoped the research findings can support the school in looking at their own systems, policy and practice in relation to the current cohorts of students attending the school.

The finding will also be shared with the LA colleagues in the researcher's current EPS and with the EPS the researcher undertook their Year 2 and 3 University placement and the research.

5.5   Possible Implications of the Research

The research has enabled the voices of young people within a secondary school to share their views and experiences of inclusion. This section will explore the possible implications the findings of this research may have for EP Practice, for Schools', for LA and wider Government and on potential future research.

5.5.1 Implications for Educational Psychologists

EPs undertake a diverse range of work, and the findings of the research could be used to support EP's work at the individual level, group level within schools and at a strategic level within the LA.

Greig et al (2014) stress the crucial role EPs have in advocating for the children and young people they work with and to promote practices that enable their voices to be heard. Therefore, when working at the individual level the findings could be used to help EPs explore children and young people's experiences of inclusion, to ensure their voices are heard and help develop a shared understanding of a child or young person's current situation.

The research may have implications for EPs working with schools at a group level. EPs have a role in supporting schools in promoting inclusion (BPS, 2022) and therefore it is hoped that this research will be of value in supporting that role. The research may support EPs by providing a framework, through the themes and subtheme, that can be used to discuss with schools to support their reflection on their inclusive policy and practice. For example, using the themes as a self-reflection audit tool that EPs can support SENCos and Senior Leadership to reflect on.

The findings of the research may also have possible implications for EPs at a strategic level. EPs could share the research findings with other agencies within Children's and Families Services to increase their understanding and awareness of the experiences of young people on inclusion. For example, within the researchers' own Educational Psychology Service there are EPs who are part of a multi-agency working group focused on developing pupil voice across Children and Families Services and ensuring pupil voice informs practice and policy within the LA.

5.5.2 Implications for Schools

There are a number of possible implications for schools as a result of the current research. Whitty and Wisby (2007) state that through gathering and understanding pupil voice school improvement can occur. The study highlights that young people are able to share their views on this topic and provide a perspective as those who are

experiencing the inclusive policy and practice being applied. Schools could engage in taking the time to discuss experiences of inclusion with students in their own settings, and through listening, work to alleviate any potential threats to inclusion and continue to strength the policy and practice in place that is supporting inclusion.

Additionally, the findings of the study could be used to support schools to reflect on their own inclusion policy and practice. Schools could focus on looking at the areas identified that appeared to support inclusion and those areas that were seen to hinder it. This could also be shared as a reflection tool with the children and young people within the school setting to enable school leaders and therefore the policy makers to hear the voices of the students within their own schools.

The findings of the current study and of previous studies suggest that relationships between young people and their peers are important to fostering experiences of inclusion (Black-Hawkins et al, 2021; Adderley et al, 2014, Shaw et al 2019). Schools could use this information to consider how they support relationships to build, both across peers and with the adults in school. Alongside how they provide any additional support when relationships may have broken down or there has been difficulties in forming them.

Additionally, the feeling a sense of community and school belonging were also factors that were identified as supporting experiences of inclusion. Schools may find it helpful to consider how they support fostering a sense of community and school belonging at key transition points, e.g., the transition to secondary school, end of year or end of key stage transitions. As well as how they maintain these feelings for their students across the school.

Finally, the findings suggested social and emotional pressures young people are facing, from home, their peers and from the learning itself can have a detrimental impact on feelings of inclusion. Therefore, it will be important for schools to consider how they implement support to alleviate pressures and provide support to ensure young people have the necessary skills to cope with these pressures when they arise.

5.5.3 Implications for Local Authority and Government

The research is hoped to provide LA and Government with potential insights into the experiences of young people in Secondary school in relation to inclusion from key stakeholders in inclusion policy.

It feels important to note that following the recent change in Government (July 2024), there appears to be a shift in tone in relation to education and supporting the diverse needs of learners in the UKs school. Initial letters sent to LAs and schools by the new Education Secretary appear to indicate a focus on bringing Special Educational Needs and Disabilities back into the remit of the Education department and therefore suggests a change from the previous governments policies. It is at this point too early to comment on what changes to policy this may lead too at a government level and therefore the wider impact of this on LAs and Schools responsibilities.

However, if a more inclusive education system is being developed by the new Government, then it will be important that the voices of children and young people are part of that process. As stated previously, children and young people are key stakeholders in inclusion in schools (Shogren et al, 2015). The possible implications of the findings of this research could help to inform policy decisions, through highlighting the areas that young people felt supported their experiences of inclusion, such as school belonging, relationships, school practices and policies, alongside areas that they felt impacted negatively on their experiences of inclusion, such as social and emotional pressures, poor relationships, perceived areas of unfairness. It is hoped this research also has the power to demonstrate to policy makers that young people are able to share their views and experiences on this topic and that their experiences should be valued, as they directly experience the policies and practices that are put in place by Government and LAs.

5.5.4 Implications for Future Research

The research undertaken was exploratory in nature to discover what the voices of young people could tell us about their views and experiences of inclusion in secondary school. The SLR suggested that only one other study had focused on gathering the

perspectives of students on their experiences of inclusion in secondary school, without solely focusing on children who fall within a particular area of Special Educational Needs. Future research could continue to explore inclusion through pupil voice, whilst addressing some of the limitations of this research. As stated previously, the research has been undertaken with a very small sample, from a rural area of the country and further research could aim to expand on this work using a larger sample of young people from more diverse areas of the country. As this research also had a narrow age range of participants, those in Years 9 and 10, future research could also look at expanding the age range of the participants to provide views from a wider age group.

Future research could also look at undertaking alternative research methodologies to gain the voices of young people around inclusion, in particular participatory research. This could involve using action research to explore views and experiences of inclusion and then go further than the current research, to implement change through understanding the views shared, and reviewing the changes. This would enable all steps of Messiou's (2012) framework for promoting inclusion with pupil voice at the centre to be undertaken. As Adderley et al (2015) state, if we are fully to listen to the voices of young people, then they need to have ownership of the topics they want to discuss and not be solely guided by the agendas of the adults researching.

Finally, research could explore teacher's perceptions of inclusion in relation to the findings of this study. Schuelka and Engsig (2022) suggest that through working with schools to identify the existing systems of inclusion support allows for the school to further develop their inclusive processes. This work should include all stakeholders and bring together the multiple perspectives (Koutsouris et al, 2024). The young people in this study have highlighted their experiences of inclusion and it would be interesting to gather perspectives from teachers on their awareness and experiences of the areas raised by the young people in this research.

Chapter 6   Conclusion

The importance of ensuring inclusion in education for all children and young people is recognised internationally (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018), however there appears to be more work needed to enable this to happen (Tomlinson, 2015; Koutsouris et al, 2024). The tensions that exist within clearly defining the concept of inclusion and how this relates to research, policy and practice is widely acknowledged (Messiou, 2019; Gorranson & Nilholm, 2014; Haug, 2017). As are the tensions in how to deliver inclusion in schools. These tensions are in relation to the current political context of educational provision (Beaton & Spratt, 2019) and in relation to how inclusion looks in the classroom environment (Finkelstein et al, 2022; Florian & Beaton, 2011). Research has called for more exploration around the voices of children and young people and their experiences of inclusion (Shogren et al, 2015; Messiou, 2012), however internationally and within the UK context there appeared to be very few studies exploring this. This research has aimed to add to the current literature through exploring the voices of young people within a mainstream secondary school in the north of England. The findings of the research have supported and extended previous research within England on the experiences of young people on inclusion in schools.

The findings of the research have indicated that there are aspects of school that support young people to experience inclusion within their secondary school. Feeling that they belong to the school community, experiencing positive and supportive relationships and school policies that promote inclusion were all identified as supporting inclusion. How learning was presented and planned by the adults in school, as well as how peers and the young people themselves acted within the classroom was also seen as supportive to inclusion but could also hinder it. There were also other aspects of school that appeared to have a negative impact on experiences of inclusion for the young people. The social and emotional pressures faced by young people and the aspects of school that appeared unfair hindered experiences of inclusion. The findings also suggested that within the multiple communities within the school, young people can be experiencing inclusion within one community, whilst also experiencing a level of exclusion within another (Qvortup & Qvortup, 2018).

This research is one small part of attempting to understand inclusion and how to best support schools to work towards improving their inclusive practices. The findings appear to have implications for all levels of EP work, for schools and for LA and wider government practices. Koutsouris et al (2024) argue that the tensions in delivering inclusion in education need to be acknowledged and cannot be solved by gathering pupil voice alone. However, through enabling the voices of young people to be heard and showing they are able to contribute to the discussion around inclusion, it is hoped that future research can continue to raise awareness of these voice and take action with these voices to bring about meaningful change to improve inclusion in schools for all.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Search Terms used in each database for SLR

Database	Search Terms
Scopus	AB (child* OR pupil* OR student*) AND AB (view* OR voice* OR experience* OR perception*) AND AB (inclusion OR (inclusive AND education) OR inclusivity) AND AB ((primary AND school) OR (Secondary AND school))
ERIC	AB (child* OR pupil* OR student*) AND AB (view* OR voice* OR experience* OR perception*) AND AB (inclusion OR (inclusive AND education) OR inclusivity) AND AB ((primary AND school) OR (Secondary AND school))
EtHos (Simple search was used)	Child AND voice AND inclusion AND school

Appendix 2: List of studies read in full for the SLR and decision on inclusion or exclusion of the study

Author(s)/Year	Title	Inclusion/Exclusion
Adderley, Hope, Hughes, Jones, Messiou and Shaw (2015)	Exploring inclusive practices in primary schools: focusing on children's voices	INCLUDED
Agbenyega (2008)	Developing an Understanding of the Influence of School Place on Students' Identity, Pedagogy and Learning, Visually	EXCLUDED – Not in UK – undertaken in Ghana
Black-Hawkins, Maguire & Kershner (2021)	Developing inclusive classroom communities: what matters to children?	INCLUDED
Carrington, Allen & Osmolowski (2007)	Visual Narrative: A Technique to enhance Secondary Students' contribution to the development of inclusive, socially just school environments – lessons from a box of crayons	EXCLUDED - Study was undertaken in Australia.
Dimitrellou, Hurry and Male (2020)	Assessing the inclusivity of three mainstream secondary schools in England: challenges and dilemmas	EXCLUDED – does not focus on young people's voices
Dimitrellou and Male (2020)	Understanding what makes a positive school experience for pupils with SEND: can their voices inform inclusive practice?	INCLUDED
Messiou (2006)	Conversations with children: making sense of marginalisation in primary school settings	EXLUDED - Not in the UK
Messiou (2012)	Collaborating with children in exploring marginalisation: an approach to inclusive education	EXCLUDED – No results shared
Messiou (2012)	Working with students as co-researchers in schools: a matter of inclusion	EXCLUDED - Focuses on the methodological issues and does not share findings
Paliokosta and Blandford (2010)	Inclusion in school: a policy, ideology or lived experience? Similar findings in diverse school cultures	EXCLUDED - Focused solely on adult views. Did not elicit voices of young people.
Sandberg (2017)	Different Children's Perspective on their Learning Environment	EXCLUDED – Study conducted in Sweden
Shaw, Messiou & Voutsina (2021)	Illuminating young children's perceived notions of inclusion in pedagogical activities	INCLUDED
Wenham (2019)	'It's horrible. And the class is too silent' – A silent classroom environment can lead to a paralysing fear of being put on the spot, called-out, shown up, shamed or humiliated.	EXCLUDED – focuses on one specific group of children only.

Woolhouse (2019)	Conducting photo methodologies with children: framing ethical concerns relating to representation, voice and data analysis when exploring educational inclusion with children	EXCLUDED - Focuses on the ethical considerations of research with children and does not discuss the findings of the project.

Appendix 3: Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) Tool Screening Checklist for Systematic Literature Reviews.

A table adapted from the original checklist to outline the considerations taken when appraising the studies as part of the SLR.

Section	Question	Areas to consider
A	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	What was the goal of the research? Why was it thought important? What relevance does the research have?
	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Does the research seek to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants? Is qualitative research the right methodology for addressing the research goals?
	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Has the researcher justified the research design?
	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Has the researcher explained how participants were selected? Have they explained why the participants were selected/were they the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge the study was seeking? Is there information provided around recruitment?
	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research question?	Is it clear how data was collected? Is the data collection method justified? Are they explicit in how data was collected through their chosen method? Is saturation discussed? Is the form of the data discussed?
B	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Has the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias, and influence during the formulation of research question and the whole data collection process? Is there discussion of how the researcher responded to events during the study and did they consider implications of any changes to research design?
	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Is there sufficient details of how research was explained to participants to enable the reader the assess if ethical standards were maintained? Is there a discussion around ethical issues? Was approval sought from an ethics committee?
C	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Is there an in-depth description of the analysis process? Is sufficient data presented to support the findings? Is contradictory data taken into account? Has the researcher critically examined

		their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data being presented?
	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Are the findings explicit? Is there an adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments? Has the credibility of findings been discussed? Are the findings discussed in relation to the research question?
	How valuable is the research?	Is the contribution of the study to existing knowledge discussed? Are new areas of research identified? Is there discussion around how findings could be transferred to other populations / other ways the research may be used?

Appendix 4: CASP Summary Table of studies included in the Systematic Literature Review

Checklist Questions	Included Studies			
	Adderley, Hope, Hughes, et al (2015)	Black-Hawkins, Maguire & Kershner (2021)	Dimitrellou & Male (2020)	Shaw, Messiou & Voutsina (2021)
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes	Yes – used framework and explained rationale for this	Yes	Yes
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes – clear how school was recruited and who participants were and how they were selected	Yes – opportunity sampling for school recruitment and then random sampling from classes. Outlines across 4 Local Authorities and therefore would contain a diverse range of pupils.	No – Schools are not adequately described and no explanation as to why/how they were recruited. Does discuss participant recruitment.	No– all children in reception class offered to take part, but unsure how schools were recruited or why those schools.
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research question	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – considered the use of pictures may have directed children's discussions

Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Unclear	Yes –ethical considerations discussed	Yes	Yes – explicit discussion of consent/dissent with the children.
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes – description of how analysis was carried out	No – unclear what type of analysis was used.	Unclear – The questionnaire data was not reported within the findings.	Yes – clear outline of coding and theme generation
Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
How valuable is the research?	Unclear – some discussion of how findings relate to existing knowledge. Does not explore future research or discuss how findings could be generalised to other populations.	Yes	Yes	Unclear – some discussion of how findings relate to existing knowledge. Does not explore future research or discuss how findings could be generalised to other populations.

Appendix 5: Ethics Approval Letter

The University of Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

School of Psychology

The University of Nottingham
University Park
Nottingham
NG7 2RD

T: +44 (0)115 8467403 or (0)115 9514344

SJ/tp

Ref: **S1335**

Wednesday 16th June 2021

Dear Sarah Atkinson and Caroline Ruth Simpson,

Ethics Committee Review

Thank you for submitting an account of your proposed research 'An exploration of inclusion through the voices of young people'

That proposal has now been reviewed by the Ethics Committee and I am pleased to tell you that your submission 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.
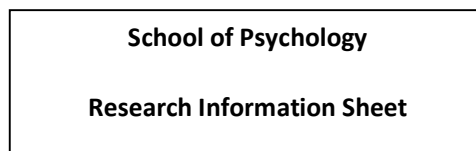
Yours sincerely

Professor Stephen Jackson
Chair, Ethics Committee

Appendix 6: Research Information Sheet

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School of Psychology

Research Information Sheet

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The University of Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

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Title of Project: An exploration of inclusion through the voices of young people in Secondary School

Insert Ethics Approval Number or Taught Project Archive Number: S1335

Researcher: (Caroline) Ruth Simpson

Supervisor: Dr Sarah Atkinson

Contact Details: Ruth Simpson: lpxcs13@nottingham.ac.uk

Dr Sarah Atkinson: s.atkinson@nottingham.ac.uk

My name is Ruth Simpson, and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist studying at the University of Nottingham. I am currently on placement with XXXXXX Educational Psychology Service. As part of my training, I am conducting research to explore how inclusion is understood and experienced by young people in Secondary Schools. The research has been approved by the Nottingham University Ethics Committee. I am writing to you to inform you of the research and request permission for pupils within your school to take part in the research.

The research seeks to provide a space in which young people's experiences of school can be voiced, acknowledged and recorded. The research aims to explore how young people understand inclusion and their experiences of inclusion within school, as they are experiencing inclusive practices firsthand. This is an exploratory study and I hope that the findings will be useful in supporting schools to enable the acceptance, participation, and achievement of all learners in school, through listening to the voices of children and young people. It is also hoped that the findings will inform the ways Educational Psychologists work with schools to promote inclusive environments for all learners.

Participation in the research would involve the young person taking part in an interview with me to explore their views and experiences. Each interview will last around one hour and be facilitated by myself. With your permission the interviews would be held on the school site in a private, comfortable room. The interviews will follow a semi-structured interview format. I have enhanced DBS clearance for working with children and young people. If on-site interviews are not possible due to Covid-19 restrictions interviews could be held remotely via Microsoft Teams, where a member of school staff would need to present in the room with the young person during to the interview.

The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. All information will be stored securely and will only be used for research purposes. The school name and participant names will be

anonymised, and any identifiable information shared within the audio recordings will not be included when reporting the results. Once transcribed the audio recordings will be deleted.

I am particularly interested in the gathering the views of a diverse group of young people, and I would like to recruit pupils who would be a representative cross section of your school population. The research will focus on pupils in national curriculum Years 9&10. Further discussion would be held between us to support you in identifying suitable pupils to take part in the research. An information sheet for parents and a parental consent form would be shared with you to be given to parents of the identified pupils. Following parental consent being obtained, a pupil information sheet will be provided to share with the pupils and voluntary consent would be gained from the pupils.

You do not have to take part in this research and are free to withdraw your participation at any time during the data collection. You do not need to provide a reason for this.

In order to support you in deciding whether you feel able to help me with this request I would very much welcome the opportunity to come and speak with you and discuss the purpose of my research further. Please feel free to contact me to discuss this researcher further – lpxcs13@nottingham.ac.uk.

If you have any complaints about the study, please contact Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee) *stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk.*

Thank you for your time in considering my request,

Ruth Simpson

Trainee Educational Psychologist

University of Nottingham

Appendix 7: Parental Information Form

School of Psychology Information Sheet

Title of Project: An exploration of inclusion through the voices of young people in Secondary School

Insert Ethics Approval Number or Taught Project Archive Number: S1335

Researcher: (Caroline) Ruth Simpson

Supervisor: Dr Sarah Atkinson

Contact Details: Ruth Simpson: lpxcs13@nottingham.ac.uk

Dr Russell Hounslow: r.hounslow@nottingham.ac.uk

My name is Ruth Simpson, and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist studying at the University of Nottingham. I am currently on placement with XXXXXXX Educational Psychology Service.

This is an invitation for your child to take part in a research study I am undertaking as part of my training which aims to explore how students attending a mainstream secondary school understand and experience inclusion in school. Before you decide if you wish for 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.

This is an exploratory study and I hope that the findings will be useful in supporting schools to enable the acceptance, participation, and achievement of all learners in school, through listening to the voices of children and young people. It is also hoped that the findings will inform the ways Educational Psychologists work with schools to promote inclusive environments for all learners.

If you agree for your child to participate, they will be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview with me, on a 1:1 basis. I have full enhanced DBS clearance. The interview will last for approximately 1 hour and your child will be asked questions around their experiences in school. The interviews will take place in the school setting, if Covid-19 restrictions allow for this. If your child would like a member of staff to be present during the interview than this can be arranged. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic if meeting in person is not possible due to Covid-19 restrictions the interview will be held over Microsoft Teams, and a member of school staff will be present with your child during the interview.

This research seeks to provide an opportunity for your child to tell their story about their experiences of school and it is hoped that the opportunity to have their voice heard will provide them with a positive experience. However, during the interview sensitive and personal

topics may be raised, which may produce feelings of distress or anger for your child. Time will be made available following the interview to talk through any feelings should they have arisen.

In order to support the research process the interview will be voice recorded. If the interview is held remotely over Microsoft Teams a separate device will be used to voice record and there will be no video recording taken of your child. All information gathered will be stored securely. All data collected will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. The voice recording will be transcribed, and once the transcription is completed the voice recording will be deleted two weeks later. Your child's name and school name will be anonymised and any information that could identifying them within the interview recording will not be included in the typed transcript of the interview.

Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are under no obligation to provide permission for your child to take part. You and your child will be free to withdraw your consent at any point before or during the study, up until the point that the interview has been transcribed, which will not be earlier than (*Insert date*). If you or your child wish to withdraw from the study, please use the contact details at the top of this letter.

If you would like your child to take part in the research, please sign the attached consent form and return the form to XXXXXX. If you give your consent for your child to take part in the research, an information sheet will be shared with them to explain the research and their consent to take part will also be gained. Your child's right to withdraw from the research will also be explained to them.

If you would like to discuss this further with me or have any questions about the research, please contact me via email: lpxcs13@nottingham.ac.uk

If you have any complaints about the study, please contact Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee) stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk

Thank you for considering my request.

Yours sincerely,

(Caroline) Ruth Simpson

Trainee Educational Psychologist

University of Nottingham

Appendix 8: Pupil Information Sheet

School of Psychology **Information Sheet**	**The University of Nottingham** UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Title of Project: An exploration of inclusion through the voices of young people in Secondary School

Insert Ethics Approval Number: S1335

Researcher: (Caroline) Ruth Simpson

Supervisor: Dr Russell Hounslow

Contact Details: Ruth Simpson: lpxcs13@nottingham.ac.uk

Dr Russell Hounslow: r.hounslow@nottingham.ac.uk

My name is Ruth Simpson, and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist studying at the University of Nottingham. I am researching how young people experience inclusion in secondary school.

I would like to invite you to take part in this research. Please read the information below to help you decide if you would like to take part.

Why am I doing this research?

This research is interested in hearing the experiences of young people in school. It is particularly interested in how young people understand and experience inclusion in their school. It is hoped that the information from this research will help suggest ways that schools and Educational Psychologists can support young people in secondary school.

What does taking part in the research involve?

Participation in the research will involve being interviewed by me. During the interview you will be asked questions about your experiences in school. You will be interviewed once, and I will voice record the interview.

The interview seeks to allow you to tell your story about your experiences in school and provide an opportunity for your voice to be heard and I hope this would be a positive experience for you. However, during the interview you may raise topics, such as experiences of being left out, that may produce feelings of distress or anger. There will be additional time at the end of the interview for you to talk through any feeling that may have arisen during the interview.

Where will the interview take place?

The interview will take place in a room in school. If you wish you can have an adult from school sit in on the interview with you. I will follow all Covid-19 guidance that your school has in place. This is likely to mean that I will be wearing a face mask when we meet, and we will be sat 2 meters apart from each other.

If Covid-19 restrictions mean that I can't come into school to meet with you in person, I will use Microsoft Teams to video call you in school. If this happens a member of staff will be asked to be in the room during the interview.

How long will it take?

The interview will take around an hour.

What happens after the interview?

The recording of the interview will be stored securely and used for research purposes. I will type up the voice recording, and the recording will be deleted 2 weeks after I have finished typing it up. Your name will not be used in the research, and no one will be able to identify you when I write up the research. I may use quotes of things you have said when I report the results, but I will make sure they would not contain any information that would identify you to others.

Do I have to take part?

No, participation in the research is completely voluntary.

What happens if I change my mind?

If you decide to take part and then change your mind you are completely free to withdraw, there will be no consequences for withdrawing and you do not have to give a reason. You will need to ask your parent/carer or XXXXXX to contact me and I will remove your information from the study. You can choose to withdraw at any stage, before, during or after the interview, up until your interview has been typed up and anonymised.

Thank you for taking the time to read this sheet and consider my invitation to take part in the research. If you have further questions or would like more information please speak with XXXXXX or contact me directly.

If you wish to take part in the research, please see XXXXXX for a pupil consent form.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Simpson

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 9: Parent Consent Form

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Consent Form</td></tr>
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The University of
Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Title of Project An exploration of inclusion through the voices of young people in Secondary School

Ethics Approval Number or Taught Project Archive Number: S1335

Researcher: (Caroline) *Ruth Simpson lpxcs13@nottingham.ac.uk*

Supervisor: Dr Russell Hounslow r.hounslow@nottingham.ac.uk

Please 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/your child is free to withdraw from the study? YES/NO
    (at any time and without giving a reason, up until data transcription has occurred)

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

- Do you agree for your child to take part in the study?   YES/NO

 "This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree for my child to take part. I understand that I am/they are free to withdraw at any time."

Signature of the Parent/Carer: Date:

Name (in block capitals)

Name of Child (in block capitals)

……

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

Signature of researcher: Date:

Appendix 10: Pupil Consent Form

School of Psychology Consent Form

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Title of Project An exploration of inclusion through the voices of young people in Secondary School

Ethics Approval Number or Taught Project Archive Number:

Researcher: (Caroline) Ruth Simpson lpxcs13@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Russell Hounslow r.hounslow@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, up until data transcription has occurred)

- 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

 "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: Participant Debrief Sheet

School of Psychology Debrief Sheet	The University of Nottingham UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Title of Project: An exploration of inclusion through the voices of young people in Secondary School

Ethics Approval Number: S1335

Researcher: (Caroline) Ruth Simpson lpxcs13@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Russell Hounslow r.hounslow@nottingham.ac.uk

What happens now?
Thank you for taking part in my study exploring inclusion through the experiences of secondary school students.

I will listen back to the recording and type this up onto the computer. I will delete the recording I took today, 2 weeks after I have finished typing up the interview. I will not use your name when typing up the interview and I will not include any information that could identify you. This means that no one will be able to identify what you said.

I will then look at all of the information young people have shared with me and try to identify if there are common themes or experiences.

I would like to share what you and other young people have told me with other researchers and teachers to help in understanding how to make schools inclusive for all children.

I've changed my mind and don't want to take part anymore.

That is not a problem. You can take your information out of the study as long as you let me know, this needs to be before I have typed up your interview. Please tell your parent/carer or XXXXXX and ask them to contact me and tell me you no longer want to take part. **Please tell them as soon as possible,** and before [Insert Date]

I will then take your information out of the study and delete the recording and all other information you have told me.

After [Insert Date] I will no longer be able to take your information out of the study.

I feel sad or worried about something I have talked about. What can I do?

If after you leave, you feel upset about something we have spoken about please speak to an adult you trust. Here are some ideas of people you can talk to:

Your parent or carer

Your form tutor

XXXXXX

Where can I get more information?

If you have any more questions about the study, ask your parent/carer or XXXXXX to get in touch with me and they can pass your question on to me.

Thank you again for taking part!

Ruth Simpson

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 12: Interview Schedule

Question	Potential Follow Up Questions	Area	Prompts
I am interested in learning about how young people like you understand and experience inclusion in school. When I say the word inclusion, what does that mean to you?	Have you heard the word inclusion before? Can you remember when you have heard it? If unsure - what do you think it could mean? How do you see this happening in your school? Have you any examples of how this happens?	Perception of Inclusion	*Can you tell me more about …* *What does that mean?* *How would you describe that to someone who doesn't know about that?* *What else?* *Can you give any more examples?* *What other ways can you describe that?* *Can you give me an example of when …?*
The rest of the questions are to explore your experiences of inclusion.			
Tell me about what being a student at this school is like?	How do you feel about being a student at this school? Have you always felt this way – any times where this was different? Do you think everyone feels the same as you in school? What makes you think that? What is the best thing about being at this school?	Wider school environment	
Tell me about the lessons you have in school?	What type of activities do you do? Are there any things you see in school that support students to take part in learning in school? Are there any barriers for young people taking part in learning?	Classroom environment	
Tell me about your learning?	What does success/achievement look like to you?	Classroom environment	

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	Can you think of examples of how you have been helped with things that you found difficult? How is help and support given for learning?		
Tell me about break times and lunch times at school?	What routines/structures are in place at lunch times? What options/activities are available?	Wider school environment	
Tell me about the adults in school?	Who would you talk to if you had a problem in school? Why this person? How do the adults in school support you to feel you included? How are students listened too in school?	Classroom environment/Wider school environment	
Tell me about the students in school?	Do you feel that all students in school have the same opportunities to take part in learning or social aspects of school? Are there any barriers to students participating in the social aspects of school? How are students supported to participate in the social aspects of school?	Classroom environment/Wider school environment	
To what extent do you feel students are treated equally in school?	In lessons? In the wider school? What happens that makes you feel this way? How do you think students are shown they are valued?	Classroom environment/Wider school environment	

Thinking about inclusion: What is the biggest challenge (if any) to inclusion at this school? Is there anything in school that you see supports inclusion?		Wider school environment	
Is there anything we have not already talked about that you would like to share about your experiences of inclusion in school?			

Appendix 13: Examples of transcription and coding

Interview 4: Heather

I: erm ok yeah so things that happen in school that support people to take part in their learning so you mentioned room 5 is there anything else you can think of? P: erm to like help you? I: yeah P: there is yeah (laughing) I have forgotten everything erm in like classes they try to make the work a bit funner sometimes I think I already said that and erm usually if like erm I am forgetting everything today	Adults approach to teaching
I: no worries its big questions are there things that you see getting in the way of people being able to take part in school P: erm if like I have been asked to do a few stuff once I've been I cant like do the work I just like give up when ive been asked to do a lot at once its just got a bit boring and too hard so yeah I think yeah	Own role in participation
I: ok yeah anything else that might get in the way? P: erm well sometimes the actual people in the class so like because I'm in bottom set its all the people who mess around erm so its its all of the naughty people who don't really listen so we don't do that much work in the classes as they are being sent out for being rude and yeah there's quite a lot of those types of people in my lessons so like the teacher is busy and they can't help you as much as they are shouting at the actual people in the class yeah	Peers impact on your opportunities / participation
I: in terms of your learning what does success mean to you? P: erm getting stuff right and erm sometimes winning stuff and like if you finally achieve your goal or something then its quite good	
I: so you have already talked a bit about this around examples of how you have been helped are there any other things school do to help with your learning? P: erm well I have like pink paper coz I find that easy to read on coz I'm not very good at some colours so like quick things are	Adaptions for individual learning needs

fine but when well especially when I'm trying to do work and I'm looking at it its quite hard to see where I am at so when they print work sheets out I always get a pink worksheet and its good because I think all the teacher know to do that so its good	Teachers know what my needs are
I: is there anything else that helps?	
P: erm (pause) erm well I I don't know but I kind of help myself sometimes so I find things easier when it looks nice so I'm quite like organised and I like things to look tidy and neat and stuff erm and it helps me a bit when I make my work look nicer and its all there and I highlight the stuff I need most and I can go back to and it will be all there and clear in my book so I have a multicoloured pen and I write things in different colours and I guess maths is probably the best for it so when other people are asking questions I have time to write down the things I think I need to remember for next time and I think that quite helps me	Own role in achievement and participation

Interview 8: Peggy

I: hmmm yeah it sounds really tricky and there is a lot out of our control erm I suppose what do you think is the best thing about this school?	
P: I think the subjects and the teachers because the teachers who I have they really want us to get to want us to be interested in our lessons and not being bored like not meaning this in a bad way but they want to do their jobs and they want to make us want to love that subject and it is just lovely coz its like I enjoy many of my lessons because of the teachers and if you have a good well relationship with your teacher then you are going to enjoy that lesson coz like people say oh I hate this lesson because they are boring or something but like well my friend said this morning oh I hate this teacher because they are boring and I said actually they are really nice towards me and their lessons are not boring she makes them really exciting its sciences and I enjoy doing her sciences as its all about the periodic table and atoms and stuff and it is amazing how we came from one thing to now millions of things now it is just so its amazing but I just love all the teacher I have and all the lessons I have coz some schools don't do like maybe drama or art or something around that because they think it is not important towards our like life but then people are going to be taking like GCSE art or GCSE drama so like what they don't think is important but then that child would have to take art lessons or drama lessons or	Enthusiastic teachers

Teachers role

Positive relationships with adults impacts positively on learning experience
Teachers need to be fun

Importance of variety of lessons |

something outside of school so I just think all schools should provide access to all of those lessons

I: hmm yeah so having the chance to do different things?

P: yeah

I: ok yeah so tell me about the lessons at this school?

P: like so like we get to talk together and explain stuff together and like history for example we like the table I'm on we explain our reasons and what we think and what happened and that and we are able to just talk and the teacher lets us do that and the might like come up and start putting his opinions in and he lets us do that and we might start just like pulling stuff in and talk altogether and explain stuff and like they make activities exciting they make lessons like they plan ahead and think about if this is going to be interesting to the students instead of oh I would like them to do this so thinking would they like it in a way they always plan like not for them but plan for would they like it as they like doing this and that but they didn't like doing that thing like I just enjoy them all

I: hmm ok so thinking about the class?

P: yeah yeah

I: erm does everyone in school have the same opportunities to do the same activities in school?

P: erm I think the teachers change it in a way but keep it on the same subject but they will plan for it but they will think ok I am going to fix that or change that for a different class but they think about what we want and what they well they want us to learn and want us to enjoy it I guess what I might find boring others might not think are boring and they might like them you cant just please everyone or base it on every child but they just plan and think what is good towards the students and the school

I: ok yeah are there any things you see happening in school that kind of help students take part in learning?

P: yeah like they put teachers put stuff on the walls explaining things like if a student didn't understand how a teacher worded it they put it on the wall and word it a little different or easier coz like we are all different in learning like people can be best or great at something else and someone else can be good at

	Coding
	Learning with peers / peers supporting each others learning
	Teachers make lessons interesting / teachers thinking of students
	Adapting to us
	Student centred planning
	Meeting all needs is impossible task/ what's best for majority?
	School environment / learning support

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something different than them and then like if that person is slow at or like if they don't well like not meaning in a bad way but like if they weren't paying attention or zoned out they can look at the wall for help or if we don't understand what is on the wall we can ask the teachers and if we don't want to ask in front of the whole class we can go after class which is nice because like with me I don't like asking in front of the class because like well you just think they are going to make fun of me because of that and they are just going to say like how have you not understood that is it easy but I just like it how the teachers say you can go after class and like just come and ask me in the corridors or after class or before class	Varying needs / pupil individuality
	Access to learning outside of the classroom
	Fears of peer responses
	Approachable adults
I: hmm yeah so do you think there is anything that gets in the way of young people taking part in learning?	
P: I think like the thing that can get in the way is their friends in a way because you will want to be talking to your friends at the same time as in being in the class because we all get put together with out friends like talk together and then you will want to erm talk erm yeah sorry I am bad at speaking at the moment	Peers impact on participation / hard to separate learning and social aspect of school / school more than just learning
I: oh no you are doing really well a fantastic job so	
P: well you will want to be talking with your friends when you are not supposed to and then you will get in trouble for that because you are talking to your friends and about something like what happened during break or something what happened at home or something you are interested in and then but like that is a big barrier I think because we do get to sit next to our friends and they like us talking together and making friends with each other but they just I think the best thing is just to not sit you next to your best friend that you are always talking too (laughing) as for me my best friend half of the time during school we don't get in trouble as we know the teachers well now and they know who we are best friends with and they know more about us and they actually have a conversation with you and then if you sit with your best friend it is better as you have someone to talk to in that lesson and if you didn't understand you have someone you can ask like it is amazing I have my best friend in my classes but sometimes we get a bit out of hand and we start well we don't pay attention to the teacher as we are wanting to talk about something else but that's basically what I think	Home and school not separate
	Building relationships with adults

Appendix 14: Examples of thematic mapping undertaken in the analysis process.

A map of the initial ideas from transcribing and reading through the transcripts and a map from the initial theme development.
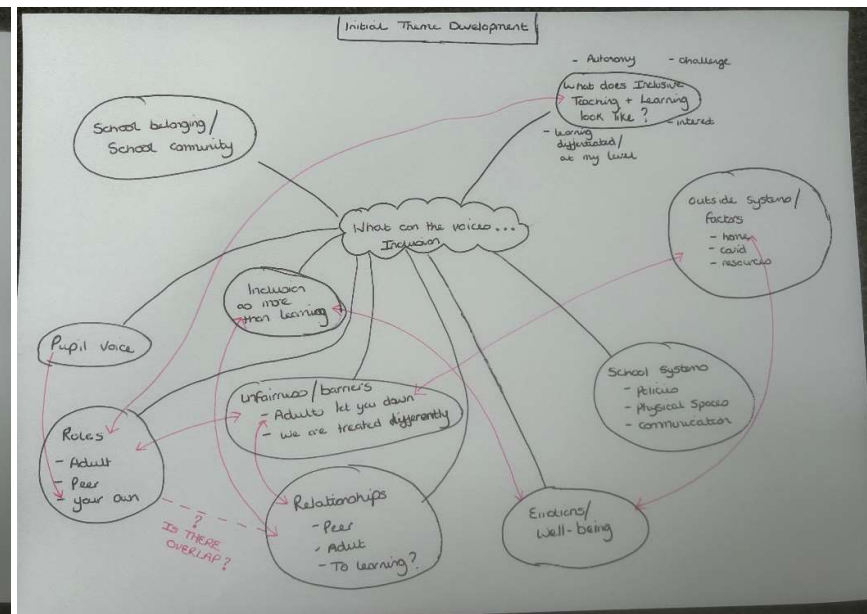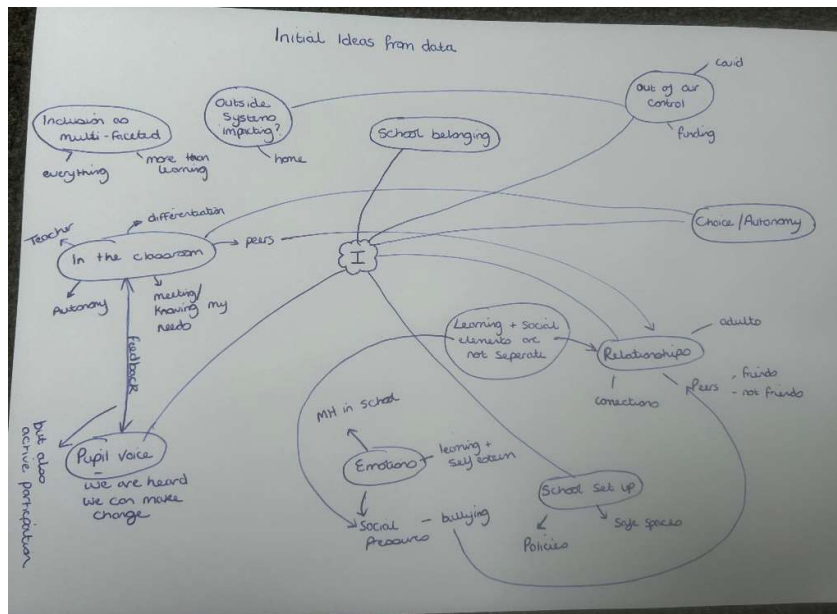
Appendix 15: Table showing an example of thought processes when undertaking theme development using reflexive questions taken from Braun and Clarke (2022).

The purpose of the table is to display the thought processes involved in the development of themes. The table does not show all final themes. It is important to note the analysis was a fluid process and themes were thought about in relation to these questions following the development of candidate themes, however the candidate themes may have been thought about in different iterations of the process of developing the themes.

Candidate Theme	Is it viable? *Central organising concept? Different manifestations of the data?*	Are there boundaries? *What does it include and not include?*	Is there enough meaningful data to evidence?	Is the data too diverse?	Is the theme conveying something of importance?
Relationships Subthemes: Adult Peers	Yes – I think this is around relationships as connections.	Is there a link to school belonging here? In relation to familiarity? However, I would argue that this is around connections and the familiarity or people or a place is different to connections to others. Boundary = connections to others.	Yes, this was discussed across participants.	I hold some concerns around potential cross over with "roles" theme – so how teachers manage their approach or the actions of peers, but I do feel there is a difference between roles or an action and the connections or relationships with others. This needs more thought. Could there possibly be something around relationship to learning?	Yes

Inclusion as multifaceted concept	No – it is a topic summary – the central concept is that there are lots of different ways to think about inclusion – but really that is just clustering everything that was said on it and there isn't a concept of shared meaning there.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
School belonging	Yes – it feels viable, there is a clear central concept, and different manifestations are present.	Yes. It feels that the boundaries are clear I know what would be included and what is not.	Yes this was expressed across majority of participants.	No	Yes
Roles Subthemes: Teacher Peers Own	Yes, this theme has a central concept however there are a lot of codes within in. Also considering if the positive and negative element is a contradiction or if it is more of what the central concept is about – that all these "players" have a role and the actions they take can	It does feel very broad, but this may be due to my coding not being refined enough rather than data itself. The teacher's role covers their approach/learning content. Peers – actions that support and actions that do not	Yes, these codes were expressed across the participants.	Possibly. I need to look at how this relates to the relationship candidate theme as relationships happen within the classroom so what makes this different – actions/role vs connection. Is this distinct?	Yes – but needs more refinement.

	lead to experiences of inclusion happening or not happening.	Own role – own motivation/actions in learning. I need to consider more the boundaries but outside of the classroom is likely to not be included in this and this focuses on the roles in the classroom.			
School systems Subthemes: Policies Physical Spaces Communication	Yes, I am happy with this central concept and feel the sub themes work. Unsure if the name needs some work though – it is looking at the systemic practices going on but unsure if this will remain the title or if there is a more suitable theme name to be developed.	Boundaries are around the practices put in place within the school at a systems level to support inclusion to occur. I was doubting myself around if "policies" a topic summary but on reflection I don't feel this is the case. It is looking at making sense of the policies in schools that support inclusion to occur for these young people.	Yes. I would say all three subthemes have data to support their inclusion.	Within the communication subtheme it is looking at communication between adults and the pupil voice elements, so communication to the adults, but I think this works and doesn't make it too diverse.	Yes, looking at systemic implications for schools.
Outside factors/systems	It could be – there is a central concept, but I don't feel it is	Yes, it would be factors or systems outside of the microsystem for YP.	Yes.	Home pressures feels that it fits more within Emotions/Well-being – feels	Hard to say at this point. Am I not

				like I have grouped home things together rather than looking at the meaning. Venturing into topic summary territory there. Parents involvement still feels pertinent to this theme.	wanting to let go of Covid – does it actually answer my question or am I interested in it it due to its impact on my studies?
Inclusion as more than just learning	I feel this is not a viable theme and actually would sit better as part of another theme. Perhaps within relationships or within social emotional pressures as the central meaning is that learning and the social element of school are interconnected.	I am clear on the boundary but not a viable theme – more likely a code.	About half of participants made reference to this but is not extensive in nature.	No but feels more like a code than a theme.	I feel the code is important, but it is not a theme.
Unfairness	The central concept feels very broad and a little loose.	Boundaries feel loose. "Adults let you down" feels like that could fall into relationships or	N/A – not working as a theme currently	N/A – not working as a theme currently	N/A – not working as a theme currently.

		partly within roles. This needs refinement.			Need to refine this.
Social Emotional Pressures	Yes, I feel there is a central organising concept which is clear.	Boundaries feel clear. Any of the social emotional pressures falling on the young people would fall within this theme – this can be within any aspect of school, e.g., the classroom and wider school environment.	Yes, there feels to be multiple elements. It was discussed across the young people.	No, it feels like it tells a coherent story.	Yes

Appendix 16: Final Themes with codes

Theme Subthemes	Central Organising Concept	Codes	Example data extracts
School as Community	The existence of the school community and feeling a sense of belonging to this community was seen by the young people as part of experiencing inclusion.	Familiarity Being part of school Not being left out Wanted by others School size supports community We are known School is community	*"like our school everyone knows each other even like if well its coz we are a quite a small school obviously so like everyone knows each other even if you are not like in the same friendship group"* (Michelle) *"like being a part of like the school, like the community"* (William) *"like all the teachers know your name and pretty much all the students do"* (Katie)

| Relationships Matter
Relationships with Peers
Relationships with Adults | The relationships with others in the school environment impact on the feelings and experiences of inclusion. | Consistency
Supporting well-being
Teacher's care
Inclusion as social inclusion
Approachable adults
Peers accept you
Difficult Teacher and peer relationships
Friends' equal inclusion
Adults are supportive
Trusting relationships
Teacher's get to know you
Importance of social time
Friendships = happiness
Relationships link to school happiness
School is more than just a place to learn
Genuine positive relationships | *"break times and lunch times are the best thing its like you know you get to have a mess about with your friends outside" (*Matt)

"for me that's the I think that's the times I enjoy as I'm mostly with me friends who I don't really see in like the school day" (Hugo)

"I've just got happier because I met this boy [name] who's my best friend now and I have this massive friend group well not massive but I'm much happier now because I have people to spend time with other than myself" (William)
"then like being with my friends is a good thing 'coz it makes like 'coz I have anxiety sometime so seeing them like makes it a bit better" (Debbie)
"we know the teachers well now and they know who we are best friends with and they know more about us and they actually have a conversation with you" (Peggy)
"they [teachers] often ask how are you doing and like honestly like mean it and like yeah they interact with you" (Katie) |

| Social Emotional Pressures can impact on our inclusion
Others judge you
Learning is not free from emotions | There are a number of social emotional pressures that impact on young people's experiences of acceptance, participation and achievement. | Emotional toll of learning
Fear of getting into trouble
I want to be under the radar
School is challenging
Teachers hold a view of you
Reputation follows you
Popular or a no-one
Learning and relationships are not separate
Peers judge you
Learning has a social side
Home and school are connected
Fear of social hierarchy
Fear of bullying
Emotional impact of school systems
Peers can be mean
Emotional state impacts on participation
Emotional impact of school | *"when they look at the test in year 7 at the very start you get judged on the results and you sort of get seen as this person is very clever this person is not not so much"* (Matt)

"I don't think being alone is a bad thing but you get judged for it like it is just like a high school thing like you get called a loner you know or if you just sit there and read a book you get called a nerd and stuff" (Debbie)

"I don't like asking in front of the class because like well you just think they are going to make fun of me because of that and they are just going to say like how have you not understood that is it easy" (Peggy)

"the learning side of school is very very difficult" (Matt) |

We all have a role Adults Peers Own	The actions taken by individuals impacts positively or negatively on experiences of inclusion within the classroom. This can be actions taken by the adults, peers, and the individual young person themselves.	Friends can stop you participating in learning Importance of variety Autonomy Learning tailored to need Learning has to be interesting Challenging behaviours of others impacts on your learning Differentiating learning Student centred planning Teachers are aware of my needs Failing to meet the needs of all learners Teachers motivate Challenging behaviours of others impact on your access to the teacher Choice Adaptions to support individual needs Failing to differentiate learning Participation links to interest Own role in inclusion	*"I feel that sometimes that the school lacks in that and they don't they just give everyone the same work that someone at the bottom scale needs when others need to be challenged"* (Debbie) *"In erm maths and sciences and stuff like that I am in actual like sets erm so they are a bit better as you can do work that is for us but we do harder work in the other classes which is annoying"* (Heather) *"they [teachers] don't stick to the lesson plan they swap and change within their lesson to like erm help us if we are struggling"* (Katie) *"it's more of a teacher who is showing you that you want to be there not that you have to be there you know you have to learn it is like do you want to learn this is your opportunity to learn she really shows that"* (Matt) *"like PE sometimes we can choose like our activities what we want to do for like that term and stuff"* (Hugo) *"like we get to talk together and explain stuff together and like history for example we like the table I'm on we explain our reasons and what*

		Peers support your learning	*we think and what happened and that and we are able to just talk"* (Peggy)
School Systems that promote experiences of inclusion Policies Physical Spaces Communication	There are school systems in place that are supportive of promoting inclusion for young people in school.	Uniform creates equality School fostering opportunities to make friends System to enable pupil voice to be heard We are heard We can make things happen Safe spaces We can share our views Learning support area School ethos Fair approach to rewards Communication between adults Systems to support vulnerable YP Systems to support peer relationships to develop	*"everyone got the option to have their name in the hat but I just didn't get picked but erm yeah it stopped teachers just picking who they wanted"* (Michelle) *"things like clubs in school where you can go and get to know people more better and talk to them and then you might start talking out of the club and become friends"* (Peggy) *"room 5 and that's like a place where people who don't like the noise of the hall go in there to eat and I go in there to eat sometimes if the hall is too busy"* (Matt) *"they have a protected and safe place for like er people who feel uncomfortable to go to that's at like room 5 I have been there before just like in year 7 when I was new and felt a bit uncomfortable and that was good"* (Samuel) *"like coz they do watch and the teacher will just say like can you pull them out and see what's up"* (Peggy)

			"you can talk to a student leadership team its more powerful you get listened to more as its coming from the students" (Samuel)
Unfairness erodes feelings of inclusion We are treated differently Covid-19 Pandemic	There are aspects of school that fell unfair to the young people, and this leads to feelings of inequality, which impact on experiences of inclusion.	Unfairness from peers Inconsistency from adults Adults let you down Covid-19 impact Access to resources is unfair We are treated differently I am invisible Unfair Behaviour management Unfairness Opportunities are linked to your performance School doesn't always have the reources	"some of the naughty kids er they they get positivises for stuff that you know I because I I I'm not a bad person but there are some who are and that is the same for every school but they tend to give them a lot of support for being bad or for doing things that are just expected of you in school whereas I I follow that and I just get you know erm ignored if that makes sense" (Debbie)

"he does that [referring to the actions of another student] but when I do it I get into trouble" (William)

"if you really struggle with a lot of things I don't think you get that much opportunity to do things ... it was certain students in my class the really clever ones got to go show this new teacher like around school" (Matt)

"yeah well because of covid and stuff we haven't been able to do a lot of things because I am only in year 9 and it started in year 7 and then |

			obviously we had lockdown in year 8 so it erm wasn't good timing for stuff so I haven't experienced too much" (Debbie) *"I guess as it is a small school we don't always feel we get an opportunity as bigger schools as obviously things like that so we don't always get to go on big school trips and we don't have like laptops like other schools or iPads as we don't have the funding for it so I suppose we get a bit left out from that"* (Debbie) *"Like in XXX Adventure [name of a lesson – name removed to ensure anonymity] we have been going on well mostly walking as we are waiting for some of the equipment to come like the trailer for like the mountain bikes to go on and stuff"* (Hugo).

Appendix 17: 15 Point Checklist of Criteria for a Good Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.269)

No.	Process	Criteria
1	Transcription	The data has been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail; all transcripts have been checked against the original recordings for 'accuracy'.
2	Coding and Theme Development	Each data item has been given thorough and repeated attention in the coding process.
3		The coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive; themes have not been developed from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach).
4		All relevant extracts for each theme have been collated.
5		Candidate themes have been checked against coded data and back to the original data set.
6		Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive; each theme contains a well-defined central organising concept; any subthemes share the central organising concept of the theme
7	Analysis and interpretation – in the written report	Data has been analysed – interpreted and made sense of- rather than just summarised, paraphrased, or described
8		Analysis and data match each other – the extracts evidence the analytic claims.
9		Analysis tells a convincing and well-organised story about the data and topic; analysis addresses the research question.
10		An appropriate balance between analytic narrative and data extracts is provided.
11	Overall	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly (including returning to earlier phases or redoing the analysis if need be.)
12	Written report	The specific approach to thematic analysis, and the particulars of the approach, including theoretical positions and assumptions, are clearly explicated.
13		There is a good fit between what is claimed, and what is done – i.e., described method and reported analysis are consistent.

14		The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the ontological and epistemological position of the analysis.
15		The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'.

Appendix 18: Exerts from Research Diary

Date	Entry
20.02.2022	Transcription. So cringy hearing my voice on the recorder. There are times I definitely spoke too much; however I do feel this improved as the interviews went on and I honed my "interviewer skills". I am a novice researcher and interviewer, so I feel this was to be expected. I do see this has improved over the course of the interviews, probably as I gained more confidence in my interview skills. Times I have said things like "I am mindful not to give you my words" shows I was trying to not influence their responses and was aware of the potential influence I may have had as the researchers and adult in the room. I think acknowledging that all of this may have played a role in my data is important. My view in this research is that I will have impacted on it, so being able to identify that and not worry about this. Don't let that positivism creep in!
12.02.2024	Following time away from the research I have begun to re-immerse myself into the data. Reading through the transcripts I can still picture the young people and hear their voices which has been great motivation to make sure I complete this work and allow their voices to be heard. I am having difficulties with NVivo and can see the codes I created and the files and exerts that link to it, but I am struggling to look at the codes assigned to a whole transcript. This is making the codes feel quite removed from the data set. This may be my lack of technical skill with this programme, but I am struggling using it and I feel I am more "old fashioned" in my approach, I need colour and visuals and therefore have made the decision to move away from NVivo and start my coding again, this time using a table in a word document. This feels like I can have more control over the finished codes and which transcript they relate too as well as having a visual of the codes in a transcript. I am mindful that time has passed, I have had many more

	experiences in my life since I began this project (bereavement / becoming a mum) and I have just read a list of codes from my first coding attempt, so all of this is likely to impact on my coding. I however acknowledge these influences on my coding.
24.05.2024	Call with peer to discuss themes. I was able to voice my themes, and I found this so helpful, as I had just had them going around in my head/writing them down, but being able to say them aloud gave them more life. I was able to explain my thinking as well as become aware of which themes/subthemes may needs more thought as I was unable to explain my thoughts cohesively. It was helpful to be questioned, all be it gently, on why certain themes were distinct and didn't overlap and I felt confident in my justification. This felt like it was going to be daunting, laying my work out to someone else, but it was actually much more enjoyable than I thought. I have struggled going around in circles about topic summaries and if my whole analysis was a topic summary, I feel I was able to explain why this was not the case. Again, adding to my confidence in my work. I do however acknowledge someone else may have interpreted this all completely different – and that is fine.