

Paper One:

An investigation of the social competence of pre-school children within three pre-school settings

Paper Two:

A case study of four children's social competence during their transition from pre-school to Primary school

Resubmitted by Julie Elkins to the University of Exeter as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Educational, Child and Community Psychology in February 2011.

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Overview

With the inception of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum (2008) in England and Wales, the development of children's social and emotional skills have been prioritised and considered to be central to children's school attainment and progress as well as children's long-term future well-being. The EYFS is aimed at children from 3 to 5 years old and therefore, 'travels' with children as they experience the move to their reception class. This research aimed to investigate how staff in a small group of pre-school settings had interpreted this change within the curriculum and how their practice supported children's social competence. Following this, there was an intention to monitor how transition impacted on four children in the new EYFS climate. The first paper, therefore, aimed to explore the environmental context of the children within their pre-school setting at age 4. This involved an examination of the interactions of the adults with the children in the setting and, also of the pre-school managers' attitudes and beliefs about social and emotional development within the pre-school. It also focused on the children themselves and examined the predominant types of interactions between children within each pre-school setting. During the second study, four children were followed up in detail with the continuing emphasis on their social competence as they experienced the transition from pre-school to Primary school. With transition acknowledged as a time of 'discontinuity' (Margetts, 2002), the emphasis in the second paper was to investigate changes in children's social competences as they settled within their new school.

The paradigm position in this research was social constructivist. The assumption was to explore diverse levels of meaning rather than seek one representation of reality. Within this interpretative framework, the objective was to provide the adult participants an

opportunity to reflect openly on their experiences, and to gather their multiple perspectives in relation to their working approaches, relationships and contexts. This core emphasis on socially constructed meaning imbued how children's interactions were interpreted within their play contexts and also, how themes were garnered through observation.

Crucial to a social constructivist position is the necessity of the researcher to declare any of their own biases and perspectives; at the same time, the researcher must also acknowledge that they do not operate as an objective outsider but bring their own interpretations and realities to the research. The researcher's cultural frame of reference was as a white, educated, mother of two with a previous teaching background in the Secondary school system in the United Kingdom. Therefore, it is important to note that the researcher's experiences and previous detailed contact with young children lay completely within her experience as a mother and not as a professional practitioner. The researcher was also looking through the lens of 16 years of professional background experience within the field of education, mainly teaching the post 11 age groups but also more recently as a Trainee Educational Psychologist.

In the first study, qualitative methods were used. Twenty-one children were observed in their free choice time across three pre-schools. Four children, who attended two separate Primary schools but were from the same pre-school, were followed up using a case study approach for the second study. In papers 1 and 2, both systematic and naturalistic observational data were gathered for children and adults. For paper 1, observation data was collected within a four-week period during the term prior to Primary school transition. For paper 2, the observations took place during the second term of the reception year and in the same term during Year

1. Semi-structured interviews took place in both studies; in paper 1, these involved the pre-school managers and for paper 2, members of staff with responsibility for transition were interviewed. For the second paper, questionnaire data (Social Competence Behaviour Evaluation Pre-school Edition, 2003) was also gathered from parents and teachers, pre and post transition.

The findings in paper 1 revealed that children were sociable with both peers and adults but adult/child interactions were infrequent and focused on practical matters (e.g. requests) rather than extending the content and theme of the play activities. Each setting had varied interpretations about how they supported children's social competencies. Despite the small scale of the study, it was concluded that the findings suggested that there was scope for pre-school practitioners to offer children a balance between choosing freely and giving good quality support to extend interactions with their peers during play. The second part of the study, which examined how children's social competences changed over transition, found that children's social interactions were stable over time. Though differences in priorities regarding social competence and transition were noted in the pre-school and two Primary school settings, no single factor was identified as having a negative or positive impact on transition. It was concluded that though children's social competence appeared stable over time, the variation in Primary school practices could involve further examination. In particular, it was suggested that future focus could pinpoint how links are maintained with pre-schools and how children's individual play skills can be given greater prominence during the early Primary years.

This research, therefore, extends the body of literature, which underscores the importance of the adult's role during prolonged and meaningful social interaction with pre-school children. The attitudes

framed by the adults within the pre-school, through policy and practice, can have a formative effect on children's social competence: Where children and adults were less interactive, children undertook fewer pro social acts (like sharing and helping) but were nevertheless curious to observe or stand alongside their peers. The importance placed upon developing children's social competence was found to be a high priority in Primary schools' agendas at the point of transition. However, despite the Foundation Stage curriculum easing the way and offering greater homogeneity to practitioners, this research found that children attending two Primary schools had differing experiences of transition and had reduced opportunity due to poor links with their pre-school settings. Supporting social competence and play in the transition to school was a stated aim by the schools but somewhat constrained by the allocation of time within the curriculum. Educational Psychologists and other professionals working within the Early Years have a definitive role in helping practitioners to raise and implement the broad profile of social competence for children, both within their relationships with families and within their own staff teams.

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Paper 1

An investigation of the social competence of pre-school children within three pre-school settings

Abstract

This paper is the first of two that investigates the concept of social competence in pre-school children within their pre-school and as they move onto their first year at school. Research has identified the development of social and emotional skills as key to a child's future well being. Using a social constructionist perspective (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1990), this project aimed to identify how pre-schools develop children's social competence. Twenty-one children were observed in their free choice time at pre-school. Systematic observations recorded child-to-child activity and naturalistic observations recorded the children's interactions with the adults present. Semi-structured interviews took place with the managers of the pre-schools. There were distinct beliefs amongst the pre-schools about how children's social competence should be promoted. The observations revealed that the pre-school children were 'sociable' either by attaching to an adult or a peer. Adults were also communicative with the children within the 'free choice' periods but this was characterised by brief interactions with a broad content of making a request, ensuring a health and safety criteria was met rather than in sustained communication about play. It was concluded that pre-school practitioners may benefit from better targeted training to develop their skills in facilitating children's social competence within play and that parental input could play a part in developing this.

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Introduction

This paper is the first of two that aim to explore how the social competence of young children is supported and developed within their pre-school through their interactions with their peers and also with the adults in the setting.

During the last thirty years, there has been increased access for young children to early years settings; a rise from 21 per cent in 1970/71 to 64% in 2007/08 (DCSF, 2008) has partly been attributed to an increase in the number of places available. The expectation is that numbers attending pre-school educational settings will increase. With a current entitlement in England and Wales for three and four year olds at 12.5 hours of free early education, Governmental expectation is that this will rise to 15 free hours by 2010 (Rose, 2009).

In the UK, during the past ten years there has also been a growing Governmental emphasis on developing practices and standards within the Early Years. Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, the Birth to Three Matters framework and the National Standards for Under 8s Daycare were the three national frameworks replaced by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in May 2008. Crucially the introduction of the EYFS ends the rigid distinction between care and learning. Whilst Personal Social and Emotional Development forms one of the discreet learning goals, it is clear that emphasis on the social and emotional development of the child is threaded through the entire philosophy of EYFS. Initiatives like SEAL (DfES, 2005) in schools and SEAD (DfES, 2008) in pre-schools are specific programmes for schools/pre-schools to support children's and families' social development. Part of the impact

of these programmes depends on how receptive pre-schools and schools are to the emotional world of the child, how inclusive they are with families and how they adopt and develop such approaches in their practice beyond the requirements of the set programme. In addition, a National Strategies (DCSF, 2009) key document supported pre-school practitioners to place 'play' at the heart of the EYFS pedagogy with clear messages about keeping play child-initiated and also setting expectations for the role of the adult in supporting and developing play. Play was therefore positioned as the vehicle through which all learning could develop.

Historically, programmes have been developed to improve the provision within the Early Years. In the USA, the Headstart programme began in 1965 and involved the provision of early childhood development services to low income children through the High/Scope (2009) curriculum. Schweinhart and Weikart (1998) conducted longitudinal research into groups of pre-school children attending one of three pre-school programmes. For the group who had attended the High/Scope programme (advocating children taking responsibility for their own learning through the processes of planning, taking responsibility and evaluation), there were indications that on 'real life' measures (rates of arrest, emotional problems, home ownership and salary) this group had experienced a positive difference. However evaluations of such programmes have shown a 'drop off' in ameliorative effects over the years. It is typically hard to isolate those variables that make a positive impact. Sissel (2000) highlighted the fade out effects of the Headstart programme and the unresponsiveness of school systems to children from low-income families. She also questioned the political aims and the real value for parents of becoming involved in such a programme, particularly as the parent aspect of the two

generational programme was very underfunded. However a more positive conclusion was that parent participation had led to parents understanding their children's needs better and being better able to communicate with their children's teachers. Though projects like Headstart have broad objectives and far-reaching aims for children, the social competence of parents and vital others are core elements in facilitating their success. Children's emerging social competence is facilitated when there are sustained high quality interactions within and between key proponents such as teachers and parents/carers.

This has been reinforced in England, through the EPPE project 1997–2003 (Effective Pre-School and Primary Education) (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, Taggart and Elliot, 2003). Commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills, this has been the largest longitudinal study in Europe investigating 'educational effectiveness'. A key focus of the report was on the quality and practices in the pre-school. Specifically, it was noted that better outcomes were achieved in pre-reading and social development when managers had a higher qualification and there were qualified, trained teachers working in the pre-school for a high proportion of time (usually as pedagogical leader). This important finding has also been supported by other researchers: Whitebrook, Howes and Phillips (1989) found a correlation between the formal education status of teachers and the more sensitive and care-giving behaviours in the classroom; and Helburn (1995) found correlations between education level and good quality care in the pre-school. Teachers and parents/carers have an important role to promote: problem-solving strategies, communication skills, reading of social situations and promoting and modeling the use of positive self-statements (Webster-Stratton, 2002).

Within the EYFS it is acknowledged that developing a good sense of emotional competence will protect children's emotional health and well-being long term. In the field of developmental psychology, Denham (2006) suggested that the most important developmental task for children is to achieve 'sustained positive engagement with peers'. Listening, negotiating and cooperating are essential skills and if children use these successfully they are a crucial predictor of later mental health and well-being. As the EYFS takes root in pre-schools with its emphasis on child-led activities and children's social and emotional learning, there is great potential for gaps to surface in the interpretation and practice between prescribed curriculum and what actually happens on the ground. West (2006) suggested that the key problem with assessing pre-school provision was in the word 'quality' and how this is measured. In England, regulation is viewed as a way of ensuring quality. With the funding for nursery education provided by the Government, it is the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), which maintains and develops standards within pre-school settings and schools. However West (2006) points out the anomalies within other regulatory mechanisms within the Early Years e.g. those concerning the qualifications of staff compared to school and pre-school as well as the inconsistent regulations concerning class sizes and adult to child ratios across reception classes, nursery schools and nursery classes.

With the growth in policy and changes to practices within the Early Years, there is potential for very different practices, beliefs and standards within Early Years education to emerge. Stephen and Brown (2004) explored the tension between three parallel cultures - those which construct the policy and set the regulations, the practitioners 'delivering' and interpreting that policy within the pre-school and the pre-school children themselves. They highlight these

operating simultaneously but with each having their own distinct processes, expectations and outcomes. In drawing attention to what they call 'insider' (teacher and pre-school child) and 'outsider' (Local Authority, HMI, researchers, creators of policy) perspective, they suggest that 'insider practitioners' may not share the innovations that are imposed on them. These differences are of interest here as they highlight the possibility of there being gaps between the curricular policies and aims and the 'on the ground' practice in the pre-school.

What is social competence?

This research paper will focus on the key concept of social competence and how this is presented in pre-school children. In seeking a definition of social competence, Greenspan (1981) emphasized the separate aspects of social competence including the skills involved, the content of what is to be learned and the outcome of the behaviour. Gresham (1986) suggested that the 'content' aspect could be best judged and observed as the other two factors were difficult to isolate i.e. it would be hard to pinpoint how the outcome was reached and the role/type of the skills that contributed to this. Furthermore, he suggested there was a relationship between temperament and the situation specific behaviour that occurs during social interaction. Spence and Donovan (1998) describe social competence as an ability to obtain successful outcomes from others. Spence (2003) contrasts this definition with that of Bierman and Welsh (2000) who delineate social competence as an organization construct reflecting a child's ability to integrate behavioural, cognitive and affective skills in order to meet various demands from within their social context. From a behavioural perspective, Gresham (1997) noted the difference between social skill acquisition

deficits (where a child lacks a social skill within their repertoire) and social skill performance deficits (where the social skill is present but not demonstrated by the child or young person in a number of social situations). Performance deficits can occur for multiple reasons linked to affective factors (e.g. high arousal due to anger or anxiety), cognitive deficits (e.g. faulty interpretations of a social situation) or competing behaviour difficulties.

Denham (2006) underlines the joint relationship between cognitive and social development as being essential for growing social competence. She links pre-academic achievement, school readiness and adjustment with the emotional components of being well liked and ability to sustain friendships. Denham identifies the adults' influence on children's emotional development as especially important and identifies these key personnel as parents/carers, pre-school teachers, day care givers including also peers and siblings. She cites the core methods of influence being the modeling of emotional expressiveness, reactions to children's emotions and the explicit teaching about emotion. Whilst upholding the aspect of social and emotional competence that is related to individual dispositions or traits, Denham's work takes a largely ecological perspective.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) is recognised as the major proponent of this perspective when he suggested parents have the most potential for change in the child's life. Adapting Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to fit the concept of social competence, Rose-Krasnor (1997) posits a multi-level model for the construct of social competence. There are three general levels of analysis: Theoretical, Index and Skills. These are presented as a prism. At the theoretical level, social competence is defined as effectiveness within interactions. Social competence is identified as transactional, emerging from the interactions between people

rather than residing within an individual. Social competence is viewed as context dependent. The effectiveness approach also stresses the performance of the individual in 'typical' interactions, rather than under ideal conditions. The index level is split into two – self and others. At this level, it is recognized that agency (autonomy) and communion (belongingness) are two basic human dimensions. These separate parts will need to be integrated if a person is to adapt and solve conflict. At the skills level (lowest level on the prism), the behavioural and motivational base is represented. This is related to the specific values and goals that direct and motivate social behaviour e.g. a child could give preference to peer dominance goals which may lead to verbal and physical bullying even though they have the social skills to behave more positively (Smith, Bowers, Binney and Cowie, 1993). Skills at this level may have a reduced or increased value depending on context.

The relational aspect between self and others is therefore a key criterion in judging a child's social competence. Mathieson and Bannerjee (2010) depict a socially competent toddler as one who 'makes social connections with others' (p.10). Observable evidence of this would be the way that children use facial expressions, appropriate body language and how they socially interact with others. If language is observed then this too will be appropriate to context (e.g. showing an appropriate response to a hurt child). Dunn et al (1991) cite the socio-cognitive skill of accurate interpretation of others' behaviours and emotional responses, as well as others' desires and beliefs as crucial to socially competent children. In their view, the 'reading' of emotional interactions is seen as central to reciprocal relationships. Where children have a poor grasp of emotional knowledge, this has been found to be a predictor of future social

difficulties in girls and future angry/aggressive behaviour in boys (Denham et al, 2002). In addition to the relationship with others, we might typically expect individual characteristics such as temperament to play a part. Mathieson and Bannerjee (2010) also found in their study of social competence in 2-3 year olds that both temperament and emotion understanding are associated with socially competent peer play. Individual characteristics such as 'effortful control and self-regulation' play a key role in children's social competence and their research suggests this has implications for how children may be perceived and rated by teachers.

Theoretical perspectives

Typically developing children are social beings from the start of life. Previous research (Konig, 2010) claims that 'sensitivity' (Garner et al 1997; Dunn 1988; Brazelton et al 1974) and 'responsive behaviour' (2002; Papousek & Papousek 1978) in adults are vital for the development of interpersonal relationships. These qualities underpin social interaction and are important in developing the child's sense of self and competency in learning (König, 2009). Interaction within a social constructionist perspective has a number of key attributes with interaction assumed to be mainly concerned with co-construction. Rooted in a Vygotskian (1978) perspective, there is a leading assumption that children are social beings from the start of life and through social guidance from others, the child can be supported to communicate, plan and remember. Children's development therefore moves from the social to the individual and is a process of understanding, employing skills and using cultural tools. There is a perceived inequality in relationships with the adult partner being the expert and able to scaffold the child's interactions and thinking. Play is seen as crucial for the development of

children's higher mental functions as children develop a kind of inner speech, which helps them to regulate their own thinking and feelings. Also crucial is the creation their own 'zone of proximal development' (zpd) as this sets out the parameters of their learning and the extent to which they can tolerate challenge and risk. Common conceptions of zpd suggest that it is through the interaction of a more competent person with a less competent person on a joint task that the less competent person can increase their proficiency and independence (Chaiklin, 2003, Hedegaard, 1996).

Working within this framework, Whitebread et al (2009) state that this approach assumes an unequal relationship but puts the child in control and so a core characteristic of the zpd is that it can be developmentally appropriate for the child. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, Mead (1934) also argued that social, cultural and linguistic interactions are relevant to forming social relationships and to the self. More recently, Rogoff (1990) extended this concept by emphasizing the interrelation between children, their caregivers and their cultural skills, knowledge and tools. She argued that social interaction must be understood within the context of broader issues like the institution, technologies, norms and practices. The formation of mind and self is therefore achieved through the communicative activity of the group and through social experience. As part of that cultural and social group, parents have a crucial role in supporting the child to develop social relationships and in supporting personality growth as do significant others in the child's world - friends, siblings and teachers. Rogoff's theory of guided participation builds on the notion of zpd with its emphasis on interpersonal communication and on the balance between observation and participation. Children, caregivers and peers form a collaboration to build the bridges that will help to form new skills

and understanding. Children's participation will be arranged and structured in such a way that there will be dynamic shifts in their levels of responsibility. However Rogoff is unhappy with the model of child novice/adult expert and suggests that the expertise of partners, equality of status, shared problem-solving and the structuring of children's efforts needs close focus if the complexities of social interaction are to be understood. Through the EPPE research, Siraj-Blatchford (2009) has argued that one of the analytic nodes within the EPPE research is 'sustained shared thinking', a concept that has much in common with Vygotsky's zpd. 'Sustained shared thinking' is a potential springboard to move children from their playful worlds of improvised sustained and shared interactions to more formal collaborations with peers and teachers in academic activity.

Coming from a different social learning theory perspective, Webster-Stratton (2000) has highlighted the essential role of the teacher as effective mediator in conflict situations; with their potentiality to teach problem-solving skills, communication skills, to facilitate the reading of social situations and to model appropriate behaviours. Whilst emphasizing the role of the teacher, this social behaviourist assumption supports the belief that teachers and parents have a set of identified and formalized skills to 'pass on' and that children are equipped to assimilate these when developmentally appropriate. It plays down, for example, the complex social interactions that form over time between the parent and the child and also the impact of wider influences or tensions in the lives of parents and children. Many social skills training programmes have their origin in behavioural or social learning theories. However, what is difficult to assess is the real potential for changes after these training programmes cease. Spence (2003) provides an overview of numerous social

skills training programmes and concludes that strategies like modeling, coaching, behavioural rehearsal, role-play, feedback and reinforcement of skill usage have shown short-term improvement in specific social skills responses. By contrast, there has been less convincing evidence of the positive impact with social-cognitive approaches such as interpersonal problem solving, self-instructional and social perception skills training upon social functioning.

Study aims and research questions

A key focus of this paper is how children maintain and develop their position within their social groupings and nurture a healthy emotional life. Children need to be adept at managing many aspects of emotions. They must learn to moderate emotions, adjust them according to context and begin to understand how different emotion states can deliver authentic, gratifying relationships. Therefore to understand each child's needs and stage of development, the EYFS non-statutory guidance suggests that practitioners need to give children close attention in order to observe, ('look, listen and note'), build a 'challenging' environment and 'extend and develop children's language and communication in their play'.

This study will therefore examine how pre-school practitioners support the interactions between children and how they extend children's emotional and social understanding as children move from the home domain and begin interacting in a wider world. As the EYFS seeks to establish commonality among pre-school practitioners, this paper will investigate practitioners' conceptions and attitudes to children's social competence, and will aim to reveal the extent to which these are similar and different across contexts. It will also explore how social competence is viewed in

relation to the adults within the pre-school. Since research highlighted in this paper has underlined the crucial role that parents can play in propelling their children towards more socially competent behaviour and understanding, it will be important to consider how pre-schools view the parent-child relationship and whether they perceive that the pre-school has a role to play within the child's broader context for example, through helping parent and child to manage the separation process.

The paper will also focus on the children themselves and will examine what constitutes social competence for 4 year olds. With the introduction of a child-centred, play-based curriculum, there will be a focus on how opportunities present themselves for developing social competencies along with an examination of the roles played by peers and adult in shaping and guiding interaction. There will be an exploration of how the managers of the pre-school settings view children's social competence of children and how their ideas inform their practice. Therefore three pre-school settings were chosen to take part in the study.

Specifically there will be a focus on the following questions:

1. What were the beliefs of the managers in the 3 pre-school settings about:
 - i. supporting children's social and emotional development
 - ii. staff working relationships with parents in this area of development?

2. How do children's observed social and emotional interactions in the three pre-school settings relate to the pre-school practices and beliefs?

3. What is the quality of the observed social and emotional interactions between the staff and the children and to what extent, in the three pre-school settings, do teachers support and promote emotional competence in play development?

Design and method

This was the first of a two-part study. Part 1, which is described in this paper, was based in 3 pre-schools involving 21 pre-school children in a town located in the South West of England.

Part 2 was a follow up study of 4 children from the original cohort as they moved onto their reception year and Year 1 in two different Primary schools.

The methodological approach used within this study involved a mixed methods survey; using systematic and naturalistic observations, semi-structured interviewing and involving quantitative and qualitative data. Qualitative data was collected in the form of semi-structured interviews with the managers of the pre-schools.

Observations of the children were carried out using a systematic observation schedule adapted from Denham (1986). Naturalistic observations were also carried out for which specific codes had been developed (Weick, 1968). Weick had categorised a basis for developing codes in non-participant observation. The range of possibilities included non-verbal behaviours, spatial behaviours, extra-linguistic behaviours (features of verbal behaviour other than the words) and linguistic behaviour (content and structural aspects of the spoken words). These observations took place over a period of four weeks in the second half of the summer term and were carried out with the pre-school children that were about to move onto Primary school in the September. The observations occurred during children's free choice time when there were perceived to be greater opportunities for the children to interact freely with their peers.

Pre-school settings and sample

The study took place in a medium-sized town from a large Local Authority. Pre-schools were drawn up from a list provided by the

Early Years Advisor and were approached through telephone calls and invited to take part. After an initial telephone conversation with seven pre-schools, the pre-schools were targeted that had differing designations (i.e. privately run, charity registered, local authority controlled) and also that had larger numbers (over 5) of children moving onto primary school in September.

Pre-school 1 was a committee run, voluntary pre-school that had a partnership with the adjoining Primary school. It was both a pre-school and Out of School Club and because of its physical position, the Foundation Stage Unit was housed adjacent to the reception classroom. Both pre-school and school provision was held in two large adjoining classrooms. The children had ready access to an enclosed outdoor area next to the Unit. There were a total of 44 children in both the pre-school and the reception class with 2 children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and 2 with English as a Second Language (EASL). There was a stable staff base of around 6 white females.

Pre-school 2 was a privately owned nursery. It operated from a Victorian school building in the centre of the town. Though there were two playrooms, one large room was most frequently used and this had access to a fully enclosed outdoor area. There was a stable staff base of 4-5 females. The number of children on roll was 30 (3 with Special Educational Needs and 2 with English as a Second Language).

Pre-school 3 was Local Authority controlled and set in a pre-fabricated building on the site of a Primary School. There were three large playrooms and an enclosed outdoor area. There were a total of 30 children on roll with 2 SEN children and 1 EASL child.

There was a stable staff base of white females generally selected post completion of their qualification at the local College.

The participants in this study were 21 pre-school children (aged 4 years old). These were all the children in each pre-school who were about to begin full time education at a nearby Primary school in September 2008. Each child was observed between 2 and 4 times during a 3 - 4 week period before the summer holiday break during 2008. Observations took place during unstructured time when the pre-school children were free to choose their own play activities. The purpose of this was to investigate children's social competence amongst their peers and to evaluate the types of support offered from adults in a child-directed situation.

Table 1: Participating children and their age

	Male	Female	Total children	Mean ages (in months)

Pre-school 1	3	3	6	55	52.4	52.6
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<i>Procedure</i>					53	53.4
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Participating pre-schools were visited by the researcher and given a briefing letter and letters for parents requesting consent to observe their child (Appendix A). The pre-school managers were asked to approach parents about their participation. Pre-schools were also offered individual feedback once the project had been completed.

Data collection and analysis

The researcher visited the pre-schools over a period of four weeks to collect observational data. This was done in the summer term directly before the children started school. The observations took place in the children’s ‘free choice’ time and were taken during mornings and afternoons, depending on how the pre-school day was structured. Each child was observed between 2 and 4 times. At the end of the observation period the researcher interviewed each pre-school manager using a semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix B).

Measures and analysis

Two types of observation were conducted and the researcher’s role was as a non-participant observer. The systematic observations were used to keep a structured and narrow focus on the key concept of social competence as seen within child-child interactions. The naturalistic observations were used to gain richer information from the setting context, with a focus both on the adult-child interactions and the play choices of the children.

(i) Systematic observation

The systematic observations were child-child focused and took place over ten minute periods using a list of specified behaviours (Appendix C) taken from Denham (1986).

A total of 50 episodes (10 minutes each) across the 3 pre-schools were recorded. Frequencies of behaviour were recorded for each child. These were totalled to provide a raw sum for each child and each pre-school. Once converted into percentages, means were calculated for each pre-school.

(ii) Naturalistic observations

Naturalistic observations focused on child-child interactions but in addition, recorded child-adult interactions. These were recorded simultaneously to provide more detail than the systematic codes. Therefore the naturalistic observations also occurred during 10 minute intervals. The naturalistic observations were based on event coding of episodes including the type of activity the child was engaged in, the number of children around the child at that time, child-child interactions and child-adult interactions (Appendix C).

The naturalistic observations were then analysed thematically (see Appendix D) using themes emerging from the data. These themes were selected with the research questions in mind and their emphasis on children's social competence. A fuller account of thematic analysis can be found in Braun and Clarke (2006).

Interview schedule

There were three interviews, one for each of the pre-schools involved in the study. The interviews were carried out with the pre-school managers and lasted between 30 and 50 minutes using an ipod recorder. Each interview was transcribed verbatim (Appendix

E) and these were checked to ensure full anonymity for all participants.

An interview schedule had been created using a hierarchical concept map (Tomlinson, 1989). A hierarchical agenda of questions was created which was presented on a concept map (Appendix B). The questions were compiled by using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory and therefore took account of attitudes and beliefs about individual levels of social competence, within the pre-school (e.g. team, child-adult) and also the quality and type of relationships that extended beyond the school system (e.g. parents). The interviews were then carried out as open-endedly as possible with an emphasis on non-directive style of interaction. The transcripts were then coded and analysed using the computer software package nVIVO (Appendix G).

Coded responses were recorded under the following subheadings:

- Staff – child interaction: This focused on the way that staff believed that they communicated and interacted with the child to support the child's social competence and skills.
- Staff – staff interaction: This focused on how staff believed that they worked as a team and interacted together.
- Parent- staff interaction: This referred to the way that staff supported parents to be involved with the pre-school and how parents' became involved with the pre-school.
- Staff training and qualification: This explored staff qualifications and continuous professional development as well as how they were encouraged to develop their own social competence and skills.

Reliability and validity

Inter-rater observation reliability was checked by having a second observer (a fully qualified Local Authority Educational Psychologist) undertake systematic observation. Although only 2% of all systematic observations were checked, an agreement of 88% was reached.

For naturalistic observation data, 10% of all naturalistic observation data was sorted into the defined codes by an independent rater and a percentage agreement of 83% was reached.

Ethical considerations

The British Psychological Society (2008) and The University of Exeter's ethical rules and codes of conduct were followed for the period of the research.

Pre-schools were invited to take part in the study. Managers were briefed verbally by the researcher and given a letter detailing the aims and purposes prior to the start of the study. Once agreement to participate had been obtained, the pre-school managers were asked to approach parents by handing out letters requesting their consent for their child to be observed. The letters also included a questionnaire to be completed and used in the follow up study, should they consent to continue to involve their child in the study. The pre-schools and the parents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity with information used only for analytic purposes at the aggregate level. They were also informed of the measures, interviews and data collection methods. Each pre-school introduced the researcher to the pre-school children during the circle time activity at the start of the observation period. Parents had given consent for their children to be observed. Pre-schools were told that they would receive verbal feedback as well as a report of their involvement once the research had been finally submitted and passed by the University.

The study also received ethical clearance in line with the University of Exeter's ethical practices (see Appendix L).

Findings

In the following section, an analysis of the staff beliefs about how social competencies were supported within their setting will be presented. Following this, there will be a summary of both the findings from the systematic and naturalistic observations within the pre-schools.

Staff beliefs across three settings (in relation to research question 1)

Table 2: Summary table of beliefs about staff-child interactions in 3 pre-schools

Theme: staff-child interactions	
Similarities across pre-schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal approach with children e.g. through 'real life' social activities like eating together. • Key worker role and tensions within role identified. • Importance of behaviour boundaries/modelling/play activities. • Outside agencies to be used as a last resort. • Key worker highlighted as the 'bridge' between adults and pre-school, enabling engagement with the pre-school.
Differences across pre-schools:	<p>Pre-school 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and emotional development is a priority over other curriculum goals. • Key worker identified as central to supporting child emotionally • Promotion of resilience in children
	<p>Pre-school 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of the children advocated. • Hands off approach – intervening if child fell into difficulties socially. • No specific targeting in the planning of social and emotional skills but would be down to individual staff to try to bring this into the work. • Adult modelling of social skills within a small group • Adult-led approaches to solve conflict. • Social competence seen as mainly dealing with conflicts.
	<p>Pre-school 3</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional matters introduced through curriculum e.g. topic work. • Positive child-adult interactions based on the setting of clear boundaries for behaviour management. • 'Reinforcement' seen as a key method to elicit child's positive behaviour within the group.
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In summary, the staff-child theme revealed that the three settings believed in promoting a 'personal'/ 'real life' approach in fostering social interaction with the children. Internal pre-school structures, such as the role key worker, were vital to maintaining good interactions. Each setting had a distinct view of the interactions between child and adult. Pre-school 1 contrasted with pre-school 3 by claiming to prioritise social and emotional development over emphasis on other aspects of the curriculum whereas pre-school 3 reiterated the link between social competence and the formal teaching of social skills. Pre-school 2 was distinct in its mention of the adult's role in leading and modelling social skills.

Table 3: Summary table of beliefs about staff-staff interactions in 3 pre-schools

Theme: Staff-staff interactions	
Similarities across pre-schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis of the staff having a good joint

	the pre-school.
Differences across pre-schools:	<p>Pre-school 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information systems in place – formal e.g. team meetings and information board. • Flexibility of staff and adaptability to change. • Problem solving among staff. • Child focused/responsiveness to need.
	<p>Pre-school 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No formal mechanisms were mentioned. • Longevity of staff as a team contributes towards trust within team and mutual understanding and support.
	<p>Pre-school 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff 'fitting in' with the pre-school ethos as well as the other staff was important. • Prior experiences with staff inform current recruitment attitudes.

Across all three settings, possessing a 'joint' understanding of the general day-to-day running of the pre-school was seen as important. However pre-school 1 stood out in reference to more formal mechanisms to hold the staff together as a team. Pre-school 2 and 3 were more informal in approach with emphasis on 'fitting in' and the acknowledgement that relationships within the team consolidated over time.

Table 4: Summary table of beliefs about staff-parent interactions in 3 pre-schools

Theme: Staff-parent interactions	
Similarities across pre-schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear boundaries around parental involvement. • Parental involvement was very minimal – by invitation at key times of the year but not generally encouraged. • 'Picking up' time was important for communication.
Differences across pre-schools:	<p>Pre-school 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with parents through key worker. • Active communication with the parents helps them to learn about the pre-school. • Broader understanding of the impact that parents could have in pre-school. • Importance placed on separation of child and parents.
	<p>Pre-school 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of the parental relationship as a way of promoting children's positive attitude and behaviour within the pre-school. • Promotion of empathy and sensitivity in the staff-parent relationship • Reliance on parent-led contact.
	<p>Pre-school 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive relationship with parent would provide beneficial model for the child and provide secure feelings about the pre-school.

Explanations about staff-parent relationships across the settings emphasised the need to control the involvement and contact with

the parents. Pre-school 2 and 3 both recognised that maintaining positive parent-staff relationships would have benefits for the child and their adjustment to pre-school. For pre-school 1, there was a belief the relationships with parents may need support and help to understand this next stage in their children's lives.

Table 5: Summary table of beliefs about staff training and qualifications interactions in 3 pre-schools

Theme: Staff training and qualifications	
Similarities across pre-schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training seen as important. • All staff had the appropriate qualifications and range of experience. • All staff had the appropriate qualifications and range of experience.
	<p>Pre-school 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems in place to develop staff skills e.g. appraisal. • Training is targeted to staff needs and development. • Training important to protect jobs.
	<p>Pre-school 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff left to seek further training and qualifications for themselves if they wished.
	<p>Pre-school 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Fitting' in was as important as appropriate qualifications.

Staff training was seen as crucial across all settings. Pre-school 1 was the most proactive in promoting staff development, which contrasted with pre-school 2 where the manager relied on staff to make approaches if they wished to seek further training.

2. Systematic child observations across the three settings and relation to pre-school practices and beliefs (research question 2).

The tables below reveal that at pre-school 1, children were more predominantly engaged in acts of sharing and helping compared to pre-school 2 and 3. In pre-school 1, this involved 5 of the 7 children and acts of sharing consisted of sharing some information, advice or ideas, sharing a toy with one child/group or encouraging others to share an item. The acts of 'helping' consisted of helping an activity to get started, helping another child to see or do an activity, helping an adult as a response to a request, helping a group or single child with ideas or information or helping a peer with a practical operation like cutting or sticking. Compared to pre-school 2 and 3, children from pre-school 1 appeared to be actively seeking to solve emotional and social problems.

Table 6: Pre-school 1 Pattern of observed categories across children through systematic findings shown in percentages

	Ch1	Ch2	Ch3	Ch4	Ch5	Ch6	Ch7	Mean%

Emot	0	12.5	0	6.7	0	16.6	6.7	6.1
Verb	20	18.8	0	6.7	16.6	8.3	26.6	13.9
<i>Adult</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>33.3</i>		<i>100</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>33.3</i>
<i>Group</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>0</i>		<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>41.6</i>
<i>Single</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>66.6</i>		<i>0</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>0</i>	

Shar	20	12.5	21.4	33.3	33.3	33.3	6.7	22.9
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Ign	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
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'Bold' marks indicated 'most frequent' observation categories for each child

Table 7: Pre-school 2 Pattern of observed categories across children through systematic findings shown in percentages

	Ch8	Ch9	Ch10				
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				Ch11	Ch12	Ch13	Mean%
Emot	0	0	3.3	21.4	0	0	4.1
Verb	16.6	40	36.6	28.6	53.3	42.1	36.2
<i>Adult</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>54.5</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>17.5</i>
<i>Group</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>18.2</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>12.5</i>	<i>12.5</i>	<i>27.5</i>
<i>Single</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>27.3</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>62.5</i>	<i>12.5</i>	

Shar	33.3	15	20	21.4	26.6	36.8	25.5
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Help	33.3	10	20	14.3	20	10.5	18
Othr	0	15	0	0	0	0	

								2.5
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'Bold' marks indicated 'most frequent' observation categories for each child

Table 8: Pre-school 3 Pattern of observed categories across children through systematic findings shown in percentages

	Ch14	Ch15	Ch16	Ch17					

					Ch18	Ch19	Ch20	Ch21	Mean%
Emot	11.1	17.7	0	45.5	0	16.6	22.2	16.7	16.2
Verb	22.2	41.2	60	9.1	50	33.3	33.3	27.8	34.6
<i>Adult</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>14.3</i>	<i>33.3</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>33.3</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>28.6</i>
<i>Group</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>16.6</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>14.3</i>
<i>Single</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>85.7</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>66.6</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>57.1</i>

Shar	33.3	29.4	10	27.3	25	16.6	11.1	27.8	22.6
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Help	11.1	0	10	9.1	0	0	5.6	5.6	5.2
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Ign	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
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'Bold' marks indicated 'most frequent' observation categories for each child

For both pre-school 2 and 3, the above scores reveal that the

child was most frequent in the least frequent observation categories

were most frequently observed engaged in expressing themselves verbally or maintaining physical proximity to another/others. A further delineation of this category revealed that in pre-school 3, the children spent most of their time engaged in acts related to single children. These episodes included joint play activities, approaching a child who was already playing, maintaining a position alongside a child who was playing (but with no interaction), following a child around, observing a child, copying a child's actions and continuing to establish a friendship with one child. These findings also reveal that the pre-school children from setting 3 were sociable and preferred to spend time with at least other child. In pre-school 2, the 'verbal/physical' category was dominated by interactions with adults. Adult contact involved the following: some physical closeness with adults (e.g. sitting on the lap, hugging) and some 1:1 direct teaching of the child. It was noted that the children were active in seeking out adults to solve problems or to fulfil requests but it was uncommon for the adults to directly approach the children.

So how do these systematic findings relate to the approaches espoused by the pre-schools themselves?

Pre-school 1: social and emotional priorities were seen as promoting direct, personal contact with the child, a clear, non prescriptive approach, the importance of the role of the key worker, clear boundaries about unacceptable and acceptable behaviour, resilience building, emphasis on positive praise and preparation for moving away from parents.

The systematic observations were consistent with some of these beliefs: the children were socially active, could go about resolving difficult issues about how to share, how to respond appropriately to

a child who needed help. These were naturally occurring activities as there was no evidence that these children were being supported by adult intervention to help or share with another.

Pre-school 2: advocated a positive approach to emotional and social curriculum, emphasising adults shaping children's play in a more 'structured' fashion, stepping in to support children to resolve conflict and to make choices. The key worker was important, as was consistent adult input.

The systematic findings reflect the dependency that these children had on the adults within the setting. These pre-school children were either more needing of individual attention or more expectant that an adult would be the most appropriate means by which to fulfil their needs. Social interaction with adults was preferred compared to groups or single children.

Pre-school 3: emphasis was on a formalised curriculum for the emotions, proactive interactions between children and staff, setting a positive tone for discipline and again, the role of key worker.

The systematic observations showed that children were dependent on maintaining physical proximity to other single children, by watching others closely but not necessarily interacting, by following and copying others. They were typically hesitant with just a few instances of having formed a more interactive bond.

3. Quality of interactions and teachers support for development of social competence (research question 3).

Naturalistic observations were recorded and coded using the following categories (also see method section).

Child – child interactions.

Common to all pre-schools was a high level of sharing where 'sharing' was coded as sharing an object, information or a play activity with a peer. All pre-school showed similar frequencies for the amount of time and types of activities categorized as 'needs met/expressed' and 'independent' activity.

The 'secure base' code stood out as mainly involving the children from pre-school 1 and 3. 'Secure base' related to using another child/friend as a secure, established base rather than an adult. It was notable that the low 'secure base' for pre-school 2 was consistent with children being near adults in systematic observations.

'Child-group' interactions in pre-school 1 involved children interacting with groups of children and in this setting there was most 'joint activity' between children. There were many kinds (9 types) of such activities, e.g. 'directing the play for the other children' and 'observing the play of other children'. In contrast pre-school 2 and 3 had fewer episodes in this category; in pre-schools 2 and 3, children were involved in non-verbal activities such as 'observing others'.

Child – adult interactions

Pre-school 1 showed the most diverse range of interactions initiated by the adults, ranging from procedural/practical requests e.g. being told by an adult to keep a game safe, to sustained shared thinking or 'scaffolding' an emotional response to something. There were much fewer child-initiated actions but when they did occur, they were used to recruit adult help to solve a problem or employing an adult as a secure base.

In pre-school 2 all adult involvement was child initiated, with no episodes of adult initiated involvement with a child. However, children and adults were not separate during the play sessions as children sought physical proximity to helpers, possibly seeing adults as more skillful and asking adults to join in with a game.

In pre-school 3 adult-child interaction covered all options, adult initiated, child initiated and jointly initiated. Child initiated interactions were mainly about children trying to become physically close to the adult. Adult initiated interactions were mainly procedural/practical, e.g. putting sunscreen on a child, but some were disciplinary.

From these summaries based on naturalistic observations there was a very broad range of play activities that was on offer and mainly directed by children themselves. In summary: in pre-school 2 there was no adult-initiated contact with the children at play. Adults were absent from the free flow of children's play and could not be characterized as promoting social competence. This non-interventionist approach reflected the manager's view that adults only need to intervene when it becomes necessary to promote pro-social acts like sharing and helping, but that was only in the structured play activities. By contrast, in pre-school 1, adult-initiated interactions show clear evidence of watching and trying to promote social competence amongst the children. These adult behaviours reflect the pre-school manager's beliefs about 'getting down to the child's level'. Finally, in pre-school 3, the adult-initiated interactions were mainly about promoting positive behaviour. There was no promotion of social competence in unstructured free play. These practices were also consistent with the manager's beliefs about preferring to use the structured curriculum to teach social and emotional competence.

Discussion

Staff beliefs across three settings (research question 1)

In pre-school 1, the manager believed that the staff encouraged children to become self-reliant and independent social problem-solvers; in pre-school 2, there were beliefs about adopting a personal approach through close supervision of the child and also adult-led modelling when difficulties arose in friendships; pre-school 3 could be characterised as linking social competence to 'good' behaviour and using the curriculum as a vehicle for children to learn more about social and emotional skills. Attitudes to parents were similar across the three pre-schools: Pre-school managers had all highlighted the role of the key worker as being important to connect the child and their family to pre-school and the pre-school to the family. There was evidence that involvement with the family, whilst dealt with sensitively, was believed to work best when the settings imposed limits on the level of involvement.

Systematic child observations across the three settings and relation to pre-school practices and beliefs (research question 2).

Pre-school 1 children were less dependent on structure from adults to support them in learning and social activities. In this setting, children were freely mixing with Reception pupils in most daily activities and therefore had greater opportunity for autonomy compared to their counterparts in pre-schools 2 and 3. However, the research identified a link between the autonomy and increased social competencies of these children and the child-led approach espoused by the manager within their pre-school. The children in

pre-schools 2 and 3 were no less sociable during their free time and were located alongside their peers or the adults. Whilst they were spontaneous with acts of helping and sharing, they were more tentative with social interaction. This was found to link to the respective pre-school managers' views about the place of social competence within each pre-school (i.e. pre-school 2 advocating an adult-led approach and pre-school 3's promotion of social competence within the structure of the curriculum).

Quality of interactions and teachers' support for social competence (research question 3).

Though pre-school 1 emerged as having the most diverse types of adult involvement within the play activities, these adult activities were nevertheless narrow e.g. issuing requests and a brief period of encouragement of a child to share. In pre-school 2 and 3 all social interactions between the child and adult were child-initiated. In this study, where adults chose to interact with children, it was usual for this to be within activities that had a dominant cognitive element e.g. jigsaw puzzles. Other interactions from the adult were embedded within practical activities e.g. ensuring the health and safety of the child, supporting a child with small disputes. This research has therefore highlighted the very limited evidence in all three pre-schools of prolonged/sustained or even spontaneous adult intervention with the play that the child had chosen.

The findings and their link to the Early Years curriculum.

The types of involvement observed from the adults within the pre-schools raise questions about how the Foundation Stage curriculum is being interpreted and how practitioners have shaped their involvement with their children. Within each pre-school setting

there was strong evidence that staff had created imaginative, wide-ranging play contexts for children to access freely individually, in pairs or small groups. However in providing this environment, there was clear evidence that children were engaged to explore but not always invited to extend their interactions through the use of the activities. Siraj-Blatchford (2009) has stated that educators who come to know their children well can increase their capabilities and potential through their sound planning and activities. She had warned against children being 'left to their own devices' and posited that it is only through adults introducing children to new challenges that their experiences can be extended. Therefore planning related to the shaping of space and activities needs to happen alongside considerations of how practitioners will creatively use that space and develop play within particular activities.

Further to this, within the EYFS, child-centred play is a key approach. All three settings allowed the children long periods of free choices as well as freedom of movement to choose play activities and friends. Whitebread et al (2009) advocate four key ingredients for successful, playful activity within an educational context: Emotional warmth and security, children's initiation and feelings of control, cognitive challenge through problem solving and creativity and talk about learning (private and collaborative speech). Given the larger incidence of children 'looking on' in pre-schools 2 and 3, clearly children were not taking control of their play but were on the sidelines considering how they may take steps to join in. This research therefore highlights the question about how balance can be achieved between adult and child levels of control. Practitioners readily intervened for health and safety reasons or when directly asked by the child however there were fewer incidences of practitioners stepping in to direct and sustain the play.

The findings and how they contribute to EP work in relation to the Early Years curriculum and development/education of children.

There are clearly areas in which Educational Psychologists (EPs) can make a contribution. Firstly, EPs could collaborate with pre-school practitioners and Early Years Advisers in examining the meaning of child-centredness and what this means at different stages of a child's development. Within the EYFS practitioners are tasked with creating what they believe to be a 'child-centred' environment and it is possible that practitioners in different settings have very different interpretations of this for the child and adult role. A key focus in this research has been to explore the levels and type of control exerted by the child and the adult. On a macro level, the adult had organised and shaped the play environment, decided the behaviour codes and how to impose them. Practitioners may feel apprehensive about placing too structured a framework on children's play or may feel unclear about the purposes of play (Manning and Sharp, 1977; Smith, 1990). At the micro level, a focus on the systemic controls over children's play could offer practitioners an opportunity to understand the dynamics between peers, practitioners and the wider pre-school system (Cook and Wood, 2009). How pre-school practitioners interpret the concept of 'child-centred' may need further exploration with a possible emphasis on children being supported to make choices about how their environment is shaped and to take their play and interactions with peers into more diverse directions. Secondly, this research has highlighted the importance of close observation as a tool within the pre-school; observation has become a growing practice in pre-schools and provides an important opportunity to help pre-school staff track children's progress. EPs can support pre-schools to

review this practice and also to explore its potential in developing staff interaction skills with children.

A further area where EPs can develop their work is in relation to parents and their inclusion within pre-school. The non-statutory guidance within the EYFS states that within pre-school settings, children should be receiving the quality of interaction that they would receive at home with their parents. Settings are therefore tasked with equipping children with the skills to move on in their educational and social experiences but also with matching the experiences that the child has at home. The pre-school settings within this research were not insensitive to parental involvement, information and needs, and had created some routes for parents to use when issues arose. However there was evidence that these mechanisms were controlled by the pre-school; the quality and type of parental involvement would set the parameters for how parents might expect their involvement to unfold within the receiving primary school. Specific programmes like Head start (2010) have emphasised parents' involvement within the learning as key to developing children's social competencies.

While the pre-school settings have clear routes to communication with parents, there is scope also for including parents in pre-school practices. A two-way relationship would provide the pre-school staff insights into the social competencies and relationships at home. Siraj-Blatchford (2009) has suggested that pre-school practitioners and policy makers are faced with the challenge of ensuring the smooth transition between contexts for the child. In quoting Sanders et al (2005), she reiterates that children adapt best when 'communication is encouraged and the process of change takes place gradually'. By including parents in a more proactive way and using this template ongoing, there are huge benefits for the

reciprocal pre-school/family relationship and also potential to reset the way that primary schools interact with families in the child's first year of school.

Evaluation of methods

The strengths of this study were in using two types of observation techniques (systematic and naturalistic) to examine children's social competence as it related to their interactions with peers and also with adults. These simultaneously offered a tight focus on a set number of social competencies (Denham, 2006) and contributed to an understanding of the subtleties of the adult role and wider play environment. The in depth semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to access the beliefs and attitudes of the manager in each pre-school setting. It was then possible to make comparisons across settings with personnel who had similar roles and responsibilities. This provided a systemic view of the pre-school practices related to social competence that could then be compared with the two types of observational data gathered from the settings.

The study was limited by using only three pre-school settings since these were clearly not representative of all types of setting in the United Kingdom. Because the sample was restricted to children moving onto Primary school during the next academic year, there was also a limited period of time in which to collect observational data. It was impossible to generalise the findings from this study. Nevertheless, the findings are useful in illuminating issues about provision in relation to promoting social competence.

Conclusions

Finally, this research has acknowledged the differing concepts of social competence within pre-school settings and has found varied practices to support children's social competence within their 'choice' or free play-time. There have been tentative conclusions about how the managers' attitudes and beliefs about social competence have a shaping effect on the practices within the pre-school and the types of interactions that children engage in. The distinct views of managers were echoed in the distinct expressions of social competence among the children across the three settings. The children were found to range widely in their levels of involvement with peers and also, in their interaction with adults. Adults were found to be interactive with the children but interactions during play activities were limited.

It was also acknowledged that while the pre-school settings take steps to provide communication routes for parents, pre-school providers could be supported to involve parents/carers to expand their knowledge of the children's social competencies and help settings to individualise their approaches. This is crucial given that the child's understanding of their social world derives from the 'interplay of home and group social experience' and that a productive relationship with parents is better achieved over time across multiple contexts (Mathieson and Bannerjee 2010).

Future directions for research could involve:

- Further engagement and exploration about how pre-school staff differentiate between acceptable behaviour and social competent behaviour in young children.

- Enquiry into how settings encourage pre-school staff to explore and build their own social competencies and how this has an effect on practices and approaches with children in pre-school.
- Enquiry into how to identify extended joint participation between the staff and the children and how to guide children's social competencies individually, in pairs and groups through play.

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Paper 2

A case study of four children's social competence during their transition from pre-school to Primary school

Abstract

This study undertook an examination of four children's social competences during a period of 18 months while they experienced the transition from pre-school to Primary school. Transition has been described as a time of 'discontinuity' (Margetts, 2002). Using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework, there was a focus on the interactions of the child during transition as well as on the school level of influence. The data was explored using a case study approach; the play experiences of four children were recorded using two types of observation (both systematic and naturalistic), semi-structured interviews with pre-school and school staff were conducted and questionnaire data using the Social Competence Behaviour Evaluation, Pre-school edition (LaFreniere and Dumas, 2003) was taken from parents and teachers. In this study, schools had differing approaches to transition and there were found to be gaps in the transition process for children who had had no prior contact with the school. Social competence did not change over transition, except for a dramatic decrease in parent scores for two children. It was argued that children may benefit from more individualised approaches during transition and also better communication between pre-school settings and Primary schools.

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Introduction

Background and context

This paper is the second paper of two with a focus on children's social competence. In this paper there will be an emphasis on children's social competence as they experience the transition from their pre-school to Primary school. With social and emotional skills high ranking within the last Government's priorities, transition was also at the heart of the goals that underpinned the National Children's Plan (DCFS, 2008): a reform in the curriculum, school partnerships and better joint working between early years setting and school would mean a smoother transition from pre-school into school.

In England and Wales, Local Authorities are expected to provide a school place for children at age five yet the majority of children begin school the term following their fourth birthday (Rose, 2009). It is also likely that they will have accessed the increased number of free hours in nursery education introduced by the last Government. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum formally bridges the transition for children who have attended a pre-school or nursery so that they will enter the school environment with a considerable amount of information contained within their EYFS profile (a document that details their attainments and development). The expectation is that the profile, begun by the pre-school, will be a tool for schools to add to in terms of recording and monitoring progress during the transition year. Schools should therefore be equipped with information about the incoming children's abilities across all the six areas of the curriculum, including their prowess linked to social and emotional skills. A review by the DfES and OFSTED (Sanders et al, 2005) highlighted

tensions within the transition process: Teachers experienced great challenge in the move from the play-based curriculum to structured curricular approaches in school. There was an identified need for children to gain certain key skills (e.g. listening skills, independence skills etc) before accessing the Y1 curriculum and parents had been reported as wishing to be better informed with greater opportunities to meet with the class teacher. Core findings from a literature review (Turnbull, 2006) suggest that transition needs to be seen as a process as well as an event with more direct support for children and parents. Within the context of the Local Authority in this study, there has been an acknowledgement of the varying levels of detailed information passing from pre-schools to Primary school. Therefore, during May 2008, a transition document was piloted to run in tandem with the EYFS profile and to simplify information and to create greater homogeneity with the information from pre-schools for the receiving Primary schools.

Transition

A growing body of research evidence has revealed that transition from pre-school to Primary School is a crucial stage in a child's life. It provides an important basis for future attitudes to learning (Schweinhart and Weikart, 1998; Sylva and Wiltshire, 1993). Research has shown how responses to transition can be a vital predictor for how children will meet challenges later on in their lives (Kerckhoff, 1993; Alexander, Entwisle and Dauber, 1993). It can therefore have a lasting influence on how children view themselves long term, how others value them and their general sense of wellbeing and readiness for learning (Dunlop, 2000). Cassidy (2005) singles out the core learning characteristics of aspiration, pro-socialisation, self-esteem, motivation and confidence that are beginning to develop at this

time. If transition is working well one might therefore expect that the pre-school would take a role in providing and modeling opportunities to develop social competence so that, at transition, children would build and enhance their skills once they move onto school.

In defining the particular features of transition, research provides a spectrum of definitions. A basic definition of transition consists of moving from one setting to another or it consists of the moves that a child experiences within a school. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) describe transition as a time of intense demands and it can only be considered complete once a child is in a state of well-being. There are many uncertainties within the transition process (e.g. different journey to school, new words spoken by a new person, participating in a large group) and the potentialities for anxiety, tiredness and discomfort (Barrett, 1986; Cleave, Jowett and Bate, 1982). This indicates that transition is a time of disequilibrium and perhaps there are some children who can never achieve that state of 'well-being'. An alternative view espoused by Burke (1987) suggested the possibility for greater direction and understanding through the various processes and conditions involved in transition. The literature tends to explore the difficulties to be found within the transition process and how individual children, teachers, schools and parents deal with it. Lam and Pollard (2006) summarise their view about transition with the notion that the child experiences a dramatic shift in identity from 'child' at home to 'child' in kindergarten.

Theoretical framework

In seeking a definition and context for transition, many researchers explain transition using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework. Essentially, this is a hierarchical

transactional theory that underscores the interrelationships for the child within their environment at varying levels of focus e.g. micro, meso, exo and macro. Though these are distinct levels, Bronfenbrenner argued for an emphasis on the processes within and between each one. Therefore, this framework, when applied to school transition, provides a way of understanding the complexity of interactions between the wider ecological and psychological systems as well as between the individuals and their proximal environments. Complex interactions between an individual and their environment can expect to shape their early years through to adulthood:

Especially in its early phases, but also throughout the life course, human development takes place through the processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects and symbols in its immediate external environment. (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 996).

Margetts (2002) posits that transition is best understood within this framework. This allows practitioners to understand better a child's developmental journey through transition. Lam and Pollard (2006) rely on this conceptual framework to explain children's sense of agency as they move from home to kindergarten. Citing Vygotsky (1978) they also employ a social constructionist view to explain the mechanisms of a child's adjustment on school entry. They claim it is imperative to conceptualise a child's entry to school by taking account of the historical, cultural and institutional context that shapes the individual child's development and view of the world. These are views supported by other researchers including Margetts (2002) and Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) who also acknowledge the complexity, diversity and intertwined relationships between the home and the school. In summary, this critical period of change makes complex demands on both the child and their wider

network.

From this ecological position, Lam and Pollard (2006) use the concept of 'adaptation' which enables transition to be seen as an active, dynamic process – children are not just 'fitting' into the new system but are viewed as active, creative and strategic practitioners. Children have their own ways to reconstruct the classroom, and these ways are suitable and personal for them. They may strategically 'negotiate' and respond creatively to the situated classroom. This is viewed as a dynamic and continuous negotiation process for children in order to adapt to the classroom as pupils. This position fits well with the notion of 'pupil career' as explored by Pollard and Filer (1999) and other educational theorists such as Carr and Claxton (2002) and Grolnick, Kurowski and Gurland (1999) who have identified the shift in focus from that of academic attainment to one of 'developing capacity and confidence to engage in lifelong learning' (Carr and Claxton, 2002, p.9). It is therefore pertinent to view children's transition to school holistically.

Factors influencing transition

There are several factors that impact upon the transition process:

Individual characteristics

In Margetts' (2007) summary of the literature on children's transition to school, she accounts for children's adjustment to school as dependent on their individual characteristics e.g. anxious temperament, gender (with boys predicated to have more difficulties with adjustment) and position in family. A core area that influences adjustment lies with the social and emotional skills that a child possesses. There are strong

associations between low levels of behaviour problems and high levels of academic competence (Margetts, 2004); by being able to cooperate, assert themselves, exercise self-control in conflict situations and respond appropriately to peer pressure, they are clearing the way for a conducive academic experience. There have also been suggestions of a strong link between peer acceptance, friendship and satisfying relationships. In an earlier study, Margetts (1997) had found that children who started school with a playmate had better academic and social skills and less problem behaviours. This is reinforced by Porath (2003) who emphasised that social understanding of one's role and the ability to interpret other feelings and intentions was a key factor to establishing satisfying relationships at the start of the school career.

Teacher attitudes and input

Other research indicates that the teacher's role is crucial to a successful transition. The evidence is mixed regarding the link between teachers' practice and input and the success of transition. Stephen and Cope's (2003) study of school adjustment in Scotland revealed that teachers are less concerned with children's developmental progress on entry (except for some aspects of social and emotional development). Only half of the 20 teachers in the study actively used transition documents to inform their practice, with only four speaking positively about them. The crucial role of teachers in the transition process is also reinforced by Cassidy's (2005) findings. These support the view that what teachers find important are the social and emotional aspects of transition, such as becoming familiar with the children and ensuring their well-being in the first stages. However, teachers in this study felt constrained and unable to achieve this with a major barrier being the pressure to deliver the pre-set

curriculum. The teachers questioned the value of 'transition documents' as they believed that informal talking was more useful than further paperwork. This was also corroborated by Wallace (1985) who found that Primary School teachers perceived little value in the exchange of documents for children at transition except for those with SEN. Meisels (1992) revealed that teachers would prefer to rely on current skills, accomplishments, knowledge and life experience and to follow these up with teaching and learning of new concepts related to these. This might suggest that teachers find little meaning in the documentation that provides prior information about a child's development and history. In addition, Meisels also showed that teachers did not value transition visits as they were under more pressure to accommodate the needs of pre-school children alongside their reception pupils. Developing a personal relationship and understanding of individual children had a higher value for teachers, but also teachers viewed 'fitting in' as a key objective for children when they started school.

Yeboah (2002) acknowledged that teachers in both pre-school and primary school are in a 'significant' position to influence the outcome of the transition. He also suggested a need to equip teachers with the necessary tools to facilitate a smooth transition for the children (see, for example, Briggs & Potter, 1990). This perspective is reinforced by the EPPE project (2004), which had also emphasized the importance of 'high quality' staff and training. In Rogers and Rose (2007) literature review, there was evidence to suggest that practitioners in the Foundation Stage lack the confidence, knowledge and training to teach early literacy and numeracy through play activities. They highlight a recent study (Adam, Alexander, Drummond and Moyles, 2004) that exposed the gaps between questionnaires and interviews

with practitioners and the data collected through observation of practice. The conclusion in this latter study was that children received a better quality experience in their first year of the Foundation Stage compared to the second.

Parental role

The role of the parent and the kind of relationship with the school was another factor exposed by the research. Einarsdottir, Perry and Dockett's (2008) large survey across Australia and Iceland revealed that teachers believed that talking to parents around the time of transition was useful, reading the records of the upcoming children was relevant and sending a letter home pre and post transition may have some value. A key point was also made about the relationship between the pre-school staff and the teachers in the Primary School which supports previous work by the authors: that the relationships between the two settings are not often based on professional respect and trust. Teachers' positive and negative beliefs about transition were also explored as part of an Irish study carried out by Kiernan et al (2008). Teachers most frequently cited supportive families and having parents/older siblings who promote learning as helpful in children's early school progress. On the other hand, they frequently mentioned poor parenting practices as likely to hinder children's progress. The researchers also noted that teachers attributed other systemic factors like school environment as also likely to influence school progress.

Summary of factors affecting transition

Children are required through transition to experience a number of 'discontinuities' – physical discontinuities of setting as well as discontinuities with curricula, teaching staff, teaching methods

and peer groups (Margetts, 1997). When children are familiar with their new situation, when parents are informed about the new school and where parents can provide information regarding the child's development and prior experience, the transition can be expected to be easier. In Yeboah's (2002) review of the factors that make transition successful, the relationship between the school and the parent was vital. Successful transition depended on individual planning, family support and collaborative working occurred between the pre-school and the school. In Rogers and Rose's (2007) review, there were interesting concluding points in relation to social competence and transition to Key stage 1. Where classrooms can be reorganised, they should be redesigned with a view to encouraging active modes of learning and social interaction. The review also emphasised the importance of how the curriculum is explained to parents. Parents need guidance about what are realistic academic expectations for this age group. Rogers and Rose (2007) clearly saw the introduction of the EYFS (DCFS, 2008a) as an opportunity to strip away some of the formal learning in the reception year by offering play-based and child-initiated experiences. But even as the EYFS takes root there are other pressures from the curriculum including National Strategies in Literacy and Numeracy that threaten its integrity.

Aims of the study

The aim of this current study was to examine the experiences of four children as they moved from pre-school to reception and then to Year 1 (Y1), exploring how their social competence changed over time and how the schools played a role in developing and supporting their social competence during play activities.

The focus of the study was individual children's social competence as expressed through play activities as well as the role played by the school in supporting children's transition. Since transition is influenced by a number of factors, this paper aimed to investigate the impact of transition on four children from the same pre-school as they moved to primary school. Research has shown that successful transition is based on individualized experiences for children; therefore the study aimed to consider how far schools and pre-schools were able to collaborate to meet this challenge and how they created successful transition within their settings. Alongside this, there was also a focus on the Primary schools' staff attitudes and beliefs about social competence and how these shaped practices within the Reception year.

Specifically, the research addressed the following questions:

1. How do individual children's social and emotional competence change in the transition from pre-school to school during the Reception year and Year 1. In terms of past assessment of social competence, interaction with the adults and social/emotional practices within the different settings, how is this presented?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the changes at transition between the four cases in terms of changing school practices?

Design and Method

This study was undertaken in a large Local Authority over a period of 18 months with four children who had attended the same pre-school. They had been observed during their pre-school years as part of a study to explore general assumptions about social competence as reported in study 1.

A case study approach was used to analyse the children's experiences of transition and to explore their social competencies in play during this period. This was felt appropriate as it allowed the researcher to describe and interpret the experiences and context of the four participants. Yin (1994) defined a case study as an investigation into 'a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (p.23). In this study, the contemporary phenomenon consisted of the concepts of social competence and transition. Multiple sources of evidence were also used and gained over a period of time (18 months). The purpose of this case study was also instrumental (Stake, 1995) as the intention was to illuminate the issues surrounding young children's transition to school.

Anderson (2004) identified seven types of data to be used within a case study: documentation, file data, interviews, site visits, direct observation, participant observation and physical artefacts. In this study, data comprised systematic and naturalistic observations of the four children and also, semi-structured interviewing of key personnel with a role involving transition. Both systematic and naturalistic observations had been carried out within the pre-school. These were replicated during the Reception year and Y1 of the Primary school phase. A systematic observation schedule, adapted from Denham (1986), was used. In addition, naturalistic observations, for which specific codes had been developed (Weick, 1968), were also made

(Appendix C). In this study, naturalistic codes were used to focus on child-child interactions, child-group interactions, non-social behaviour, child-adult interactions and general play observations. The Social Competence and Behaviour Evaluation questionnaire was also used to gather data about the children's social competence both pre and post transition, from parents and teachers (see below for further details). The researcher also accessed data from OFSTED (2009) as well as the Primary schools' prospectuses.

Pre-school, school settings and sample

The research took place in a medium-sized market town within a large Local Authority. In 2006, a total population for the town was 35,924 with 4.9% of the total aged 0 – 4 years. Ethnicity in the area was 99.3% white. There were 13 Primary schools within the town and surrounding Parishes; two schools were classed as 3 – 11 years and the remaining eleven schools catered for 5 – 11 years, with a number of these having close links with a pre-school or Nursery base.

Sample

The children in the sample had all been chosen because they all attended the same pre-school, which was not attached to their receiving Primary school. The research spanned approximately 18 months (06/08 – 01/10). It is important to note that aliases were used so that none of the children could be identified.

Table 9: Four children’s gender, age, pre-school and receiving Primary school.

Child	Gender	Age at start of study	Pre-school	Primary school
Sally	female	4y 6m	Pre-school 2 (from study 1)	PS1
Toby	male	4y 3m		PS1
Rory	male	4y 6m		PS2
Tessa	female	4y 3m		PS2

Pre-school

Pre-school 2 was a privately owned nursery with an owner/manager who had been running the pre-school for sixteen years. It operated from a Victorian school building in the centre of the town. Though there were two playrooms, one large room was most frequently used and this had access to a fully enclosed outdoor area. There was a stable staff base of 4-5 females, with temporary employment for training staff from the local college. The number of children on roll was 32 (3 with Special Educational Needs and 2 with English as a Second Language). This pre-school fed pupils into diverse Primary schools within the town.

The main playroom was set up with themed activities e.g. role-play area linked to Holiday theme. Also on offer at separate tables or spaces on the carpet were construction activities, play dough, drawing and painting. The staff was usually stationery at one table or activity where they were joined by children who had chosen that activity. On occasions children were directed to particular activities by staff if a craft item needed to be finished. Clear routines had been established each day with a register followed by a free play session (one hour long) leading up to snack time. A further period of outside or free play

was scheduled for 45 minutes before lunch with story time immediately preceding lunch or home time. All pre-school children mixed as a whole group and choices were child-led at free play-time.

An OSFTED inspection during 2006 found learning intentions were not planned and play was spontaneous. The staff was seen to be managing behaviour appropriately and offering children praise for both good work and behaviour. However the same report suggested that staff needed to clarify their understanding of child development so as to match individual children to 'stepping stones' assessments. An overall rating of satisfactory was awarded.

Primary School 1 (PS1)

PS 1 was a large Primary School of mixed sex and ability. There were pre-school facilities with an active Parent and Toddler group, Baby club and a purpose-built Nursery. Statements from the school prospectus promoted a 'positive approach to behaviour' and an emphasis on individual responsibility. OFSTED inspectors noted:

The school attaches a high priority to working very closely with parents, the community and other agencies. These excellent links enhance the curriculum and are effective in promoting pupils' enjoyment of learning and their personal well-being.

(OFSTED, 2008, p.4)

In Reception, children usually had two free play sessions per day, during the morning and the afternoon for 45 minutes. These took place in the classroom with a range of activities on offer – role-play corner, construction, arts and craft etc. These sessions were supervised by their teacher or by a teaching assistant when their teacher had planning time. In addition, children had outside play-time during the morning and the afternoon. By Y1, choice sessions

had been reduced to one period of 45 minutes per day with two teaching assistants to supervise. Similar play opportunities were available.

Primary School 2 (PS2)

PS2 was another large Primary school of mixed ability and sex. The school set out 13 broad aims in their prospectus with some clear messages about children's social competence (*'to be able to live and work cooperatively with others'*) and the importance of parental involvement (... *'to make every effort to encourage parental involvement in the education process'*) inter alia. Within the prospectus, the school also published a separate briefing for parents regarding preparing their children for the start of school. This stressed the importance of play as a learning tool and as an essential part of healthy development:

'Your child discovers through play and is able to explore not only what he/she can do, but also his/her own thoughts and feelings. He/she needs you to help him/her with his/hr play and one of the most important ways you can do this is to talk to him/her'.

In Y1, play within curriculum time consisted of 1 session of 40 minutes per day. Play activities that offered free choice were role-play, messy play (sand tray), construction, jigsaw puzzles, creative table (scissors, glue, crayons and paper), carpet with cars and garage, Tool Factory (toy hammers, screwdrivers, nails, work bench etc).

Data collection and analysis

Data sets and researcher's notes for each child can be found in Appendix J. The datasets comprised of the following:

(i) Interviews

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the pre-school manager and the two receiving Primary schools. The interviews were conducted with staff that had a specific responsibility for the transition process from pre-school to Reception class. In the case of PS1, this was the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) and in the case of PS2, this was the Deputy Head (with pastoral role). The pre-school interview took place during the summer term prior to the children's transfer to their Primary school. In the case of the Primary schools, the interviews took place at the start of each child's Reception year. Each interview took between 30 and 40 minutes (see Appendices E and F for full transcripts).

A hierarchical concept map was created based on Tomlinson's (1989). The questions were structured and themed using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. Therefore, the questions were framed with the overarching theme of transition and children's social competence but also a focus on the school systems and the wider interactions with parents (see Appendix B).

Each interview was transcribed verbatim. The researcher gained an initial impression of the data by reading through the transcripts several times. The data were then coded and the codes were sorted into themes using a thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Themes were reviewed and refined on two levels: at the level of the code in relation to the extract and then at the level of the whole dataset (see Appendix H). They were then defined and analysed.

(ii) Observations

The observations of each child took place over a period of 18 months. There were three target points:

- (i) At pre-school during the summer term prior to school entry.

(ii) During the reception year (in term 2).

(iii) During Year 1 (in term 1 or 2).

Each child was observed between 2 – 4 times during 'choice' or play activities. Systematic observations took place during 10 minute intervals using a coding schedule developed by Denham (2006). Naturalistic observations took place during the same morning.

As described within study 1, inter-rater observation reliability was checked with an agreement of 88%. For naturalistic observation data, 10% of all naturalistic observation data was sorted into the defined codes by an independent rater and a percentage agreement of 83% was reached.

(iii) Questionnaire data

Both parents and teachers were invited to complete the Social Competence and Behaviour Evaluation (SCBE) questionnaire for each child prior to (in the term before September school entry) and after transition (in the second term after the transition to Reception class).

The questionnaire was the Social Competence and Behaviour Evaluation – Pre-school edition (SCBE) by LaFreniere and Dumas (2003). This was a standardised instrument designed to assess patterns of social competence, affective expression and adjustment difficulties in children aged 30 – 78 months. The main aim of the questionnaire was to 'describe behavioural tendencies for the purposes of socialisation and education' (LaFreniere and Dumas, 2003, p.1) rather than to classify children within diagnostic categories. See Appendix K.

Table 10: An overview of Basic and Summary Scales in SCBE-Pre-school Edition.

Basic scales		Content domain
<i>Negative Pole</i> Depressive Anxious Angry Isolated Aggressive Egotistical Oppositional Dependent	<i>Positive Pole</i> Joyful Secure Tolerant Integrated Calm Prosocial Cooperational Autonomous	Overall Emotional Adjustment (Items 1-30) Social Interactions with Peers (Items 31-60) Social Interactions with Adults (Items 61-80)
Summary scales		
Social Competence Internalizing Problems Externalizing Problems General Adaptation	Summarises items of all 8 positive poles Summarises items of all negative poles Summarises items of all positive poles Summarise all 80 items	

SCBE reliability and validity

The SCBE was standardised on 1263 American children during the 1990s. The authors reported that an Indiana sample of 824 pre-school children (419 girls and 405 boys) and a Colorado sample of 439 pre-school children (212 girls and 227 boys). For the Indiana sample the interrater agreement was uniformly high ranging from .72

to .89. Each of the eight scales produced a high degree of internal consistency ranging from .80 to .89.

Ethical considerations

The British Psychological Society (2008) and The University of Exeter's ethical rules and codes of conduct were followed for the period of the research.

The pre-schools had been invited to take part in the study as described in my previous paper. The two participating Primary schools were invited to take part by both letter and follow up briefing with the Head teacher. Briefing letters were also given to teachers and parents with consent sought and obtained. Parents had been previously issued an SCBE questionnaire to complete at the pre-school stage. They were given another to complete during the school phase. The pre-schools and the parents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity with information used only for analytic purposes at the aggregate level. They were also informed of the measures, interviews and data collection methods. Each Primary school introduced the researcher to the whole class at the start of the play session. Schools were told that they would receive verbal feedback as well as a report of their involvement once the research had been finally submitted and passed by the University.

The study also received ethical clearance in line with the University of Exeter's ethical practices (see Appendix L).

Findings

The following data relates to the observations and the questionnaires of the four children's social competence. There is also a summary of beliefs about transition and social competence in the pre-school and receiving Primary schools as they relate to each case.

Table 11: Sally: analysis across data sources

(SC = Social competence; GA = General Adaptation)

SCBE questionnaire			
Pre transition		Post transition (term 1, reception)	
Parent	Teacher	Parent	Teacher
46 (SC)	48 (SC)	44 (SC)	42 (SC)
48 (GA)	38 (GA)	34 (GA)	33 (GA)
Systematic observations, showing highest % of activity observed			
Pre-school		Reception	Y1
42.1% in category: 'Verbal/physical interaction with an adult'.		36.4% in category: 'Verbal/physical interaction with a single child'.	33.3% in category: 'Sharing' and 'Leaving'.
Naturalistic observations:			
Pre-school		Reception	Y1
Stays close to adult helper for all activities. Shares an activity with another child. Preference for role play and conversation with an adult.		Joint activity with a peer. Takes the lead. Uses verbal skills to negotiate roles. No adult interaction sought or received.	Appears to be very versatile across a range of play activities e.g. can take a leading role, can negotiate, can support others. Does not seek interaction with an adult and can respond to general requests made.

(The questionnaire data shows T scores. The T score range is ≤ 30 (*low levels of adjustment*) to ≥ 70 (*high levels of adjustment*).

Where $T \leq 30$, this shows difficulty with social competence and general adaptation. Where $T \geq 70$, this shows success with social competence and general adaptation. Mean: 50, SD: 10).

Sally was below average in the SC range (mean 50) and there was no change over transition, with neither parent nor teacher scoring her above the mean at any time. In the pre-school phase, the parent's general adaptation score was higher than the teacher's but they converged post transition. General adaptation was in the 30-40 range, below the SC average level, but not in the low range (that is below 30) indicating that she had higher social competence than adaptation. In the pre-school phase, systematic observations showed Sally to engage mostly in play with an adult. Naturalistic findings revealed that though there was a high level of dependency on interaction with an adult, she was highly conversational and able to play for an extended period in a role-play telephone conversation. In the Reception year, adult interaction was neither sought nor offered and interaction with a single peer was mainly seen, with negotiation skills also observed. During Y1 it was clear that Sally was accomplished among her peers for her levels of social competence. She was able to simultaneously support others, negotiate and express her needs and desires. Both 'sharing' and 'leaving' were her highest systematic categories reflecting her ability to share with others but also to move on and decide her own pathway through play.

Moving onto the reported transition links from the pre-school, all four children attended the same pre-school so they all experienced the same approach with regards to the pre-school's handling of

transition to school. Centrally located within the town, from this pre-school, children would go onto to any one of a number of Primary schools within the locality. Therefore, the pre-school reported a diminished transition package. As a consequence the manager had mainly left the responsibility for visits within the hands of parents, having had little success in establishing links with the local schools. This experience was replicated across all cases. The pre-school were evidently limited in what they could introduce for transition. Having tried to establish links with schools and been unsuccessful, they were in the position of being reactive rather than proactive. The pre-school reported a crucial role for parents during the transition process. Parents would take responsibility for organising the visits and would report back to the pre-school if there were concerns.

Both Sally and Toby moved onto PS1. In the staff interview for PS1, it was acknowledged that both children were unlikely to have had as smooth a transition to school as their counterparts who had been at the nursery, adjacent to the site. Children at the attached nursery were assumed to have gained a greater familiarity with the school over a longer period of time. A key feature of transition in PS1 was the emphasis placed on the Head teacher's presence and involvement with parents. Ongoing, it was felt important to keep parents informed. Transition was eased by a number of formal Parents' Evenings and meetings where both staff and parents could share information. In PS1, it was explained that children's social competence over the transition period was supported by the formal mechanism of '*a powerful PSHE and citizenship curriculum*' (PS1 SENCo). In addition, it was felt that children's social competence and skills were supported through keeping records and by being sensitive about how much autonomy is required in social problem-

solving: *'(children are) not encouraged to sort things out for themselves when it's something that can't be sorted out.'*

Table 12: Toby: analysis across data sources

SCBE questionnaire			
Pre transition		Post transition (term 1, reception)	
Parent	Teacher	Parent	Teacher
57 (SC)	48 (SC)	45 (SC)	43 (SC)
55 (GA)	37 (GA)	36 (GA)	35 (GA)
Systematic observations, showing highest % of activity observed			
Pre-school		Reception	Y1
33.3% in categories: 'Sharing' and 'Helping'.		47% in category: 'Verbal/physical interaction with a single child'.	50% in category: 'Sharing'.
Naturalistic observations:			
Pre-school		Reception	Y1
<p>Some limited sharing and plays mainly alone.</p> <p>Assists the adult present in play activity.</p> <p>Lengthy periods of focus for his own play. Active in seeking play pieces to move his game on.</p>		<p>Seeks the company of various single children or groups.</p> <p>Wants to share his book/information with others.</p> <p>Seeks adult's help.</p>	<p>Focuses for a lengthy period on one activity. Can interact with peers about their efforts to build with Lego pieces.</p> <p>Adult initiates conversation with child. Minimal communication with the adult and children present.</p>

In the pre-school phase, parent scores for Toby were above average in both general adaptation and social competence contrasting with post transition scores that were below average. Teacher scores were below the mean pre transition, dipping slightly post transition.

Social competence scores were between 43 and 57 between both phases and therefore, higher throughout compared to general adaptation. The observation data showed very little change in social competence and interaction with others over the 18 months. During the pre-school phase, the systematic observations revealed Toby to be limited in both sharing with others and seeking children to play with. This continued through the Reception year and Y1 phase. In the naturalistic observations during the pre-school and Y1 phase, Toby was most purposeful with his play when successfully building or constructing, and retained awareness of the needs of those around him. He was mainly intent on his play and made limited verbal comments to others about their efforts with a building activity. He accepted verbal comments from adults but did not want to expand conversation.

Table 13: Rory: analysis across data sources

SCBE questionnaire			
Pre transition		Post transition (term 1, reception)	
Parent	Teacher	Parent	Teacher
46 (SC)	46 (SC)	45 (SC)	44 (SC)
44 (GA)	39 (GA)	36 (GA)	36 (GA)
Systematic observations, showing highest % of activity observed			
Pre-school		Reception	Y1
36.6% in category: 'Verbal/physical interaction with an adult'.		47% in category: 'Verbal/physical interaction with a single child'.	44.4% in category: 'Leaving'
Naturalistic observations:			
Pre-school		Reception	Y1
Plays both with and alongside other children. Preference for playing alone and directing the play. More likely to share and include an adult rather than a peer. Role play activities preferred.		Plays with girls but is generally seen to 'flit' around other groups. Very little verbal interaction No observed interactions with an adult.	Plays alongside other children and takes a leading role in how to direct the play. Wanders to look on the play of others but does not join in. Interacts with adults and includes them in his plans. Preference for role play.

Rory was below average in the SC range and showed no change over transition with neither parent nor teacher scores rising above the mean at any time. General adaptation scores were consistently lower than social competence scores in both phases; these scores were lower in the post transition phase. Social competence scores were the higher scores but these also decreased slightly post

transition. The naturalistic observations supported the low levels of social interaction found in the systematic observations. They showed that Rory had a strong preference for role play activities. These were undertaken on his own with some children playing alongside. Rather than inviting others to play, it was more usual for Rory to try to recruit an adult playmate or seek adult approval. This had been particularly evident in both the pre-school and Y1 phase.

PS2 was the receiving Primary school for both Rory and Tessa. Within their prospectus, the school promoted the importance of a play curriculum and this was corroborated in the interview with the SENCo's view: *'If they (the children) are not happy and secure and comfortable, you're wasting your time in doing anything else – so that's what we've always considered to be of paramount importance.'* Transition was located at the child's level with emphasis on an initial small Reception class and the option for parents to access a family learning group prior to transition. This group was a mechanism for creating parity between the teaching staff and the family; families chosen for this group would have built up a 'relationship' with the school through attendance at the attached Nursery. Parents were a central part of the picture with ready access created for them to the Reception classroom and also an encouragement to reduce this over the first year. Social competence was supported through activities within the SEAL programme but the SENCo believed the school had gone beyond this. They had created specific programmes and activities that had an emphasis on the promotion of social and emotional skills at all other transitions in the school as well as in the staff's own personal and career development.

Table 14: Tessa: analysis across data sources

SCBE questionnaire			
Pre transition		Post transition (term 1, reception)	
Parent	Teacher	Parent	Teacher
58 (SC)	46 (SC)	48 (SC)	47 (SC)
60 (GA)	36 (GA)	37 (GA)	38 (GA)
Systematic observations, showing highest % of activity observed			
Pre-school		Reception	Y1
28.6% in category: 'Verbal/physical interaction with a single child'.		40% in category: 'Verbal/physical interaction with a single child'.	50% in category: 'Emitting same emotion as peer'.
Naturalistic observations:			
Pre-school		Reception	Y1
Plays with another child for a long period (>10 mins) and makes jokes. Seeks help and tries to include an adult.		Plays alongside other children. Seems uncomfortable with no direct involvement from other children. Some wandering from activity to activity. No observed interactions with the adults present.	Plays with one other child for lengthy periods. Verbal interactions about the activity pass back and forth between child and peer. Physical closeness and laughing. No observed interactions with the adults present.

In the pre-school phase, parent scores for Tessa were above average in both general adaptation and social competence. These contrasted with the pre-school teacher scores that were below average. After transition, the parent and teacher scores converge to a similar level, with social competence being below the mean and higher than general adaptation. Systematic observation of Tessa showed that she was sociable with single children throughout the three observation periods. The naturalistic observations revealed these interactions to be lengthy pieces of play or interaction with a chosen friend in pre-school and Y1. Tessa had seemed 'uncomfortable' and not completely engaged during the middle phase where no one single child was involved with her play.

Similarities and differences across the cases.

It was through the observation data that the children's unique differences in social interaction were observed more fully. During the final phase of observation, each child showed a distinct pattern of interaction, features of which had been seen in the very first phase in pre-school. Sally was a highly skilled negotiator who planned independently, showed she could share and be sensitive to others' needs. Toby was focused on the goals within his play. He shared with others and conversed only briefly. Rory showed a preference for role-play and though he showed some interest in others, he followed his own plan within his play. Tessa appeared to have a strong bond with one other child and preferred to stay close to this child during play; their play was punctuated by laughter and conversation about the activity, characteristics, which had also been seen in the pre-school phase.

Despite these distinctions there were some similarities between the children during the three phases:

The questionnaire data (teacher), in all four cases, revealed very

little change over transition for levels of social competence, which were also below the mean in both phases. Therefore, over transition, pre-school and Primary school teachers perceived the children to have neither increased nor decreased in their social competence; a factor that cannot be explained by any repeated effect as different staff completed the questionnaire within the two phases. In the cases of Toby and Tessa, parents' scores had been above the mean scores in the pre-school phase and had not agreed with teachers' scores. In the post transition phase, they had converged with the teachers' below the mean scores, suggesting parents had experienced or noticed a decline in social competence following transition in their children. It is possible that this contrast change reflects parents' own experiences, concerns or anxieties of the change from pre-school to Primary.

Observations had explored the quality and type of interactions over time. Toby and Rory were similar in their singularity of focus within play. Toby became absorbed in construction play, interacting infrequently with others but usually to help by passing a piece of equipment. Rory preferred role-play consistently and carved out his own game with similar infrequent contact with others. Toby was also absorbed in an activity and not proactive with others. By contrast, Tessa and Sally enjoyed the company of others but on different levels. Tessa sought the company of her peers, with a preference for a single friend. Their activity was based on chasing, laughing and mirroring each other in activities. Sally's interactions, in the pre-school phase, were focused towards an adult with activity based on conversation. Post transition, she showed continuing verbal ability to negotiate and support others. There was also observed a strong thread of independence as she had come to depend less on adults. Both the questionnaire data from parent and

teacher in both phases had not captured her increased levels of social competence.

All four children seemed to have a preferred option within their play (e.g. Toby gravitated towards construction play) that was seen both at the early and later stage of the observations. Sally was highly socially competent and her inclusion of an adult in her play for the pre-school sessions was indicative of her high level of conversation, turn taking and use of pretend elements of her role playing. Her low questionnaire scores did not reflect this sophistication in her play and interactions with others. For Toby, Tessa and Rory, some elements observed in the first phase (e.g. choice of play activities, connectivity to peers) were also seen in the final observations and were therefore stable over time. Therefore, a key finding regarding the impact of transition is that, within these four cases, the social characteristics observed within the pre-school play were also found to have endured during the earlier and later transition phases. These elements might therefore be considered to form a core part of these children's approach to social interaction and problem-solving.

Discussion

Cases

The similarities and differences in the four cases highlighted the stability of the children's social competence over the transition period as patterns observed in the early pre-school phase were also seen in the later phase of transition. In addition, the teacher questionnaires appeared to support the 'no change' findings. This is an important finding in relation to young children's transition from pre-school to school. There is potential for receiving Primary schools to match incoming knowledge about individual children's social competence and approaches to play within their short and medium term planning for reception class children.

A gender difference was noted with interaction styles. Both Toby and Rory, during free choice time, generally engaged in solitary play. Rory chose role-play, conducted on his own terms with little interaction with other children. For Toby, construction play was preferred with low-level interaction with others. Therefore both boys, though engaged in play, preferred to play alone. Where interaction was sought this was by Rory only, initiated by him and directed towards an adult. Interaction with peers had a higher profile for the two girls, with single friends chosen although Sally also opted to be independent from others. That the two girls engaged in predominantly social activities with peers and adults is consistent with social learning theories (Rogoff, 2003, Tietz and Shine, 2001). These children appeared to be behaving in culturally coherent ways with the girls in this study linking with other girls and the boys exhibiting characteristics like independence, physical activity and task orientation (Wood and Cook, 2009). Again, this is an important finding in relation to practitioners shaping play choices

and social interaction between pupils.

Transition experiences

The children in the study had received no formal transition support from their pre-school due to the pre-school's poor links with receiving Primary schools. For children from this pre-school, parents initiated contact with the receiving school and then were encouraged to report back to the pre-school. The pre-school was in the position of being unattached to a Primary school and geographically isolated so their pre-school children usually accessed a range of the town's Primary schools. This factor had a bearing on how continuous their links were with schools. In this instance, the pre-school manager described her role as secondary to that of the parent who was the 'prime mover' in establishing school links. The pre-school manager believed there was a negative impact of not being able to make their practices continuous with receiving Primary schools.

The focus on transition practice within the Primary schools revealed a contrasting approach. For all four children in this study, both Primary schools were aware that the transition would not be as smooth compared to children who had accessed the Nursery on site. Sally and Toby moved onto PS1 where there was an emphasis on keeping parents fully involved and informed. For Tessa and Rory, PS2 offered a child level approach. Prior to inception, parents had access to information about how to play with your child in the school prospectus and the school had cultured a holistic view of transition as an ongoing process throughout school life; an approach supported by Adams et al (2004) 'a view of learning that is continuous and coherent through the school' (p.12). It is important to note therefore that though the establishment of the

EYFS has created some consistency across schools and their approach to transition, schools have their individual stamp on how transitions are handled.

The findings and their link to the Early Years curriculum.

The introduction of the EYFS has brought the possibility of greater continuity between the pre-school and school with the inclusion of an Early Years Foundation Stage profile. As one of the tools that can support children, the EYFS profile has provided practitioners with a framework for continuity of assessment of children's skills and development on their journey from one setting to another. That children's social, emotional and educational needs are addressed appropriately within this is viewed as key. However, transition is an understated theme within the Early Years curriculum and settings are free to interpret the guidance in their own way. It was clear within this study that the two Primary schools conceptualized transition differently, with PS1 directing their support to parents and PS2 perceiving the child at the centre of a long process, lasting throughout their school years. Evaluating the kind of contact suggested with parents by both schools revealed some informal and formal mechanisms e.g. allowing parents to come to the classroom, inviting parents to meetings. Clearly parents are key to the child's positive experience of transition. There is scope here, however, to review how the Primary school support parents through this time, possibly by offering a more tailored approach in eliciting their views about what would best support them in this period of change.

The findings and EPs can contribute to the Early Years curriculum and development/education of children.

This study highlights the possible gaps for pre-schools when handling the transition process. Here, the pre-school had had very little contact with the receiving Primary schools and only became involved with outside agencies with regard to children with Special Educational Needs. There is arguably a role for Educational Psychologists (EPs) to work systemically with pre-schools and Early Years Advisers, particularly in promoting good transition where pre-school settings are vulnerable due to poor links with feeder Primary schools. EPs could support the process of increasing communication between pre-school and Primary school staff together and, in addition, support training needs.

EPs may also consider how to continue to promote the good practices related to play and the promotion of social competence in school. Substantial parts of the children's day were devoted to play within the pre-school setting. The quality of this was discussed in my previous paper. Once children moved onto Primary school, this was found to be dramatically reduced in the reception year and then dropped again once in Year 1. EPs could be involved with schools in a discussion about the purposes of play, how to expand play and the possibilities of assessment in play (Stagnitti, 2004). Adams et al (2004) posit a continuum that practitioners need to move across e.g. rather than seeing play as an opportunity to deliver specific learning objectives move towards accepting play as spontaneous, complex and imaginative.

The literature highlights the necessity of individualising transition (Yeboah, 2002). Documents such The EYFS profile and local transition documents go some way to highlighting individual attainment and needs during transition. EPs have a role in supporting practitioners' good quality observation techniques. Facilitating the analysis of the valuable skills attained through play

can expand the profile of the child and also deepen knowledge of them as a growing person. This could be crucial in a number of ways: through the evaluation of children's preferred pieces of play, in allowing them scope to develop these and in understanding how to prevent stagnant or stereotyped activity undermining the learning and development of communication skills. This individualised approach may be helpful in organising play experiences around the child's needs and preferences rather than as an additional feature of the curriculum.

Evaluation of methods

The strengths of this study were in being able to conduct a detailed view of four children from one pre-school and two receiving Primary school. Two types of observations were used over a long period of time (18 months), which gave the scope to see how the children coped with transition, whether and how their social skills changed over time and how environmental changes could make an impact. These observations were triangulated with parent and teacher data from the SCBE questionnaire, which also focused on aspects of children's social competence. However, because the focus was limited to a restricted sample, the results could not be generalised to other situations. Nevertheless, the case studies do illuminate important aspects of the transition process and the patterns of social competence within different settings.

Conclusions

Within the four children studied, there appeared to be little change in social competence as measured by their teachers. Observations revealed there was continuity in patterns of play and interaction over time (begun within the pre-school phase and continued as late as Year 1). This was considered an important finding in terms of children's continuity of experience at the pressure point of transition and also for teachers' planning of the curriculum and children's play experiences. The questionnaire data (parent) also highlighted a negative effect on social competence for two children (Toby and Tessa) over transition, raising issues about how parents experience or perceive the process of change for their children. The Primary schools were found to have varying practices with transition despite the opportunities to streamline practices since the inception of the EYFS. Finally, because of poor links with local schools, the pre-school in this study was limited in offering transition support for its pre-school children. It was therefore considered that professionals such as Educational Psychologists and Early Years Advisors could be proactive in strengthening those transition links and building continuity of practice where pre-schools have become isolated.

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Appendix A:

Briefing letters to pre-schools, schools and parents

Pre-school: Parent briefing and consent letter

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am writing to seek permission to include your child a piece of research linked to social competence and transition to Primary school.

This will involve observing your child (and others) over the course of four weeks within their pre-school during their free choice time. All information will be dealt with in the strictest confidence and no personal information about your child's observation will be provided to the pre-school or receiving Primary school. The results of the research will be presented to University tutors and individuals will not be identified. In addition, I would be very grateful if you could complete the attached questionnaire about social competence.

The research aims to provide some useful information about how children's emotions and social skills help them as they move from pre-school to the Reception year.

I very much appreciate your participation in this project and if you have any questions about the project, do not hesitate to telephone me on *Telephone number*. Please return your completed questionnaire to your child's teacher by the end of the summer term.

Sincerely,

Julie Elkins

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Head teacher briefing letter

Dear Head teacher

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist based in Barnstaple and Exeter University and am writing to brief you about a research project I have been undertaking in Devon pre-schools and Primary schools.

You are probably well aware of the growing number of initiatives aimed at increasing social competence in young children and how this has the potential to generate positive long-term outcomes for children. This research is focusing on children's social competence during their transition from pre-school to Primary school and how this is supported in the Primary school by staff and others.

Phase 1 of this research project involved the children in their pre-school during the summer term 2008. In Phase 2, I would like to continue the observations of the children who were selected. In addition, I hope to interview you about the social/emotional curriculum and would like to ask the parents and the reception teacher and to fill out a questionnaire.

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasise that all interviews, questionnaires and observations will be treated with strict confidentiality. In view of this I have obtained consent from each child's parents to take part in the research.

I look forward to working with you.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Elkins

Primary school: Parent briefing and consent letter

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am writing to thank you for consenting to include your child in my research that I carried out whilst visiting their pre-school last summer.

I am now approaching Phase 2 of the project and would like to visit your child at their new school. The visits will involve a short observation similar to before. I would also be very grateful if you would fill out the attached questionnaire that I handed out in Phase 1 so that I can compare the responses to those in pre-school.

As before, all information will be dealt with in the strictest confidence and no personal information about your child's observation will be provided to the Primary school. The results of the research will be presented to University tutors and individuals will not be identified.

The research aims to provide some useful information about how children's emotions and social skills help them as they move from pre-school to the Reception year.

I very much appreciate your participation in this project and if you have any questions about the project, do not hesitate to telephone me on 01271 388700. Please return your completed questionnaire to your child's teacher by Monday 15 December 2008.

Sincerely,

Julie Elkins

Trainee Educational Psychologist

I give my permission for my child _____(name)

to be involved in the research project and consent to them being observed in the classroom.

Parent/carer name: _____

Parent/carer signature: _____

January 2010

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to you to seek permission to observe your child within their classroom.

You may remember that I wrote to you before regarding my research about children's social and emotional competence and sought your permission to observe your child at both pre-school and in their first year of Primary education. I now wish to do some follow up observations in the classroom during the children's free choice time.

As before, I would like to assure you that all information regarding your child would be treated confidentially.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address if you would like more information.

Julie Elkins

Trainee Educational Psychologist.

Appendix B:

Pre-school and Primary School concept map and semi structured interview schedule

Concept map for Social Competence/Transition project

Context				
	Pre schools			
		Children's social competence		
		Staff belief about s/c	Values/ethos Relnships child-child Staff-staff Child-staff	
			Quals/turnover	
		Curriculum		
		Parents/carers	Support Groups	
	Primary sch			
		Children's social competence		
		Staff belief about s/c	Values/ethos Relnships child-child Staff-staff Child-staff	
			Quals/turnover	
		Curriculum		
		Parents/carers	Support Groups	

Process	Preschools Schools	Transition	Planning – who and how?	Staff
				Parents/carers
				Chn
				Prim sch staff
			EYFS profile	
			National and local policy – impact of this on transition	
Outcome				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School • Core gp of chn • Gender • Age 			
		Soc comp	Questionnaire: Pre/post transition	Parent teacher
		Behaviour	Class obs	
		Attendance	School data	

Pre-school: Semi-structured interview schedule

Question themes for semi-structured interviews:

Transition

- Are you aware of any Policy - nationally and within local Authority concerning transition?
- How does it work on the ground? Joint planning with the pre schools, information-giving and sharing, taking roles within transition?
- How are other staff outside of pre-school involved e.g. EPs, EYAs etc
- How do parents get involved with their own child's transition to primary school?
- Do you believe that transition is a two way process between the school and the pre-school? In what ways does it work and not work?
- Are there opportunities to review the process and share the results?

Staffing

- What is your staffing structure?
- What kind of staff turnover do you experience?
- What are staff qualifications and future aspirations?
Employment background?
- What would you say are the strengths within the setting in terms of the staffing expertise?
- What emphasis is there on emotional and social development of staff/relationships?

Curriculum

- Do you consider that the pre-school has an emotional curriculum for the children? How is this organised? Within the new EYFS/Foundation stage?
- Supporting children to interact socially with adults and their peers - what are your strengths in this area, what do you need to build on?
- How are children supported to form relationships with each other?
- How are they encouraged to manage their own behaviour? Conflict with others? Setbacks? Problems?
- How does this fit in with EYFS?
- Has EYFS meant role recalibration/conflict?

Parents

- How are they encouraged to be involved with the life of the school? PTFA? Other?
- What are the barriers to involvement (if any)?
- Are parents supported through the school in a formalised or informal way when their children first come to school?
- How do parents support the transition process?

Primary School: Semi-structured interview schedule

Question themes for semi-structured interviews:

School phase

Question themes for Semi-structured interviews:

Transition

- Are you aware of any Policy - nationally and within local Authority concerning transition?
- How does it work on the ground? Joint planning with the pre schools, information-giving and sharing, taking roles within transition?
- How are other staff outside of school involved e.g. EPs, EYAs etc
- How do parents get involved with their own child's transition to primary school?
- How does the school and the pre-school work together? In what ways does it work and not work?
- Are there opportunities to review the process and share the results?
- Is there any specific information that relates to the child's emotional disposition and social skills that is requested and handed over at transition?
- How is information gathered regarding this during the first few weeks on entry?

Staffing

- What is your staffing structure?
- What kind of staff turnover do you experience?
- What are staff qualifications and future aspirations? Employment background?
- What would you say are the strengths within the setting in terms of the staffing expertise?
- What emphasis is there on emotional and social development of staff/relationships?

Curriculum

- Do social and emotional issues have a place within the School Improvement Plan?
- Do you consider that the School has an emotional curriculum for the children? How is this organised? Within the new EYFS/Foundation stage? What explicit teaching happens to support this?
- Supporting children to interact socially with adults and their peers - what are your strengths in this area, what do you need to build on?
- How are children supported to form relationships with each other?
- How are they encouraged to manage their own behaviour? Conflict with

others? Setbacks? Problems?

- How does this fit in with EYFS?
- What structures, routines etc are in place to encourage 'whole' school emotional literacy across the year groups?

Parents

- How are they encouraged to be involved with the life of the school?
PTFA? Other?
- Do you perceive any barriers to this?
- Are parents supported through the school in a formalised or informal way when their children first come to school?
- How do parents support the transition process?

Appendix C:

Systematic observation category codes

Systematic observation sheet

Naturalistic observation themes including sub theme for category 1

Example raw naturalistic and systematic observation data from Pre-school 2

Systematic observation category codes

Systematic observation categories

- Emot: Emitting same emotion as peer.
- Verb: Verbal or physical reinforcement (including hugging, touching, approaching or maintaining proximity).
- Shar: Sharing (offering, showing temporary use of or giving an object previously in possession)
- Help: Helping (verbal or physical, including defending, stopping an offensive activity, giving information or strategies, assistance with tasks, or getting, giving an object not in previous possession).
- Care: Care/concern (physically comforting, questioning, reassuring or looking quite concerned).
- Neut: Sustained neutral attention > 3 secs
- Ign: Ignoring
- Leav: Leaving
- Othr: Other (usually a discrepant emotion e.g. anger to a happy display).

Child Observation sheet: Target child identifier: _____

Date

Behaviour/interaction	Frequency/time in minutes										Score
	1 min	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Emitting same emotion as peer											
Verbal/physical reinforcement (inc. touching, hugging, approaching or maintaining proximity)											
Sharing (offering, showing allowing temporary use, or giving an object previously in possession)											
Helping (verbal or physical, including defending, stopping an offensive activity, giving information or strategies, assistance with tasks, or getting, giving, moving object not in previous possession)											
Care/ concern (physical comforting, questioning, reassuring, or looking quite concerned)											
Sustained neutral attention (<3 sec)											
Ignoring											
Leaving											
Other (usually discrepant emotions, e.g., anger in response to a happy display).											

Contextual information:

The above observation schedule is adapted from Susanne Denham's work (1986) on observations of social interaction the preschool. The purpose is to measure the prosocial behaviour of children in unmanipulated free-play situations.

Each child will be observed for 10 minutes and the frequency and length of their interactions will be noted. There is also an opportunity to note specificity of context in the final box.

Percentage scores will be calculated spent for amount of time spent on a specific behaviour.

Naturalistic observations themes developed using Braun and Clarke (2006).

1. Child – child interactions
2. Child – group interactions
3. Non-social behaviour: child to child, child to adult
4. Child – adult interactions: adult initiated, child initiated, jointly initiated
5. General play observations

Sub thematic categories developed from Category 1 (Child – child interactions):

1. Sharing (SH): a child shares an object, information or shares the play activity with a peer.
2. Emotional expressiveness (EE): 2 or more children are laughing or smiling together as a response to enjoying a game or the content of their talk.
3. Secure base (SB): a child maintains physical closeness to another child by following them around or else continuing the established bond with them.
4. Needs expressed/met (NEM): a child expresses a need to a peer or an adult, or when a child responds to the need/request expressed by another
5. Joint activity (JA): a child plays closely with another for a prolonged amount of time e.g. over 2 mins. There is evidence of taking turns, being engaged in a reciprocal activity and/or borrowing phrases from each other's language.
6. Independence (IN): a child follows their own choice of activity and they show no response to the others around them.
7. Imitation (IM): a child copies the actions or the talk of another child or adult
8. Tolerance (TOL) child shows tolerance of other children's interference e.g. physical low level interruption.

Pre-school 2 Raw observation data

Pre school phase: Child: 1				
Session 1 27.06.08				
Time (mins)	Systematic obs	Naturalistic obs	Child to child	Child - adult
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing 	Target child is playing with the train track. One other child playing beside him. Stays close to the group playing with the trains for the whole period. Very little verbal interaction with the other children.	Gives a train to the other boy	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Target child continues to be absorbed by playing with the train track.		
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement - approaches adult helper • Helping • Sharing 			Helps the helper to change some of the features on the track
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Target child has started to direct his play to the adult and appears to be trying to assist them and involve the adult in		

		building more track.		
7	•			
8	•			
9	• Helping			Helps the helper to add more track
10	•			

Pre school phase: Child: 1 Session 2 27.06.08				
Time (mins)	Systematic obs	Naturalistic obs	Child to child	Child - adult
1	•	Playing on the carpet with the cars. Close to other children but not playing with them		
2	•			
3	•			
4	• Leaving	Moves to another part of the carpet. Target child is looking around for other toys. He looks interested in activities of others but does not join in.		
5	•	Target child settles down on another part of the carpet. He picks up the building blocks,		

		focused on an activity and sits near others but does not interact with them		
6	•	Focuses on building with the blocks and looks around but only to search for more blocks		
7	•	Maintains focus with solitary activity until the end of the session – continues to sit near to other children but does not interact them or involve them in his activities.		
8	•			
9	•			
10	•			

Pre school phase: Child: 2				
Session 1 20.06.08				
Time (mins)	Systematic obs	Naturalistic obs	Child to child	Child - adult
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement 	Sits next to helper and receives 1:1 input. No other child nearby.		Interacting with helper on toy phone
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement • Maintains proximity next to adult helper and interacts only with adult helper for whole period • Sharing 	Sole child for whole period.		Interacts with helper to talk about and look at holiday brochure
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing 			Continues to share holiday brochure
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing 		Looks at other children but stays in one place.	Continues to share holiday brochure
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing • 			Shares holiday brochure

Pre school phase: Child: 2				
Session 2 27.06.08				
Time (mins)	Systematic obs	Naturalistic obs	Child to child	Child - adult
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement: maintains proximity to other children, interaction with one child • Helping • Care/concern 	Playing with train track, helps one child to attach track together	Other children playing with same activity. Looking at a child playing with a storage box who is crying	Sits close to helper whom she played with in a previous session. Maintains this position throughout the observation period.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing 	Target child continues to share the track with one other child.		
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement : approaches adult helper and interacts • Sharing 			Shares an idea with the adult helper
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Target child stays close to the helper.		
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care/concern 		Looks at the helper who is observing another child	
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing 			Asks helper to look at what she has done with the track
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement - 	Target child joins in with another child to try to mend		

	approaches another child • Helping	the track - both are taking turns and working together to find a solution.		
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Pre school phase: Child: 2 Session 3 13.07.08				
Time (mins)	Systematic obs	Naturalistic obs	Child to child	Child - adult
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement 	Rolling out play doh and using a toy knife to cut it up and make shapes		<p>Sits close to helper whom she played with in previous sessions.</p> <p>Maintains this position throughout the observation period.</p>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement • Maintains proximity to adult helper for the whole period • Helping 			Explains to adult helper what she is doing
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement 			
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement • Helping 			Helps the adult to cut up play doh balls
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement 			
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement 			

7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement 			
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement Sharing			
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement 			
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement 			

Pre school phase: Child: 3				
Session 1 20.06.09				
Time (mins)	Systematic obs	Naturalistic obs	Child to child	Child - adult
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement - maintains proximity to one other child and interacts with her • Emitting same emotion as peer 	Playing with one other girl with pushchair, doll and clothes. Plays with same child throughout this session.	Smiles with friend.	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping 	Target child and friend involved in putting clothes on the doll		
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaving 	Target child and friend leave the play area and start pushing the push chair around the room		
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emitting same emotion as peer 	They push the push chair in a wavy line around the room	Target child laughs with friend	
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emitting same emotion as peer 	Continuing to push the pushchair and stop at parts of the room.	Smiling together	
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emitting same emotion as peer 		Smiling together	

10	•			
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Pre school phase: Child: 3				
Session 2 20.06.09				
Time (mins)	Systematic obs	Naturalistic obs	Child to child	Child - adult
1	•	Target child starts off in the book area of the room. Takes a book down from the shelf. 2 other children are involved in the choosing of books.		
2	•			
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement - approaches adult • Sharing • Leaving 	Target child temporarily leaves the area to come towards researcher.		Target child comes and asks me to read the book with her.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement – approaches other children to find someone to play with 	Returns to the other children in the book area		
5	•			
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing • Helping 	Target child points to something in her book.	Target child asks her friend to look at the book with her.	
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement • Sharing 	Shares book with friend.	Both children turn-taking and making comments about the pictures in the book.	

8	•			
9	•			
10	•	Target child ends the session with one child, sharing a book on the floor of the book corner.		

Pre school phase: Child: 4				
Session 1 13.06.08				
Time (mins)	Systematic obs	Naturalistic obs	Child to child	Child - adult
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emitting same emotions as peer • Verbal/Physical reinforcement - maintains proximity to another child • Sharing 	Playing with another child with toy animals		
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Target child continues with the same activity with the other child.		
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaving 	Lone play with cars and dolls		
4				
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Target child is approached by another child but chooses not to share with this other child		
6				
7		Target child has a confrontation about a toy with another child		
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing 	Hands over a toy	‘Your turn, _____’	
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/Physical reinforcement - maintains proximity to other children 	Joins other children at the Post Office area – target child stays with these children til the end of the obs.		

10	•			
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Pre school phase: Child: 4				
Session 2 13.06.08				
Time (mins)	Systematic obs	Naturalistic obs	Child to child	Child - adult
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/Physical reinforcement - approaches adult • Sharing 	Creates own role play involving aeroplanes. Invites an adult to join in with him.		Adult watches on and target child asks her to become an aeroplane too.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaving 	Plays at being an aeroplane and comes and goes. Weaves his play into groups of other children therefore maintains contact with them		
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Continues to weave his play into groups of other children therefore maintains contact with them		
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Continues to make contact with others but still playing aeroplane game on own		
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing 			Initiates a conversation with a helper - shares some information about a toy with an adult
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/Physical 			Tells the helper about the

	reinforcement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches adult helper • Sharing 			play – helper looks interested but is with another group.
7	•			
8	•			
9	• Helping			
10	• Helping			

Pre school phase: Child: 4 Session 3 20.06.08				
Time (mins)	Systematic obs	Naturalistic obs	Child to child	Child - adult
1	•	Creates own role play involving holiday equipment. Has a suitcase and a passport Plays in parallel to another child		
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaving 	Lone play but is maintaining a proximity to other children. No interaction with the others.		
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/Physical reinforcement - approaches an adult • Leaving 	Target child seeks my help		
4	•	Plays with some construction toys. Maintain proximity to other		

		children but engages in lone play		
5	•	Dresses up for holiday activity – lone activity The only child dressing up but others looking on.		
6	• Verbal/Physical reinforcement – approaches a child.	Approached another child to give information about clothes	Talks to another child about the clothes	
7	•	Target child continue to play with the clothes.		
8	• Verbal/Physical reinforcement – approaches other children • Leaving	Approaches 2 children and begins to interact and encourage them to participate in his game. They role play some of the preparations for going on holiday.	Plays with 2 girls	
9	• Sharing		Puts pretend sunscreen on another child	
10	•			

Pre school phase: Child: 4				
Session 4 27.06.08				
Time (mins)	Systematic obs	Naturalistic obs	Child to child	Child - adult
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/Physical reinforcement - maintain proximity to an adult helper • Sharing • Helping 	Target child maintains a position next to helper. Sat at a table with helper playing with the lego. Sweeps the lego bricks back onto the table.		Talks to the helper about the bricks
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaving 			
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/Physical reinforcement – approaches adult • Leaving 	Target child goes back to the helper but also leaves to go and fetch a lego tree		
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/Physical reinforcement - approaches another child 	Approaches another child and looks interested in their activity		
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping 	Target child engages in helping a girl	Helps the girl sitting next to him by holding a brick for her	
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping 	Target child continues to be absorbed helping the girl.		
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping 		Tells the girl in the group how to use a lego piece – ‘that’s for the bedroom part’.	

10	•			
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Pre school phase: Child: 5				
Session 1 20.06.08				
Time (mins)	Systematic obs	Naturalistic obs	Child to child	Child - adult
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing care/concern 	Playing with holiday role play items	Has broken a body board she has been sharing with a friend	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement - maintaining proximity to an adult 			Stands close to helper
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement - approaches another child • Sharing 		Shares a dressed up 'dummy' in a wetsuit with another child	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing 		Stays with friend and playing with the dummy	
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 		Stays with friend, playing with the dummy	
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement - approaches another child • Maintaining proximity to a child • Care/concern 		Moves to a child showing some distress and tries to interact	Hugs the helper
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement 	Hugging a child	Hugs her friend	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining proximity to a child • Hugging/touching 			
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement - approaches and maintains proximity to a child 		Moves to and stays close to another girl and shares the play with holiday props	
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 		Stays with friend but no more talking together	
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 		Stays with friend	
Pre school phase: Child: 5				
Session 2 20.06.08				
Time (mins)	Systematic obs	Naturalistic obs	Child to child	Child - adult
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing 	Playing with the holiday items. Shares the body board with another child (male).	Pulls the other child along the floor on the body board	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing 		Continues to pull other child on the board – is looking uncomfortable and finishes the activity	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping 		Helps friend to put away body board	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping 			
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping 			
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement – approaches an adult to make a request 			Approaches helper Assisted by helper to the toilet

7	•	Shows interest in the activities of another child who is tidying up Begins to join in with the tidying up		
8		Wanders around alone looking at the other children tidying up		
9		Called by helper for carpet time Responds immediately		
10		Joins friends on the carpet	Sit close to other girls	

Pre school phase: Child: 6				
Session 1 13.06.09				
Time (mins)	Systematic obs	Naturalistic obs	Child to child	Child - adult
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ignoring 		Being called by a child and not responding	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other discrepant emotions 	Takes another child's toy	Shows no interest in child's protest	
3		Wanders around room		
4		Wanders around room		
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other 		Refuses to share the toy phone	
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbal/physical reinforcement Approaches adult helper and maintains proximity to her 			Goes towards adult helper
7		Wanders around room		
8		Wanders around room		
9		Wanders around room		
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other 		Child grabs toy from him – he pulls away	

Pre school phase: Child: 6				
Session 2 13.06.09				
Time (mins)	Systematic obs	Naturalistic obs	Child to child	Child - adult
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement • Touches and maintains close proximity to adult helper 	Target child engages in solitary play to solve jigsaw puzzle. He stays close to the adult for the whole time he is engaged with the puzzle.		Sits on the adult's knee to do puzzle
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing 			
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement - approaches a group of children 	Moves to the mat to play with a truck. Continues to engage in lone play and makes no interaction with other children nearby.		
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Parallel play – target child absorbed by his own game on the mat.		
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Parallel play		
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Parallel play		
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaving 	Loses interest in toys on the mat Moves away from the mat to explore the room		

Pre school phase: Child: 6				
Session 3 20.06.09				
Time (mins)	Systematic obs	Naturalistic obs	Child to child	Child - adult
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement - maintains physical proximity to adult • Shows care/concern (towards some children in conflict on the play mat)) 	Playing with the holiday role play toys. Initially lying on carpet 'swimming' Stays close to an adult.		Watches an adult repair some swimming goggles
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emitting same emotion as peer • Sharing • Care/concern 	Moves to office area	Gives a child a pink envelope	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement - maintains proximity next to a group 	Wanders around room to look for another activity. Finds a group to look in on but does not interact.		
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaving 	Wanders around room.		
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement - approaches an adult and maintains proximity to her 	Target child finds an adult helper		
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing 		Shares out his play doh with adult helper and another child	
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			

8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement – hugs 			Hugs helper and climbs onto their knee
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 		Plays alone but tells another child what he is doing	

Pre school phase: Child: 6 Session 4 27.06.09				
Time (mins)	Systematic obs	Naturalistic obs	Child to child	Child - adult
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/physical reinforcement – maintains proximity to an adult 	Works with an adult 1:1 on a counting/matching activity for the whole 10 mins		Adult tells child what to do Adult leaves gaps in sentences for the child to fill in
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Adult leaves and child sustains interest with the counting		
6		Child maintains position with the counting activity on his own.		
7		Child maintains position with the counting activity alone		
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping 	Target child is approached by another child	Puts a toy away when a peer asks him to	
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping 	Target child is approached by	Shares information about the	

		the returning adult	toy with the other child	
10		Target child is approached by another child Target child tries to break the contact	Child grabs toy from him – target child pulls away	

Appendix D: Analysis of themes from naturalistic observations

(i) Pre-school 1 Naturalistic thematic codes

Naturalistic Observation Summary codes of pre-school 1 children

Child-child interactions:

Laughing and smiling with another child - 4
Shares by showing something to friend - 3
Shares information with another child - 3
Seeks out a familiar friend to play alongside – 2

Share a joint activity with another child
Spending more than 5 minutes with a particular friend
Initiates physical contact with the friend
Gives advice to another child about how to play with a toy
Takes turns sharing a toy with a friend
Assists another child to find a toy/find an item/do a task (cutting sticky tape)
Accepts being followed around by another child
Can tolerate 'special friend' leaving – just carries on with previous activity
Observes an upset child for c. 1 min
Freely gives up a toy when asked by another child
Maintains closeness to this particular friend
Accepts another child taking charge and follows the lead
Interacts by copying a phrase his friend has said earlier
Seeks out a particular child to play with
Responds positively to a request from another child to hand something over
Joint activity with one other child – looking for insects
Tries to recruit help from another child
Shares an item crucial for the play with another child e.g. a bowl of water
Makes a joint plan with a friend
Follows friend around

Child-group interactions:

Directs the play for the other children - 4
Observes the play of other children - 2
Freely joins in with other groups of children - 2
Stays close to a small group of friends for more than 5 minutes
Shares ideas about the game with a group and the others follow
Initiates a chasing activity with others and finds they have not followed
Approaches a new group of children
Returns to a group of children previously played with
Interacts with a small group older children
Shares out his playdoh with the group present at the craft table

Changes the direction of the activity for the group

Anti social interactions (child):

Makes no sustained contact/interaction with another child for 10 mins

Takes an item from another child

Anti social interactions (group):

Gets into conflict with friends

Chooses to leave the group and sits alone

Cannot be reengaged with a group of friends by the actions of another child e.g. putting puzzle pieces near to him, using verbal persuasion

Adult-child interactions (*adult initiated*):

Responds positively to an adult request

Accepts redirection from the adult to keep the game safe

Tolerates the closeness of the adult when doing a puzzle

Responds to adult's questions

Given prompts by an adult to share

Listens in on an adult's conversation with another child and comments about it

Adult-child interactions (*child initiated*):

Seeks adult help to find a solution - 2

Seeks out adult company when the activity changes

Seeks out adult company after a period of disagreement with other children

Sits and watches the adult rather than joining in

Adult-child interactions (*anti social*):

Resistant to suggestions to give up a toy

Does not seek help from adult when adult is alongside

No outward response to adult praise

General play obs:

Lone play - 7

Physical activity - 5

Imaginary play - 3

Creative play -2

Joint play - 2

Parallel play -2

'Messy' play (water and sand), playing in with others

Social activities chosen - walking around with a friend

(ii) Pre-school 2 Naturalistic thematic codes

Naturalistic Observation Summary codes of pre-school 2 children
Child-child interactions: Shares props and toys with another child - 3 Expresses same emotion as a peer by smiling together - 2 Attends to a child in distress Hugs a friend Maintains close proximity to one friend Shares an activity where she helps another child have fun e.g <i>pulling around a child on a body board</i> Seeks help from another child e.g. asks to read a book Takes turns with another child Plays with one child for longer than 10 mins Plays with another child for more than 2 minutes Leaves a child part way through an activity Shares a toy that he had previously been reluctant to give up Shares his ideas with another child Gives an item to another child without being prompted Tolerates having a toy taken from him
Child – group interactions: Observes other children - 3 Maintains play in parallel to others Encourages other children to join in with his role play
Anti-social interactions (child – child): Ignores another child when the child calls him using his name Takes a toy from another child Makes no response to another child who protests about the toy being taken away Does not share when asked to Plays alone and refuses to play with another child Verbally confront another child about his wish to have a toy
Adult-child interactions (adult initiated): Seeks adult’s (researcher) help e.g. asking to read a book - 2 Sits next to an adult and plays with her – 3 Seeks adult approval/help Stands close to adult Hugs adult helper Seeks assistance from adult to go to toilet

Asks adult to join in with his game
 Accepts being turned down by the adult
 Initiates a conversation with an adult
 Shares his ideas with an adult
 Seeks adult company after a conflict with another child
 Maintains physical closeness to an adult whilst doing an activity (jigsaw)
 Interacts with the helper by sharing a toy/ideas
 Observes an adult closely (making a repair on a toy)
 Seeks adult to play with
 Can maintain an activity when the adult withdraws
 Directs his play towards the adult when there are other children present

Adult-child interactions (*child initiated*):

None

Adult-child interactions (*jointly initiated*):

Reciprocal counting activity with an adult
 Takes a role assisting the adult to build train track

General play obs:

Role play activities - 5

Parallel play - 3

Constructing/building activities - 3

Lone Play - 2

Non play activities e.g. tidying up

Physical activity e.g. pushing and pulling a friend around the room

Physical activity e.g. racing around the room with a pushchair

Reading

Role play activities

Creating his own role play

Wandering around the room

Cognitive activity with adult (counting/matching)

(iii) Pre-school 3 Naturalistic thematic codes

Naturalistic Observation Summary codes of pre-school 3 children
<p>Child-child interactions:</p> <p>Shares a toy with another child - 2 Smiles/laughs with another child - 3 Hands over a tool/toy when asked by another child, no verbal interaction - 3 Stands close to another child without talking - 2 Playing with one other child - 3 Takes turns with another child - 3</p> <p>Follows a friend and stays close e.g. sitting together in the outdoor area Playing in parallel to another child, both doing the same activity (using paintbrushes with water) Follows around another child for more than 10 minutes, is taking the lead from the other child Copies the actions of the other child Choose not to copy all the friend's action e.g. does not follow her onto the climbing apparatus Shares ideas with a friend about how to adapt their game Tolerates some rough and tumble play from another child Seeks help from another child when he is unable to get down from the climbing apparatus Allows another child to step in before him to use the computer Creates his own fun with another child - splashing each other Spontaneously gives toys/props to child who has been in distress Child has one key friend with whom she plays, leaves her and rejoins her Child appear to be the 'leader' in the pairing as the other child seeks permission to play with particular toys Can sustain a game with a friend</p>
<p>Child-group interactions:</p> <p>Observes the activities of other children - 7 Approaches other children to signal she wants to play Choosing particular friends to be with for activities or at the end of a session Accepts the physical proximity of other children looking at a toy in her possession</p>
<p>Anti social interactions (child):</p> <p>Unaware of other children around him when using the computer Takes a tool off another child without asking</p>

Interrupts the activity of another child by trying to push buttons on the keyboard

Adult-child interactions (child initiated):

Seeks out adult company, sits on the lap of the helper and gives her a hug - 5

Stands close to adult on more than one occasion and is reluctant to move away

Goes to adult helper to share an idea

Speaks directly to an adult about having help with building a toy plastic car 'Show me the bit .. can you help me?'

Seeks the attention of an adult after looking on at various groups of children and not joining their activities

Chooses a toy to show to an adult

Seeks adult's (researcher) help e.g. asking to read a book

Adult-child interactions (adult initiated):

A timer is used to help her to give up a toy to another child

An adult asks more than once for her to give up a toy

Adult asks him if she can put sunscreen on him, he accepts

Receives help from an adult to look at the instructions

Can accept a gentle word from an adult to stop the 'splashing'

Adult-child interactions (jointly initiated):

Complies straightaway with an adult request

Adult-child interactions (anti social):

Does not comply straightaway with an adult request to share a toy

General play obs:

Physical activity e.g. rolling a toy lawn mower up and down a stretch of ground - 6

Lone Play - 4

Creative activities - 3

Role play - 2

'Wet'/messy play - 2

Physical play (chasing)

Using ICT - 2

Outdoor play - climbing apparatus- 2

Construction activity e.g. constructing a plastic car

Wandering around the space

Reading

**(iv) Further coding of the naturalistic observation category:
Child – child interactions.**

Code	Evidence
<p>Sharing</p> <p>Definition: Sharing happens when a child shares an object, information or shares the play activity with a peer.</p>	<p>Pre-school 2: Shares props and toys with another child - 3 Shares an activity where she helps another child have fun e.g <i>pulling around a child on a body board</i> Shares a toy that he had previously been reluctant to give up Shares his ideas with another child Gives an item to another child without being prompted</p> <p>Pre-school 3: Shares a toy with another child - 2 Hands over a tool/toy when asked by another child, no verbal interaction - 3 Shares ideas with a friend about how to adapt their game Spontaneously gives toys/props to child who has been in distress</p> <p>Pre-school 1: Shares by showing something to friend - 3 Shares information with another child - 3 Gives advice to another child about how to play with a toy Freely gives up a toy when asked by another child Shares an item crucial for the play with another child e.g. a bowl of water</p>
<p>Emotional expressiveness</p> <p>Definition: This happens when 2 or more children are laughing or smiling together as a response to enjoying their game or content of their talk.</p>	<p>Pre-school 2: Expresses same emotion as a peer by smiling together - 2 Hugs a friend</p>

	Pre-school 3: Smiles/laughs with another child - 3
	Pre-school 1: Laughing and smiling with another child - 4
Secure base Definition: This happens when a child maintains physical closeness to another child by following them around or else having an established bond with them.	Pre-school 2: Maintains close proximity to one friend
	Pre-school 3: Stands close to another child without talking - 2 Playing with one other child - 3 Follows a friend and stays close e.g. sitting together in the outdoor area Follows around another child for more than 10 minutes, is taking the lead from the other child Child has one key friend with whom she plays, leaves her and rejoins her Can sustain a game with a friend
	Pre-school 1: Seeks out a familiar friend to play alongside - 2 Spending more than 5 minutes with a particular friend Maintains closeness to this particular friend Seeks out a particular child to play with Follows friend around Accepts being followed around by another child
Needs expressed/met Definition: This happens when a child expresses a need to a peer or an adult,	Pre-school 2: Seeks help from another child e.g. asks to read a book Attends to a child in distress

<p>or when a child responds to the need/request expressed by another</p>	
	<p>Pre-school 3: Seeks help from another child when he is unable to get down from the climbing apparatus</p>
	<p>Pre-school 1: Tries to recruit help from another child Responds positively to a request from another child to hand something over</p>
<p>Joint activity Definition: This happens when a child plays closely with another for a prolonged amount of time e.g. over 2 mins. There is evidence of taking turns, being engaged in a reciprocal activity and/or borrowing phrases from each others language.</p>	<p>Pre-school 2: Takes turns with another child Plays with one child for longer than 10 mins Plays with another child for more than 2 minutes</p>
	<p>Pre-school 3: Takes turns with another child – 3 Creates his own fun with another child – splashing each other</p>
	<p>Pre-school 1: Share a joint activity with another child Takes turns sharing a toy with a friend Joint activity with one other child – looking for insects Makes a joint plan with a friend Initiates physical contact with the friend Assists another child to find a toy/find an item/do a task (cutting sticky tape) Accepts another child taking charge and follows the lead</p>
<p>Independence Definition: This happens when a child follows their own choice of activity and they show no response to</p>	<p>Pre-school 2: Leaves a child part way through an activity</p>

the others around them.	
	Pre-school 3: Chooses not to copy all the friend's action e.g. does not follow her onto the climbing apparatus
	Pre-school 1: Can tolerate 'special friend' leaving – just carries on with previous activity Observes an upset child for c. 1 min
Imitation Definition: This happens when a child copies the actions or the talk of another child or adult	Pre-school 2:
	Pre-school 3: Copies the actions of the other child Playing in parallel to another child, both doing the same activity (using paintbrushes with water)
	Pre-school 1: Interacts by copying a phrase his friend has said earlier
Tolerance Definition: Child shows tolerance of other children's actions.	Pre-school 2: Tolerates having a toy taken from him
	Pre-school 3: Tolerates some rough and tumble play from another child Allows another child to step in before him to use the computer
	Pre-school 1:

Appendix E:

Pre-school interview transcripts

Pre-school semi-structured interviews: transcripts

Transcript for pre-school 1

An interview with NAME who is based down here at NAME. The first questions I'm going to ask you are all about the staffing structure and who you have got here and what everyone's role is so:-

Q. What are you?

A. There are four key staff. I am the manager and my role is split between admin in the office and playing with children but while I'm out there playing with children I'm also making sure that everything is happening as I expect it to. So, I'm the manager and below me there are three key staff. So NAME is the supervisor, NAME is deputy supervisor and NAME is financial assistant. So whilst I'm in the office NAME should be doing the day to day running. If myself and NAME are both out then Donna takes over which she does brilliantly. NAME, NAME and NAME are all three key workers so they have children which they get to know incredibly well and they get to work closely with their family. Any issues with children in their key worker group and then they will be the one that will go to the family.

If the family have any concerns they should go to the key worker. If they come to me I will re-direct them to the key worker to keep that relationship going. The key workers develop the Celebration book for the children to show their development and encourage the parents to come and look at the scrap book /Celebration book to see how much progress they are making and to see what they are doing. The children tend to go home and say they've done nothing. In complement to the key staff there are bank staff. They are not all bank staff but they are staff that are all part-time staff. There's NAME and NAME, part-time staff which we call on as and when we need them basically.

Q. So that's a consistent thing then – you know that they will be your part-time staff if you need them. It's not anyone else who would be your part-time staff ?

A. Occasionally if we are in dire straits then we will ask a parent if they don't mind staying to maintain close supervision. But it's easier to use the staff that have got a little bit of training and understand how we work. NAME does every Wednesday and Friday because she's in regularly and NAME does every Tuesday. NAME does no regular hours at the moment but she might do in the future.

Q. And those three staff that you've just mentioned are they in charge of particular groups of children in terms of the three different staff squirrels, monkeys and frogs. Are they in charge of that cohort of children each ?

A. NAME's in charge of the frogs – she's a key worker for the frogs

Q. And the frogs are ?

A. The very first ones that come in, age 3. NAME's in charge of the monkeys, she's in charge of the monkeys so she's developing her own relationship with the monkey family and NAME is in charge of the squirrels

which is our oldest group. So frogs are the babies, just turned three, monkeys are the middle group and squirrels are just ready to go to reception. So NAME is getting them ready making sure celebration books are finished off and transition reports for the reception teacher –which is mainly NAME, our reception teacher, but it can be the reception teacher of any other school that they go to – it doesn't have to be NAME but it happens that they are all going there this time. Then the part-time staff that step in they will know which member of staff they are covering and therefore which particular group they are focusing on that day. NAME knows that on a Wednesday she's covering frogs and on a Friday she's covering squirrels.

Q. And so she's got quite a fluid relationship with the two groups and she knows the children fairly well?

A. Fairly well – but because there are staff stepping in we have developed a child information book where we are writing down little things people need to know if they are looking after those children. Like someone who has just come out of nappies and they are in pants so they need reminding every ten minutes to go to the toilet. Another little boy's comment that I put in this morning - he's just come out of nappies and into pants and we were asking him every half an hour and he was getting very stressed – he has extremely good bladder control – we don't need to ask him. We need to back off our pressure. He'll just go like all the others who are toilet trained.

Q. So that information book is the bridge for staff to find information about children that is absolutely up to date?

A. Yes and they have been asked to read it when they come in before they start anything else.

Q. And you are trialling it?

A. Yes we're trialling it and we'll change it and it should be very, very good.

Q. Brilliant! I was just going to ask you about turnover of staff. Have you had experience of that – how stable is the staff here?

A. It's very stable at the moment. I've been here six years; NAME was here when I started so she must have been doing it for eight years I think. NAME, bless her heart, was a Chair, she was a parent rep, then a Chair. She's been on the voluntary side, so as she was a Chair she was in once a week voluntary anyway so she's had massive input. She was Chair and she employed me so she was in the setting probably for eight years the same as NAME. Then the pre-school assistants have changed three times since I've been here. So not a massive turnover and the bank staff have been pretty stable as well.

Q. I was going to ask you also about the qualifications people have to have to do a job like this and do people keep having to top that up. How does that work?

A. We have to have one member of staff level 3 and at least half of the others level 2. We have two at level 4 , two at level 3 and one of our bank staff working up to level 2 so we are over qualified which is fine and at every appraisal we are looking to say "what training do you want, where do you want to go?" and leading peoples' training forward all the time.

Q. Is it the thing that they have to do more qualifications?

A. No - but they have to keep updated on their training so they are constantly doing health and safety and curriculum training all the time. The training is on- going to keep in the job. At the moment there is talk of this Early Year Professional Status, which is level 5 or 6 so me and NAME are working towards that at the moment. You do it for your own safety to make sure you've got a job. NAME is thinking, over the summer holidays, of looking into level 4. So all the time you are just thinking of trying to improve yourself. I would be encouraging NAME next year, when she's had a bit more experience, to go up to the next level just for her own benefit. The rest of the part-time staff I'm encouraging to get a level 2 qualification because it will be in demand for everybody soon. So you're looking at the new rules and trying to be one step ahead.

Q. What would you say, from your own experience of running the setting, are the strengths of the staff within the setting. What makes your team unique?

A. It's the way we communicate to each other. Constantly reviewing situations – extremely flexible as well. We can look at the book corner and say that really needs seeing to and that afternoon somebody sorts it out and it becomes an appealing book corner. We see a need and we respond to it. We see a child struggling and we bat ideas around and that child doesn't struggle any more because we all work in the same direction. It is team work. I've heard playground gossips saying that they like to send their child to us rather than another pre-school because we're so child focussed rather than being judgmental about a family situation.

Q. What about staff and your team ethos? Do you have regular meetings? And how does that happen?

A. We aim for a regular meeting on a Monday morning and if we keep doing it on a Monday morning it works but at the moment we are struggling to maintain that – in which case team meetings become talks over a cup of coffee while the children are having a snack. It is a problem. We've got a team meeting next Thursday where we've got an expert coming in, an Early Years Advisor is coming in to talk to us about an issue we've got. We can organise group sessions but it's difficult to get every body on board and that's why we've got the Staff Information board. We've got a staff meeting book as well

Q. I'm going to move on a little bit and talk about transition. In terms of National policy or local authority policy what are you aware of around transition if anything?

A. I'm aware that there's a new pilot scheme coming in at the moment which we said we will be part of but we're not doing anything until the Thursday meeting that we've got..... and that is encouraging you to do a transition report where every group is doing the same transition report so it's standard throughout so that means when the reception teachers get it they know it will all make sense. They are trying to standardise it.

Q. And who's introduced you to that? Has it been the Early Years Advisor?

A. No, the Early Years Child Care Service. They sent an e-mail and I responded to that.

Q. And so you are going to pilot that from September, hopefully?

A. Yes. It said pilot from May but we only had it from June and we can't really do anything June/July with the summer holidays coming up. We're talking about it now and hopefully will put in place in September.

Q. And so in terms of transition on the ground and how it actually happens to a child, like NAME's little group, what happens here?

A. When we were in the hut we used to bring them over to reception for 6 weeks twice a week. Let them have a story and meet the reception teacher, then bring them back and tell them how exciting it was and really try to boost them up and make sure we wave to them when they start in September so they know we're still there. Now, they know the building, they know the teachers, they know that reception spends more time with Mr NAME than they do and then they are really excited and looking forward to it. The parents need transition more than their children because all the children are going to do is put school uniform on and spend a bit more time with Mr NAME than they do now. Then we will use a different door to come in the morning than they do now. It's a simple thing but they find that really exciting. They don't get an official transition process because it's almost there already.

Q. So what do you mean by 'parents might need it more'?

A. Because they get worried that their children are going to school and that's different than coming to pre-school and I've had lots of worried mums. So NAME, that's the teaching assistant, has written a seven page document telling them what happens in reception class and how it's very similar to what they are used to in pre-school and telling them about PE kits which is different. Little things that are different that we all take for granted are written down in this document. Also the school uniform list, which all parents will have had when they put their names down for the school and might have changed and I've been handing those out this week to parents.

Q. So is there a parents' meeting with the school or do the parents just get the letter?

A. They just get the letter. I think they have had a parents' meeting in the past because they demanded one. They've not demanded one this time so I don't think there is one. We can do 'special Thursday' when the parents are invited in - they can come in and speak before end of day on a Thursday - whether Mr NAME makes one of those his transition meeting - he might well do.

Q. So it wouldn't necessarily be something from the top management in the school - it would run through the reception teacher?

A. Yes

Q. And in terms of taking joint roles through transition how does that work? NAME obviously handles those children through transition how about the roles between the reception teacher and NAME? Is there anything that happens there? Because I have seen that NAME takes little groups of children from reception - it's almost as if NAME is part of the scene in reception.

A. What should happen when things go to plan here, the plan we've got should be tailored for each and every group. If I was doing a thing on colours I'd do a very basic one with frogs. And then the next day I might have the top of the reception and I would do something really different with them but still based on colours and still with my initial plan but just differentiated for the age group of the children that I'd got. So everybody's planning should be differentiated for the age group of the children they have. But we've not done that this term we've had problems.

Q. So you've not been able to carry that out but ideally that would be. Children would, perhaps, have an experience with you, with another member of staff, with Mr NAME and it would run like that?

A. Yes, which is why there's no transition in place because they should be having teaching time with all of us

Q. Does that planning happen jointly as well? Does Mr NAME become involved with your ethos?

A. Yes. The main plan is we've got a three year rolling plan ... That three year plan was devised when we all sat down together. Then I go round and ask people what they want to do and they go away as individuals and do their planning. Mr NAME will be very focused on reception Then he will differentiate for a frog when he gets a frog. So just in case we don't circle round it's very, very focused on the right group when we do differentiate round it's very refreshing and lovely to get a different age group and see the topic planned at a different angle.

Q. In terms of other staff being involved in the transition - staff outside of the setting - Early Years Advisors and even staff from other agencies what happens regarding that? How much input do you get from them?

A. Nothing

Q. Your special educational needs children might have more input at that time – have you noticed that particularly?

A. No – I can't think of anybody

Q. What about where the children go to other schools? How are transitions handled then?

A. NAME phones up the head of the school and asks where she can address a transition report. The parents will come to us and say they won't be in for the next four Wednesdays because they are visiting their new school.

Q. So that is mainly led through the parents? Their reception teacher wouldn't necessarily come here and do something?

A. No. They would be welcome to if they wanted to but they don't. So it's sparked off by the other school teacher telling the parents 'this is what we're offering

Q. I think you've probably answered this – but how do parents get involved in their own child's transition here? It happens without parents in some ways – there would be a meeting and it would be quite low key and it would be to impart practical information. Is that my understanding?

A. Yes – and reassurance.

Q. Do you believe it's a two way process between you and the school? Are you happy with it the way it's running? Is there anything you want to change about it or build on or something?

A. I think I'd want school to be a little bit quicker to reassure the parents that their children are being looked after and thought about. And make sure that the parents know that the school realise that it's a big step going from pre-school to school - though it isn't. I still think there needs to be that more reassurance for the parents

Q. Is that the feeling you get from parents then? That parents are quite needy at this special time?

A. Yes. It is a special time their children are going to school

Q. I'm going to ask you now about the other side of what I've been doing – that is about the children's social competence and the way they handle themselves, the way they handle their relationships and so I've just got a few questions to ask you about that. Do you think that as a pre-school you've got an emotional curriculum?

A. I would say so, yes, because NAME takes the three year olds when they come in and her main aim is get them to like it here, feel confident, to get to know they can access toys if they want to, to share and to put them away. I think she's got a major role in their social development. I think if you get that foundation right then they are confident to learn. If you don't get that social foundation right then you're just banging your head against a brick wall because they won't accept anything else, I don't believe.

Q. So the emotional curriculum for you is a priority - over any of the learning, in a way?

A. Absolutely

Q. The learning happens after they feel sure of themselves?

A. Once they are in and they are happy and settled and they are confident then they will start absorbing learning.

Q. In terms of supporting children to act socially with adults and with their peers, what do you think your strengths are in that area - adults and peers?

A. Being good role models – how we react to them and they will react to us nicely – but also they will respect us and when we say no it means no – and giving them the boundaries that they need, as they have them at home they need them here. And with their peers we try to get down to their level and explain why things are going wrong and get them to agree and say we'd like you to 'say sorry' even if they don't want to say the word.

So it explains to them what is acceptable and what is unacceptable.

Q. So do you think the interaction between the peers is mainly about a conflict? Or are there other ways that you?

A. No – I think we praise them for the good things that we see – yes, we do praise the work and we do show their work when there's been something to show good work. It's the importance of showing them what's right, also.

Q. I know it's quite early for children to form friendships and relationships at this stage but how do you feel you support them to feel they are friends with each other?

A. I think the key worker group does that when we do the focus times because you are building up that friendship around the table or around an activity on the floor because they are there together and they are becoming familiar with each other. Also it's reassuring the parents that it's fine when they come in at three not to make a best friend. And sometimes that takes quite a bit of explaining - parents have come in and said they are not mentioning their friends.

Q. In terms of managing their own behaviour and managing their own emotions what would you say are the strengths of the setting here? Not so much conflict with others but their own managing of how they are? Have you come across children who, perhaps, find it hard to settle and there are lots of tears. Or even how resilient in the playground if they fall over?

A. Yes, we do find that a lot – it depends on the individual really. I would say that we probably encourage them to jump up and brush themselves down and crack on with things. But then we also reassure them by saying its OK to be upset. We work with their parents if there is an issue. Then there's the child who has English as an additional language.

Q. I would guess that you match it to individuals and what you know about that child and what you've worked out about their personality?

A. Yes, because when they are upset they need a cuddle, they need a story in the book corner. Some, when they are upset need to get told to stop making a silly noise and start playing nicely - and they do.

Q. But you can't say that to all of them?

A. No – that wouldn't happen.

Q. About parents – how are they encouraged to be involved with the life of the pre-school? Is there a PTFA, parent group, parent forum?

A. We're run by a Management Committee and parents are encouraged to come on to the committee.

Q. Who makes up the Management Committee?

A. Mr NAME is Chair but that's the first time we've had anybody from school in the Chair. Then we've got Vice Chair, secretary, treasurer, and parents reps which we're hoping next week at the meeting to give different people different roles. Then we've got an after school rep and we hope to have a breakfast club rep and they are parents of the children in the pre- school that are here.

Q. And who would be the Vice Chair and the treasurer and the secretary?

A. The parents.

Q. So it is the parents who run that group?

A. Yes. Because I'm the Manager and I do the admin I report to the committee on the finances and what I've been spending.

They have to approve the budget because they are responsible to the Charity Commission. So although I put the forecasts to them they may have to. But they really have to understand how it is working and what is working because they have responsibility for it and if anything goes wrong they have to pay for it.

Q. Is that like a Governor role in a school? So would they also be involved with recruitment and interviewing? What kind of level of decisions can they make about how you are running the pre-school?

A. They have full control over how we run the pre-school. Because it is going well at the moment they 'but' out. It's an information process at the moment. There is quite a lot on the agenda for next Thursday, actually. One of the things is we need to look into is becoming an incorporated company. That came from the pre-school learning alliance in a newsletter and part of that said about this incorporated company. I gave that to one of the mums on the committee who is very good at crossing every 't' and dotting every 'i' and I said read that, put it in plain English and tell me if I need to do anything. And that's developed into being an item on the agenda for discussion as it is going to take so long to get our heads around what it actually means. One thing it does mean is the trustees aren't responsible for quite as much they will have limited liability to £1. It also means our accounts will have to be done slightly differently; reports have to be given to different people in different ways etc. But it also means we can have the same Chair and the same trustees for much longer than we do at the moment. Although they have a lot of responsibility and decisions to make they also change every two or three years. I know my treasurer is going to change in September.

Q. And it's not that easy to find a treasurer, is it?

A. No, its not.

Q. In terms of staff being paid does that come through that and the treasurer would handle the account for that then?

A. No – we have a wages clerk. I do the time sheets for pre-school. They go to the wages clerk who works out what we get paid and she e-mails me back the wage slips which I print off . Then the treasurer sends the money through the BACS system with the bank so there are lots of us involved in pay. For pay rises it's the committee who decide what we're getting paid.

Q. So there isn't, like there is with teachers, a scale that you would be going up. That's purely decided by the committee?

A. That's right. If there is no committee then we have to close.

Q. So the committee is important?

A. Very important.

Q. In terms of other parent interests and involvements that's a legal involvement isn't it? Are there any other softer involvements?

A. The fund raising committee. We've got three mums on that at the moment and they do Christmas fetes and summer fetes. In the near future I'm going to suggest that, perhaps, they do fund raising in different

ways. We do the sponsored run which was organised by school and raised £800 which was fantastic. But on a fete, which is a lot of involvement for the people who are running it, and not many volunteers coming to help on the stalls and it made £120 which is not to be sniffed at but it wasn't as much as the run. I think, perhaps, the fund raisers should be doing things like filling in fund raising grant forms and looking at ways to pick up money like that.

Q. So less of the old style and now it's the new order for other kinds of funds?

A. Yes

Q. In another kind of way with parents and in terms of your support for parents and how you support them – how does that happen? Would that be more ad hoc that you might speak to a parent individually about how things are being handled with their child? Or is there another way that you try to reach parents?

A. We reach them through the key worker session and then they can talk about anything and every thing when they sit down and talk with the key worker. People do open up and express their fears and anxieties – and their praise as well, which is nice. But also we pick up the vibes of the needs of individuals. Something I'm taking to committee is a request for two children to come to the holiday club without charging them because of the needs of their family. We're worried about them going for a six week spell and no one looking after them. That has come from the key workers upon discussion – we don't want them to be left alone for six weeks. They need to know that we are there so NAME's is actually going to come to the meeting, express her feelings to the Child Protection Officer then leave the meeting and I will fill in the gaps what the committee need to know on that. Again, that is us really getting to know the family.

Q. Again the key worker process is completely unique to that.

A. Yes, absolutely.

Q. With key working how often do parents get to sit down with the key worker?

A. That comes from the parents – its need led. If we want to speak to a parent we call them in - and if the parent wants to see us then they come in. We did try for a spell meetings in a portacabin – it seemed quieter and simpler in those days – and we did have a week where we said make an appointment for ten minutes and come and see your key worker. It was very formal and school like – I didn't like it. Now it seems to me that the key workers are just asking the parents just to come in making it more pro-active, which is nice.

Q. So it suits your parents rather than the fixing of appointments?

A. It does, yes.

Q. Do you think there are any barriers to the parents being involved? Are you aware of anything that parents might feel?

A. There must be something – there was a parent rota up where they are supposed to write their names for stay and play but they don't. I've had probably three parents staying and playing since the beginning of this unit which is almost two years. But there must be something there that we are missing – we're not selling that enough. Which is fine because we don't really want them in. Because the children change so much when the parents are in – they either get really clingy or show off

Transcript for pre-school 2

What I'm going to do to start with is to ask you some general questions about the staffing because I'm not sure I picked everything up as we went along.

Q. What is the staffing structure here?

A. Well, I'm the owner manager, NAME is the deputy and NAME and NAME are Nursery Assistants – and NAME is a Nursery Assistant but in the afternoons.

Q. And the times I came on a Friday you had a student as well?

A. Yes, from NAME College.

Q. But you haven't got that all the time?

A. No – that's just part of their early years course.

Q. And also I just wanted a quick word about staff turnover that you experience – when do they arrive to cover work.

A. NAME and NAME have been with me for at least 10 years. NAME started full time last September – she was with me part time from the September before.

Q. Qualifications – its NVQ 3 and 4 that people have to work towards. So what is the position on that?

A. One did diploma and pre-school practise which is equivalent to level 3. NAME is a Scottish National Board Nursery Nurse which is level 3. NAME is BMD level 3 Nursery Nurse. NAME's was the course before mine which was Foundation - that is equivalent to a level 2.

Q. So are they continuing to go through more qualifications?

A. NAME applied to do the early years professional status last year at the college but the course was cancelled.

Q. But she can re-apply for that, can she?

A. Yes, if she wants to when the course comes up.

Q. And in terms of background before they came to you – what had that been?

A. NAME was a nanny and she's been a psychiatric nurse before she had the children and she came to work here. NAME worked in two other pre-schools. NAME was at college but she was nannying as well before she started here full time and I've been here for sixteen years. NAME was working in a local Children's Home before she left to have her child.

Q. What would you say are the strengths within your staffing?

A. Well, we all think on similar lines. What we expect from the children and how we all work with the children and that we are consistent with each other as well. Friendly, happy.

Q. And do you think that has been built up because you have worked together for a long time?

A. I think it has – we all know what needs to be done as well. If somebody's tied up at a particular time of the morning doing one thing then somebody else will see that that is happening and take over the lunch boxes. We don't need to tell each other.

Q. Right, I'm going to move on a little bit and ask you a few questions about transition because that is part of what my research is about. Are you aware of any policies either nationally or in the local authority that support settings like yourselves with transition?

A. We attend cluster group meetings and at these cluster group meetings they have formatted a transition form for all the pre-schools in the Tiverton area to use to pass on to schools.

Q. And so the cluster groups they happen once a term and you would go along to that?

A. Yes whenever possible. They hold it at different times of the day to suit different people so it's if and when you can go.

Q. So what sort of things comes up at the cluster groups?

A. That would be different areas of learning, concerns - and Ofsted concerns.

Q. So not specifically about transitions but it could be one of the things discussed?

A. Yes

Q. In terms of the transition within the setting, how does that work? Can you talk me through how you prepare a child for the transition? For example, the children who come with you in September who are going to start school the following September – how does that work?

A. Because we are central in the town we are not connected to a specific school it has just been what the schools provide for the parents and the children. I have made contact with the different schools to try and get some more contact between schools but it hasn't really happened. It's quite difficult really - so it's basically the schools getting in contact with the parents and not getting in contact with us.

Q. That's very interesting - and so if I asked you in terms of joint planning with a school have you had any experiences of that with a school?

A. I did have contact with Miss NAME at NAME school asking about the Jolly Phonics and she came in and she gave me some literature and we sort of do it as a part of our register time and with their names and things. But that's the only contact I've had.

Q. Does anyone within your setting take a role on particularly with transition or would it be your role to fulfil in transition?

A. It would be me really, initially, and filling in the transition forms.

Q. Just out of interest, do parents come to you with any worries about transition and any questions about what they should do or what should happen next? Have you had anything like that?

A. We had a couple of parents saying the child was worried about the school visits. What we do there is just sit and talk to the child and say what sort of things they could be doing and so when they've had their school visit ask them what they did and then say 'Oh, that's like what you do here'. Basically their first term is the same as they would do here as regards play and learning through play.

Q. So are you aware that your structure here is kind of duplicated within the primary school?

A. As far as the things that they play here - they've got the sand and the water tray and there's a lot of free play. It's not overly structured as far as sitting down at tables and 'you will do this, you will do that' it is still done as free play.

Q. Is there any other support from staff wider than the ones within the setting? From people like Early Years Advisors, like we saw this morning, in terms of the transition and helping with wider issues? Do you have any support? Are you aware of input from outside agencies?

A. With the additional needs children there is a lot more support because more agencies are normally involved with those children. There are meetings that we go to in the school to meet the SEN teacher.

Q. To facilitate the transition?

A. Yes to meet the SEN teacher - and that has happened with one of our children that will be moving on in September.

Q. So that would have been a joint meeting where you all sit together and discuss what the needs are and discuss what the transition should look like?

A. Yes, to discuss where the child is now and what support they will need going into school.

Q. In terms of parents how do you see the parent's role with the transition, they mainly seem to be doing it in some ways, they are the anchor aren't they, for moving on? Can you say how you've seen parents being involved in the transitions?

A. Well, apart from coming in and telling us when the child will be attending school, there hasn't been an awful lot of contact other than that. One parent with NAME school had taken her child to the Friday afternoon link group so she has been more involved that way round but with the other parents it's just letting us know when they are going on the school visit.

Q. Are there any opportunities to talk to people about transition and get some support with making it happen more within the setting and making you have better links with the primaries? Has anyone such as the Early Years Advisor talked to you about how that could strengthen the links between the schools?

A. No, because the last time I spoke to _____ I told her I had sent a letter to the schools. She was quite disappointed that there wasn't the contact back. So apart from that, we can just persist and try and build up the links.

Q. I want to ask now about the other area I've been interested in which is about the emotional side of things. The social competence and how it fits in with the curriculum? Do you consider you've got an emotional curriculum for the children? Do you see that as something that exists?

A. Not specifically, I don't think. We ask the children to talk about things like, at the moment, because it's holidays we're talking about how they go on holiday, what they like to do when they go to the seaside for a visit. When we do Mother's Day or Father's Day we ask the children what Mummy does for them at home and what they do to help mummy. What they do with daddy and what daddy does with them. It's there but it's not specific - it's done as part of other learning.

Q. So would you see it as the early learning goals part threaded through that?

A. Yes, not put in the planning as a fixed thing to do. It's intermingled with what happens in the topic anyway.

Q. Supporting children to interact socially with adults and their peers. What do you think your strengths are within that area? And helping children not just to talk to the adults but also to try and engage with each other. Do you think you've got strengths in that area?

A. Yes. Because we've had a number of children sent to us with behavioural problems through the Health Visitor or just from the

Community Nursery Nurse. She knows in the past we've had children with behavioural needs and we've got through it with the child. So, I think we do quite well.

Q. With that kind of end of child, a child with difficulties in behaviour, how about on a day to day level with the children I've been observing here. How do you think it works getting them to interact with each other?

A. If we know there's a problem between children we try to, not direct their play, but just be aware of where they are playing and watching and asking them to share and take turns. But not interfering, just watching and quietly supporting. But if there is a real problem then the child gets removed from that activity and has to go and sit by himself for a little while. Then we let them go back and see what happens again.

Q. How do you think children are supported to form relationships with each other within the pre-school?

A. We encourage them to play games together. Children that you can see don't necessarily get on it's not to keep them completely separate but to encourage them to do things even if it's taken in turns with an adult as well - 3 or 4 children playing a colour game or shape game - so they have to spend time with that child but not on their own in a corner where there is going to be a problem. In a structured way - turn taking, sharing and asking - please and thank you - and not just taking toys. If somebody's got something in the tray that they've brought in and another child wants to play with it, we ask the child to go and ask the child who has brought the thing in and not just help themselves out of the tray. They need to understand it's not theirs to take.

Q. You've just described how they are encouraged to manage their own behaviour but what about if they have a conflict with another child. How do you see that being supported?

A. If we see that there is a conflict then we go over and ask what the problem is and if they can tell us then we'll give options for what they can do. If there continues to be a problem then the child is removed from that activity. If that child still continues to be a problem at a different activity they have time out over in the book corner for a couple of minutes. An adult will explain why they are sitting there and if the child has physically hurt someone or snatched something from someone then we will ask them to apologise as well. So they are aware that they have upset somebody.

Q. And are parents aware of the kind of way that you deal.....

A. Yes, if it's persistent we explain to the parents. When parents come in for their initial visit we go through the behavioural side of things. A lot of parents do ask, anyway, what we do for 'punishments' for want of a better word. Unless it's a real persistent problem we wouldn't go back to the parent every time, because it gets quite disheartening for the parent as well as the child. But if we do have to say something then we also give

a positive like "he/she did this really well today" so it's not all negative - for the child as well as the parent really.

Q. In terms of the child who is experiencing a set back either within the pre-school or perhaps something at home how would that be managed amongst you in the pre-school?

A. If a piece of information is given to a member of staff by a parent, not necessarily to me first, and then we share that information amongst us. NAME has given me a piece of information this morning concerning what a child said happened last night. I'll talk to mum later on just to say it's been said, and to let her know how he was and how she wants us to handle it if it's going to be a problem.

Q. The other thing I was going to ask you about, NAME, was parental involvement with the pre-school – how does that happen?

A. They will drop them off. There might be a little talk with them at the beginning of the day if there were specific things they wanted to discuss about their child.

Q. What other things happen apart from the drop off and the picking up discussions?

A. If parents want a specific discussion time that can be arranged. We put information up on the board outside of things they can do with their children at home related to the topic as well. At different times with different topics we encourage them to bring something from home so parents are involved with that also. What we do initially is to tell the children that we want something brought in and see what happens – then we go through the parents too. Occasionally, in emergency situations we have parents who have said they will come in and help in a session if needed, so that happens. If we go on a visit, we've got one next week, parents have been asked to come along to that. Plus at Christmas we do a concert and parents come to that as well. But generally it's staff.

Q. Is there a PTFA type thing you've got here and are there any other ways that parents can become involved? Are there any other groups? Any sponsored events?

A. No, there's no PTFA. - we sponsor events occasionally but we tend to do it for outside charities rather than ourselves. We have had sponsored events over the years and parents have become involved.

Q. Do you see your role encompassing the more 'nitty gritty' parenting – things that might happen within the pre-school which you might address to parents?

A. If there are specific areas like behaviour or issues between children then we will talk to parents when they come in, Or if the child has done something really nicely or well, we will let parents know what they've done plus if it is a

really nice piece we will put a smiley face on it so that parents can see, as well as being told, that the child is working well.

I think that's about it, actually, so I'm going to finish this interview with NAME from NAME pre-school.

Transcript for pre-school 3

This is an interview with NAME from NAME pre-school. So NAME I'm going to start by asking you about the staffing structure because I wasn't sure I picked everything up when I came here. So start with you and then work your way outwards.

Q. I want to know where everyone fits in, if anyone has a particular role, and other things like turnover of staff and qualifications and other things in general?

A. Well, I'm the manager, NAME is the deputy manager and we've got and NAME who are team leaders because they run out of school and holiday clubs. Then we've got NAME and, NAME, NAME, NAME, and NAME, they are assistants, and NAME's our financial clerk and that's about it. We are committee run so we've got a Chair person that's overall in charge of the pre school because it is committee run, but she usually leaves most of it to me because she is just a parent.

Q. Is that like a governing body almost?

A. Yes, it's a bit like that. The committee actually runs the pre-school

Q. But there is a treasurer, secretary and all of that. They would do the funding and the money comes through them.

A. No. We've separated it. Because it is parents and they come and go, because they usually don't want to stay on once the children have left, they deal with the fund raising side of it and any fund raising we make goes into a separate account. That comes back into the pre-school for any toys or equipment that we may need. Then any other vouchers or anything else comes through NAME and myself and then at meetings we report what is going in and out of the account. Any decisions made are made by them – I just take it to them and say "this has been approached by me can we make this decision?" Then they vote it in and say yes or no and I come back andSo, it's all run by them but basically they leave it to Melissa and myself to run the every day staff and we just take the reports to their committee meetings.

Q. I was going to ask you about staff turnover and what experience you have had of that, if any?

A. None really. Our staff stays for a long time actually – we don't have a very big turnover with them leaving. – so that's quite nice. We don't have a big staff turnover.

Q. And what do staff need for qualifications and what have they got. What are they currently trying to do and that kind of thing?

A. I've only got two ladies that didn't have any qualifications but they just finished their level 2 now – NAME is one of them and NAME – so they will be on level 2. I do like them all to have at least a level 2 to be an

assistant. If they are supervising or team leading at any time they have to be a level 3. I've got two other ladies that are on level 2 that are on level 3 at the moment. I'm on my level 4 at the moment and so is NAME on her level 4.

Q. In terms of where people have come from before they came to work here – is there a picture of that? Have people come from “caring professions” or have they come from other professions?

A. NAME and NAME, they came as students first and then they stayed with me. They started off with work experience with school then they went on to do their level 2 and asked if they could come back to do their level 2 placements. NAME came in later and decided that she liked doing this as well so she stayed with us and she's got hours. But most of them have come from either another nursery or they've gone through student levels and if a position has become available I've taken them on because I've known them before. It's quite nice if you know them, which is good for us if we know them from before.

Q. Looking at the overall staff you have got in the setting what would you say are the strengths of what you've got?

A. It's a very good team. They all work well together and we try and keep that even when I'm interviewing new staff I always think about if they will fit in with the team. And because we had one incident where we had to discipline – we've only had one incident in all the years I've been here and I've been here for twelve years or so – I'm always really, really careful about taking on members of staff. I know that one person can disrupt the whole thing. But everyone works really well together, we all understand each other and everyone knows their role. And it just works for some reason.

Q. In terms of the transition, which I've seen a little bit of, what happens? Are you aware of any policies that are running either nationally or locally that geared towards transition?

A. There was some funding, but I'm not quite sure where she got that from, where they tried to promote the partnership agreement. And then we did go into some funding thing where they were actually giving you some sort of fund so that you could do the meetings to set everything up originally and you could apply for that every term which was quite nice. We've done that a few times.

Q. So who did that come through?

A. I think it was the Capital Strategy thing.....

Q. Primary Capital Programme?

A. Yes, I think it was and we claimed through them. But apart from that we have just done our own and we have just done our partnership agreement between us for the Foundation now and so that's working with

both settings and that's gone through their governors and my committee so it's all been agreed.

Q. So that's with NAME school?

A. Yes. We've got a partnership agreement between the two for transition. It's nice that it's all laid out and it's got in there about any disagreements, what our roles are when we're in the school and how everybody works together with the teachers and ourselves. Everybody understands what their roles are when we're in different settings.

Q. So that's just been reviewed, has it?

A. Yes, we've only just put it into place ourselves because we've been tweaking it all along as we found that wasn't quite right and this wasn't quite right and so we had to make sure it was going to be a working document for both of us. Because we've both got our own policies for our own settings we had to come to an understanding for when we were both in each others' settings. We've got one now that we think is going to work and now it's going to go to print so that we can have a copy this side and they can have a copy that side. Then that is going to be annually reviewed or if there is something that we need to change between the annual reviews then we will and that will go back to the governors again and the committee and then it will all be agreed and signed.

Q. In terms of transition on the ground, your intake who are about to go to school, when did it all start for them and what did it look like?

A. It's the term before they start school so the ones that I'm doing now they will have started in January, because there's no Easter intake, so they start in January with me then they go straight through into July when they break up for summer holidays and they will start as soon as they come back in the January. Then the September ones will start in September and go through until Christmas.

Q. So it looks like a visit per week or.....?

A. Two visits with an afternoon visit.

Q. And what more can you tell me about it?

A. On the Monday we just go straight across and we do SEAL with them and because our planning is in line with them as well so we're on the same topics and whichever side we're in we're still working on the same lines - we might be talking about books, if they are talking about books and Jack and the Beanstalk so are we. But we might be doing slightly different age appropriate activities. So we do the same planning, we do the same SEAL for the week so whatever Seal they are doing. We do the same phonics with them.

On a Friday afternoon we do a PE lesson and we get mum's to bring in shorts and t-shirt in of any colours and plimsolls that they can use. We try to do things like throwing and catching and keeping in time and moving

around. We get them changing back and putting everything in their PE bags and putting it back on their pegs. So that when they go to school they've already got that because when they first do it, it's not there at all. We've got more staff to be able to put the time to them and we help them. Then we start leaning back and by the end of the term they are doing what they are meant to be doing. And then we go across again after we have had the PE lesson and then we come in line with them again with what we're doing.

Q. Do you see any staff who are outside the setting of the school and the pre-school to come and help with the transition, say, Early Years Advisor or any other professionals?

A. Yes, we work with Nursery Plus and she comes across to support transition just to see how they are settling in and if they're on the right track. We've had Speech and Language come across with us to see if they can see anything that can help with that transition. We've had the Behaviour Support team with us as well – we had a little chap who had problems with behaviour – and then he also talked to the teacher about things he placed here and whether could put it in place here. We've had various ones.

Q. So it would mainly be with a child who expressed a special need rather than for any other reason?

A. Yes, we've had different agencies in for certain things

Q. And parents – what level of involvement do parents have with the children. And transition?

A. We always tell parents in advance when we're doing transition so that they can let their child come in on those sessions. We don't want them to miss out and a lot of mums do change to make sure they are in on both those so they get to go in twice a week to go in. Half way through that term we have these what we call triangular meetings. The first one we have here and the teachers and the TA come across and we have different group meetings with mums and dads. NAME and myself come across as well. I talk about all the things that I've been putting in place with their children here and talk about EYFS because that's what we're on. Even though they know what we've been doing it it's nice to reinforce and then they get these Learning Journey folders when they leave us. It's just reinforcing, when they get this, why they've got them.

Q. When is that learning journey started?

A. The ones that are leaving now will have the learning journey folders and it's just their learning journey through Pre-school with the EYFS and the learning goals. We started our own system back at Easter this year because we wanted to get all ours in place before September because in September you've got to. But we thought we would have all the hiccups by September. Yes, they had the learning journeys then and it is just a folder on their child. There's pictures in there, and write ups and there is

even pictures when they are over the school and how their transition is going. Mum can see how things are going, that they are joining in and they are doing things at school. They've gone down really well – these are the first folders that we have given out so it was quite nice for the feedback on that and it was very positive – Mums really loved them. So we've given them their learning journeys then I speak to them about reinforcing that. Then the reception teacher steps in and tells how she picks up from that and continues that journey for the first year because they pick up on the EYFS anyway and developing further into that. She enforces that what we've put into place. She talks about the 6 areas the same as we do cos they're still going to be doing all of those. And she says things like the reading times, to read to your children and that there will be reading books coming home

Q. And this is all in this meeting?

A. Yes, all in this meeting. She's got pamphlets and things they she gives out to the parents as well. They bring it up on a big board and they talk about things, partnership agreements. Her TA speaks and introduces herself... so if eve you can't get to the teacher in the morning then you can tell me and I can pass that information on for you.. she talks about little things like the uniform that they are going to need and they have these book bags. She talks about that they will get a newsletter every week.

Q So when does that meeting happen?

A. That's about half way through that term and then a couple of weeks after that we have individual meetings at the school – so that's just a group meeting. I go and the teacher is in there as well then I hand over a transition document. That's just a document on how I feel the child is and also if they've got maybe it's that they don't settle very well, they don't like change very much, they've got special friends they are really close with. I just point out all those little obvious things that mum may not even know. Maybe there are two children that don't get on with at all and they are best kept apart – so I just point those kinds of things out. And then that transition we read it through with mum and dad. Then I hand that over - I ask them if they are OK with it – to the teacher and she keeps that. She makes a few notes and asks mum and dad if they have anything to say - they can talk about anything they want to personally. Then she says to them once they go in, in September before the half term in October, they have another meeting just with the teacher and them. She will talk about how she feels they have settled in if there is anything they can help with or areas that she feels that they need support in. Then they've had the three meetings. Some mums know that when they go into school sometimes you need that kind of contact because nurseries are quite hands on and then all of a sudden there is a bit of a gap.

Q. And to have that meeting in October is a good idea, isn't it, as opposed to having one later in the year like a parents' evening?

A. Towards the end of October they should be settling in by then and she can see where there are areas where they need, say, to read a little bit more..... or they are really doing well in this..... . Just to keep the mum and dad informed.

Q. I've probably asked this question but are there opportunities to review the whole process and share the results. You've told me you are doing that by creating a document that works for them and for you? So that's that process?

A. Yes, then we review that document.

Q. You will adjust whatever you need to?

A. Yes.

Q. Going onto something that is completely different –the curriculum. One of the things I've been looking at is the emotional function of the children. I've been watching how they interact with each other and how they interact with staff. Do you think you've got an emotional curriculum and if you do how do you think you organise it. How is it put across?

A. An emotional curriculum? Well we do go into emotions mainly, I think, when we do circle times and things like that. That's our main one, especially with new term we do bring in our persona dolls expressions. We do go around with those and we talk about happy, sad - about what makes you happy, what makes you sad? NAME, actually, this term – no it's next term – she's going to be doing her topic and she doing settling into our pre-school a couple of weeks after they've been here. So when they first come back they're talking about themselves and then we going to be talking about their family and all of that. Then they're going to be talking all about their pre-school and she's going to be asking them which room they like the best and why do they like that room the best. What is their favourite toy in that room? Then we can get a bit of feed back from the new ones especially. Where they like to be and what they like to be doing. Then she will be doing a bit board and each child can be put in which room they like the best – I think that's going to work. It will be talking about 'ourselves' when we come back. Then we'll be talking about their house and their family, their pets and brothers and sisters so the emotional side will probably come in.

Q. It's asking them to reflect a bit about their lives and their feelings? That should definitely bring their feeling out?

A. Yes, definitely.

Q. In terms of supporting the children to interact with adults and their peers, what do you think is the strength of that within the setting?

A. I think they interact well with the staff and I think the staff do get involved – they sit at their tables and they do it. At snack times they sit at their tables and they get involved to talk about passing the plate around

with the fruit and that's a social time for them – it's quite hands on. We do get involved with parents as well; I think that's quite good, because if they see us getting on quite well with mum then they feel more secure. I think we interact really well and they've always got their favourite member of staff.

Q. In terms of the children interacting with each other how do you think the staff support them to do that?

A. I think the new term is always the worst time but I do think that in bringing people in and they're sitting at the table it would be a case of somebody standing back – it's trying to get them involved in those activities. If I did have any problems and I felt there were any social problems then I would probably involve Nursery Plus I would give them a term to try to settle in first but if they were still standing back, I've had a few children who have stood back and they are just in their own little bubble playing, then I would be concerned. Key workers, they are all allocated and every child has a key worker so they are monitoring their own keyworked children; they would report back to me so I would make my own observations. If I was still concerned then I would invoke the relevant agency. But if it was a case that they weren't interacting I think nursery plus would be my first call because they do deal with the interaction side of it quite well. They come in, take a group of children and they play games and they get them involved and from experience I know that they do a really good job like that. So depending what the needs were for the child, I would involve

Q. Whatever level you felt was needed?

A. Yes. I would get mum involved and say "look he could do with just a little bit of help now so that later on he probably won't need it – he just needs that little bit of modelling in place". So Nursery Plus are really good at that. They've got the time whereas we haven't got that time.

Q. In terms of their behaviour and their emotions, how are they encouraged to manage their own behaviour, face conflict with others, setbacks or any problems that come up for them?

A. We work with the same as in the school now. We're on timers – you've probably seen them all around the rooms. We've got 3 minute ones so they are age appropriate

What we do we give warnings first. We usually only use them if they're annoying other children or they're going to hurt somebody. We say can you please not do that and we explain why they mustn't do that. The new ones, it takes them a little while, but it doesn't take very long. Then we say, this is the second time I've asked you not to do that because it's going to hurt somebody or whatever. On the third time they know that they will be taken out of the room with a member of staff, with the timer, and they have to have time out. It's time just to think about what they've done – then the member of staff will reinforce it with them out of the room. So it's on a one to one basis. The member of staff will reinforce

with them why they were taken out and why they shouldn't do what they were doing.

Then they just get taken back into the group. If they do it again it just gets repeated and they get taken out. To be honest, it works; I've not had to do anything else. We've had some quite challenging children. They cotton on really fast, when it comes to the second warning I'll say to them "this is the second time of asking you, you know what happens next time?" – and it works. Some of them will push it to the second warning then they give up, they don't go any further, because they don't want to be excluded from that group.

Q. So the same procedure is used in over in the school as well?

A. Yes. They don't get taken out of the classroom they have to go and sit on a cushion away from the group. They stay in the classroom but away from the group – and they have timers as well. I think their timers may be a bit longer than ours – ours is three minutes and theirs is four or five.

Q. How do you involve a parent in terms of feeding back bits of behaviour like that - and even what would happen at home regarding the discipline of the children?

A. We always tell them when they have time out so that they know the child has been We've even bought the timers for mums and dads, if they want them we can get them but they have to pay for them. A couple of mums have bought one so they work on the same principle – one lady with twins has major problems – so she warns them now and she puts the same strategies in place.

Q. So that's supportive to parents... ?

A. Yes, definitely.

Q. Have you ever experienced a clash between your strategies and what parents believe is right?

A. Not really, because we don't say that they have to use what we use here. If they are doing it at home as well we suggest that mums try to get on top of it, especially if it's biting or something like that, something they need to get on top of. We leave it to mums to do whatever they think is best but we don't say they must do what we do here. I always enforce that we do need to get on top of this and this needs to be stopped. I explain that a child can't keep biting and that if he doesn't he won't get any friends and that will affect him later in life.

Q. You have embraced the Early Years Foundation stage for September, haven't you - whereas I know a lot of places are not quite where you are with that? What has had to change – has much had to change or... and in what way?

A. All of our planning has changed completely. We used to do quite a detailed planning sheet and it was quite big. We used to detail everything,

even our continuous provision was on there but we couldn't think of a way of doing it, because our rotas come in at different times. NAME and myself sat down and we came up with some principles that maybe we could use. We've had lots and lots of staff meetings to discuss the best ways of doing this

We have a board up and I put all my continuous provision on there and what we do ... up in the corner we put what week it is. So this is week A, there's boxes and they just write in there so we know what we are doing on a Tues morning or a Thursday afternoon. It highlights things that we are using and not using. It's quite good for us.

Q. What do you think is going to be gained from the new curriculum?

A. I think it's going to be better because each member of staff will target our topics. NAME and myself go and find out what the school are doing. each member can choose something under that topic that they are responsible for.

So they do the activity, they write their activities sheets out, they evaluate it; they put the early learning goals that they are meant to be achieving.

They write their sheets out – they put the early goals they are meant to be achieving.

We have a target child and we make sure we do observations on each of those children.

Q. So in terms of that being fed back to the parents, you might do it on an informal basis when you're speaking to the parents at the end of the day when the key workers speak to the parents at pick up time. You have also got the learning journey book, a more formal thing, which goes with them throughout. Is there any other mechanism that.....?

A. Yes, there's a report twice a year, especially for mums that work and we don't see very often. They go out just before Christmas and they go home now, in July. That highlights the six areas and how we feel that child is doing in those six areas.

Q. So knowledge and understanding of the world, numeracy, literacy?

A. Yes. We've got six boxes and each key worker writes in about that child. On the second sheet it's got additional information and then targets for next term – so she actually puts the target for where she wants that child to go next. Then on the back there are comments for mum and they just get signed. Then that goes home twice a year. So if they've been with us for two years they will have had four reports that will have gone home.

Q. That's quite a lot of work, isn't it, in terms of how you communicate with to your parents?

A. Yes. Then they get newsletters regularly, updating them on any events that are coming up. In each term they will probably get about four or five newsletters.

Q. Going back to the very first thing you said about the committee parents – is that a vehicle for fund raising for you in any way? Is it like a PTFA as well?

A. Yes, that's what they do. They do all the fund raising for us, when we do our barbeque that's a fund raising event that they are organising. We involve everyone coming along – mums and dads, nanas and granddads – we have a bouncy castle, somebody face painting and it is a proper event. Especially for the new term in September

Q. Do you see that you almost, in some ways, can manage them rather than ... because I would guess that it might fluctuate in terms of the energy that they might put into the fund raising? Is that part of your headache, really, to have to mobilise them more...?

A. Yes, I don't have to attend their meetings but I do attend their meetings because it is out of hours. But I do go along because they do tend to look back and say is it OK if I do this or that? They'll say to me is there anything you are going to need in the future so I'm thinking if my gardening frame is looking a bit 'iffy' and I'm thinking in the next six months I'm going to have to buy a new one . We'll have a fete or a quiz thing or meat bingos.

I think I've come to the end of what I need to ask you – thank you very much.

Appendix F:

Primary school interview transcripts

An interview with Name at Name Primary School (PS1)

Q. What is your role, *Name*?

A. I'm the Deputy Head and I'm the line manager for all the non-teaching staff and I do a lot of the pastoral care stuff.

Q. The first questions I'm going to ask are around transition. Within the local authority and nationally are you aware of any policies that drive transition? Has COUNTY got anything that they are pushing transition wise?

A. I don't know.

Q. It wouldn't be part of your job to know that?

A. It probably would but I don't know.

Q. With transition – how does it work on the ground? What happens to the children who come to be in reception here?

A. In reception, if the children have been in the nursery then transition is smoother for them because they have actually been part of the school for quite a long time and they have the opportunity to be part of the nursery lunch club which means they will have used the dining room and will have stayed here during the lunchtime. But in any case they come into the school building itself, so they are used to coming into the building, the library and the hall and various parts of the school. They join in with certain things that are appropriate to them with the whole school so they get used to that – the bigger feel of the school. Children who don't come into our nursery but come from other nurseries or just come into reception are invited in, as are the nursery children, for four or five sessions before the term that they begin. So they come in for story time, meet the teacher and walk around and look at the school so they get used to the feel of the school.

Q. What sort of timescale are the NAME Nursery children on for transition – the whole year before?

A. Well, it is really because they do use the school all the time – they do have more of a feel for the school.

Q. And so children who are not from the nursery – that would mainly be in the summer term, would it?

A. It isn't at any particular time – it depends at what age they are coming into reception - whether it's September intake or January intake.

Q. Do the reception staff tend to go out to the other pre-schools?

A. They do go out and there's a lot of communication between them – we don't have many children that don't come through the nursery so it's not that much of

an issue. But contact is always made and information gathered, parents are invited in well beforehand so that they get to know what's going to be happening.

Q. What about linking up with pre-school staff – is there any interchange of ideas and methods of teaching?

A. There used to be within the academic council. There used to be quite a strong early years forum where people would get together and visit different providers so everybody could see how everybody else operated and just share ideas and resources and everything else. But that hasn't been operating for some time now.

Q. Do you have any links with your Early Year's Adviser?

A. We haven't got an Early Year's Adviser, apparently. Somebody asked that the other day. We have had links with people from the Children's Centre when there have been issues around children and families within the time that they have been working with them – that's been very beneficial. They have actually come here to work – if the children have been to the Children's Centre or special groups or play groups – as they have transferred to our nursery and then our reception, people have come and worked alongside them to help with that transition, which has been really good – but they have stopped doing that now.

Q. Would that be Nursery Plus?

A. Yes

Q. But you don't have access to that anymore?

A. No

Q. Is that a case of funding?

A. I guess it is.

Q. How do the parents get involved with their own child's transition? What is sort of access do they have to the school for that?

A. We have a parent/toddler group which runs all year during the time school is open for two or three times a week. Parents can come into school with their toddlers before they even start nursery. We have also had a parent/baby club and a twin club so there are lots of opportunities for parents to come in and get used to being in school. Through that, although it's run voluntarily, they are people who actually work in school so they know about the school and how it works and how to access information and different things – so that's a very informal way of passing on information about the school. When parents choose to come here, whether it's into nursery or mainstream school, the Head spends a lot of time with parents and gives them a lot of time to make sure they are absolutely clear about what we are and what our ethos is – shows them around and explains

exactly how things work so parents are very well informed about school and what we do in terms of supporting children whether it's for special needs or able and talented children or extra curricular activities whatever it is, it's made very clear.

Q. What do you think are the key things to get across to the parents?

A. The key thing that parents need to know, I think, is that their children are going to be safe. That's probably the most important thing – and then, usually, it's basic things like school meals and uniform, bullying comes up, as it would do anywhere. I know the Head wouldn't dream of saying that we don't have any bullying because that's not true it happens everywhere. But what he makes very plain to people is what we do to deal with things like that – what he makes clear to people is how we operate.

Q. Is there a policy for that kind of thing?

A. Yes.

Q. With your transition process are there opportunities for you to review how the transition goes and to change things about it if you are not happy with it?

A. Our staffing structure in the school is divided into teaching teams because we are a big school. The foundation stage team works very closely together, they have team meeting regularly which are minuted and then those minutes are passed on to the senior management team – team leaders from each of our teaching teams make up the senior management team. Things that crop up to do with anything, including transition, or anything that isn't working well or if things need to be tweaked in some way will be discussed and a new practice will be drawn up from that.

Q. Are you aware that anything has changed in terms of transition?

A. No, I'm not, actually. One of the things that we have talked about was the timing for home visits and things like that – usually it's been small things. There's nothing major that I can think of.

Q. You just mentioned a little bit about the staffing structure – how big is the staff and how are they organised, particularly down in that foundation stage?

A. There are nineteen teachers altogether, and the Nursery Nurse. We've got twenty seven teaching assistants and sixteen mealtime assistants and everybody works in a team. The teaching team is divided into four; foundation stage, early years, middle years and later years and everyone has a team leader. The foundation stage team leader manages her team which is the nursery teacher and two reception teachers. I manage the teaching assistant team and there are members of the teaching assistant team delegated to the foundation team and it is my responsibility to manage those teaching assistants on a day to day basis with what they do

and how they operate. The nursery teacher manages the Nursery Nurse and the teaching assistants that work in the nursery as well.

Q. In terms of staff qualifications, I'm aware of what teachers need, but in terms of their future aspirations and how they are helped to be trained, what happens with that?

A. We have a training policy and everybody has access to that – everybody can look at the training file and if there are any training opportunities they are interested in they can come to me and we will discuss it. We need to think about whether it's necessary for the school – sometimes training is identified because it's something that we all need to do if there's a new initiative – sometimes it can be something specific to do with early years. Everybody goes through a performance management individually – I do all the teaching staff as well as the non-teaching staff so I know what individuals want to do. A lot of our teaching assistants, particularly, have done lots of training. Some of them have become graduates, and some of them are now working towards HLTA status, some have been involved in training projects.

Q. Going back to the issue of social and emotional competence amongst the children - what emphasis do you think is put on that when the children first come into school?

A. I think quite a lot. What we do in school, very informally, of course, and within the boundaries of our special needs policy and guidelines, we get to know the children really well and we record if there are social and emotional issues which are going to impact on their learning and we keep a confidential record of that - which is only shared amongst the teaching staff. We are then aware if there are things that are going to impact. Those needs are addressed through the special needs team.

Q. What happens on the other side of things where they are succeeding with emotional issues and other things? Is that also recorded? How would that be notified to the child or even celebrated amongst the staff?

A. As far as the children are concerned I think there is constant praise and recognition of success and achievement even from a very young age – that's also shared with parents. In the nursery, for instance, and in the reception classes it would be done face to face very often because parents are there. We do keep detailed records and use the profile so that all details of things are kept. If we need to call in outside help, health visitors or the school nurse, this is usually done through me or one of the special needs teachers so that every need is addressed.

Q. In terms of the staff and your overview of the staff what would you say are the strengths within the staff in terms of their own social and emotional knowledge and what they can offer to the job?

A. The staff are very committed and are very much a team. Everyone operates as part of a team although they can operate independently and make their own decisions. They spend a lot of time behind the scenes, after

school or before school, talking to one another, regularly looking at and addressing things. Our team meeting addresses the needs of the children and the needs of the staff so every team meeting we have they will be considering anything that anybody needs. There might be a member of staff that's feeling ill or has got other worries so that would be dealt with through the team then everybody would go through me.

Q. In terms of going to those team meetings, the MTAs the TA's and the teachers

A. The MTAs don't go unless they happen to be a TA but everybody is invited. TAs very often don't go because most of them have families. But we do have times when everybody is invited and everybody comes.

Q. So you think the needs of the staff are quite well addressed really in an emotional way?

A. Yes, I do. Everybody is made very welcome when they are new to the staff. We have an induction policy. Although it's a big staff and we are broken up into smaller teams people always look after one another. We have got a fantastic staff – everybody notices and people know if someone is feeling low etc. and they know if they need to keep away or to step back or offer to have a chat or something.

Q. Thinking about the curriculum how do you think that children are supported in the classroom to form relationships and to be shown good ways to interact with each other?

A. We've had quite a powerful PSHE and citizenship curriculum for some time and it might not always be evident that it's being taught but it's certainly evident in the way pupils are encouraged to behave towards one another – and that include the staff as well. Children are always encouraged to treat all adults and each other with the same amount of respect.

Q. Just looking informally around the school – you've got your 'make a friend theme' in the playground. Is that scheme very well set up?

A. Yes, we've got that. There were issues at lunchtime, which a small amount of parents identified – some children were left out or not included. We restructured the lunchtime team so that we have an overall umbrella of the lunchtime team but are divided into two. We have the play leader team and they operate outside all the time to see that the children are actively playing or keep them company if they just want to walk around – there is a team leader who organises all the games and equipment for that. Then we have the healthy eating team who operate inside in the dining room encouraging the children to make healthy choices with their eating, using their knives and forks, making sure they are eating properly and are happy while they are in the dining room. Those team members are allocated a year group each so they actually have a relationship with those children and they go all the way up through the school with them. So someone who starts off being a mealtime assistant with the reception classes will go

through the school that class. They will really get to know those children – they develop a relationship with them.

Q. In terms of MTAs is there much turnover with the staff? So you've got quite a strong base of MTAs? Also I've noticed the modelling of the older children, as well, to form relationships

A. Yes, we have a buddy system in the playground where there are older children supporting younger children. We also have trained mediators that was a training package from the police, actually, they came and they trained year four children and some year five children and they trained children in the high school. So the children who are trained mediators from here go up through the school and go up to the high school, eventually, in every year group in the high school there will be trained mediators.

Q ... and what is their role?

A. Their role is quite intense, actually, they literally mediate if there are any issues out in the playground at all. It's quite a responsibility for the children to do. But they are hand picked to be able to do that, we identify that they will be able to cope with it.

Q. ... and that's going well?

A. Yes, it is going well they just get on with it. It doesn't really require much organisation or anything else.

Q. In terms of behaviour and children managing behaviour are there set ways to get children to manage conflict, setbacks and problems that they come up against?

A. Children know that if there are any issues they need to go and see an adult – and speak to an adult – whether it's an MTA a TA or whoever. They are not encouraged to sort things out for themselves when it's something that can't be sorted out. So they are encouraged to talk about issues – it's not seen as telling tales, it's seen as either keeping someone safe or preventing something serious from happening. That's a number one rule, really. But everything we do in school, throughout the whole year, we have an assembly, which has a religious focus, we also have a SEAL focus, and and we've done this ever since the school started, and it's quite powerful, a behaviour focus every week. It might be something like remembering to open the door when someone is coming towards you, remembering to say please and thank you; it can be something to do with persevering and having a go at things rather than giving up easily.

Q. ... and that's the whole school theme?

A. Yes

Q. and MTAs who aren't at the assembly?

A. Everybody knows it's written up on the board in the hall so everybody knows what the theme is for the week – if they don't know it's easy for them to find out. Most people write it in their diary but it will be up on the board too. So we revisit all those important things like manners and respect.

Q. How are those themes decided and how are they introduced?

A. It evolved over the first two or three years and every now and again it's tweaked because some things we find are quite hard to talk about – something you know you need to get over to them but with the times we have in assembly..... it's quite hard to talk about them. We can link things with bible stories or any stories to do with charity things that we are doing – we try to link it all in – so it's got some meaning. Last week, because we are doing the fund raising for the RNLI we talked about people who give their time to help and save others. It's quite powerful - it's just a steady drip drip drip. That theme was then carried on and talked about in the classroom.

Q. Is the social/emotional aspect of learning in the school development plan in any format – as far as you are aware?

A. Yes, it will be – I'm just trying to think about how it looks at the moment. What we did, but we haven't done it this year; we did a very detailed school improvement plan the previous year where we actually linked everything to Every Child Matters. It was a huge document to pinpoint it all in detail – we've done it in less detail this year. It's just part of everything we do here.

Q. Thinking about parents and how they understand your brief and how they accept it what do you think the school does in order to inform them and draw them into your way of thinking?

A. Again one of the first things that either NAME or myself, whenever we meet parents for the first time before the child comes, we make it very explicit how we operate, why and what we do. I think they know, first and foremost, that their children are happy and they come home happy at the end of the day – and they want to come here in the morning. I'm very surprised - there always used to be, particularly at the start of the school year, someone who was reluctant to come or they would be crying – but I haven't noticed that for the last two or three years at all. I think it's because we are very open about our expectations. We treat parents very respectfully and they are very welcome to come into school. We always respond very quickly to them if they want a quiet word or are wanting to tell us something that has impacted on their child or that affects them in some way. All the staff are like that – teachers will always make time to see parents at the beginning or end of every day – so the fact is that we are very open and honest with them about what we do and they can see that their children are happy in school.

Q. So they are informal networks, really? Is there anything more formal in place where parents' voices are heard?

A. We send out questionnaires from time to time about parents' concerns, whether it's to do with homework or it might be behaviour on the playground. We do seek views of parents in that way. We have three lots of Parents Evenings throughout the year – the first Parents Evening we have in October/November which is about six weeks after the children have started school – whether they have started school for the first time or whether they have started a new class. We have an informal Parents Evening where parents can come in, they have an appointment, but it's mainly for parents to come in and to tell us about their children so that we are well informed about their children – whether, for example, they might not like being in the dark, they might not like thunder and lightning or whatever. That Parent Evening at the beginning of the school year is an opportunity for parents to tell us about their children and about the family situation or anything they want to share with us to make things easy with the relationship between home and the school. We have a very informal Parents Evening this term so that people can catch up and pass on anything else and we also feed back to them how their children are doing and how they are. Then there is a much more formal one at the end of the year to talk about academic progress but also to talk about other issues – social/emotional things, behaviour issues, attendance etc.

Q. Are there any self-supporting groups for parents – do you have a PTFA?

A. We do – we have a Parent and Community Association of which everybody is a member as soon as their children come to school – there is a committee that runs that. That is a very welcoming and open committee so anyone can be part of that. It depends what we are doing – as sometimes we get more parental involvement and support than we do at others.

Q. Is that primarily a fund-raising function?

A. No, it's not and that's something that we have always made very clear – it's not just about fund raising. It's about supporting everything that goes on in school – it could be by being here to make refreshments, it could be by helping on a trip.

Q. Do you find, as in some other schools that you get the core of parents who help again and again, and perhaps some parents who would benefit from that kind of experience don't come?

A. Yes, we do, but our Parents/Teacher Committee, which isn't very big, are really good at looking out for new parents. If I say to one of the committee 'we've got this new family coming and mum's a bit reluctant, they are new to the area and they would like to get to know people', they operate an informal buddy system so they will go and talk to that parent and help them as much as the children.

Q. With parents supporting the transition process - you talked at the beginning of parents coming into school and having four or five visits – they would come in more formally?

A. Parents are invited in before the children start school – although it's formal – it's sit down for tea and biscuits and its questions and answers.

Q. I think that's about it, NAME_. But going back to parents again do you think that parents perceive any barriers getting involved? Is there anything that they could be put off by coming into school?

A. No, I don't think so at all.

Q. You perceive the school as very welcoming?

A. I do and we say this quite regularly in Newsletters to parents, if there is anything at all you want to mention, pop in and see the class teacher at the beginning or end of every day and if it is something that requires more time please ring the office to make an appointment and staff will always be happy to see you. I'm a non-teaching role, and there is also NAME, so there are two of us and people can come in to speak to us at any time.

An interview with NAME of Primary School (PS2)

Q. Would you mind just saying what your name is and the school, - and your role in the school?

A. Right, OK – I'm Name and I'm SENCo at NAME primary School and I also teach for a day and a half in reception.

Q. and how long have you worked here, as well. That would be useful to know

A. For about five or six years, I think. In key stage two and then I moved down to Foundation Stage this as of September.

Q. As this project is about transition I'd just like to ask a little bit about how your transition works on the ground. Where do the children come from and what happens, say, in the year preceding coming into school in the September?

A. We have our nursery, which is attached to school, so lots of our children do come from nursery. We have also surrounding nurseries in town, and we have the NAME Centre which is just around the corner - that's the NAME nursery. We've got lots of - we don't just have our nursery. The children do come from lots of areas. Our nursery, the children come up in the half-term before they start the term in September, their summer half term and then in January and up to Christmas they come for a story in the afternoons from 3' o'clock on their day. So our nursery children have a lot of time leading up - they also have a lot of time to come and play in our middle room.

Q. The play area?

A. Yes, between the two classrooms. That's where there is continuous provision - that's always available to the children and it runs on a pennant system. So our nursery children have a chance to come up while we are in the hall on a Friday doing apparatus - they have that opportunity.

Q. Would that be in the last half term before entry - or is that continually during that year?

A. Yes, they come and use that space - just the older children - and the stay and play group, which is a group that we have in the nursery to cross over the two morning/afternoon sessions. Or children that are just in for the morning and they have a stay and play group to see them through the rest of the day. The stay and play children use that middle area as well. So it's more of a familiar space for children from our nursery. We have play sessions for children that are coming from outside districts who come in with their parents - we have a few of those again, before Christmas for the January intake, and before the summer for the September intake.

Q. And do you find that parents take that up?

A. Yes – we’ve probably had about eight parents for fifteen children – that kind of ratio during the day, it’s not always easy – we’ve had both parents or one or other that came if they could – but at least some had access. They have often come with younger children and that’s not necessarily been a hindrance. We’ve also got the family learning which is run by NAME, who is the reception teacher who I work with and I do her other day and a half.

She does family learning sessions and does that for the lead up to children starting school. In September she’ll run a course for the children starting school for the parents. Just coming up to January she did a course for the new intakes parents and children – they came in then with their parents as part of the family learning – it gives them other opportunities.

Q. So what sort of broad topics does the family learning course cover?

A. A lot of it will be social, emotional –the SEAL kind of topics.

Q. Is it really just what to expect from the school – not formalised so much

A. I think it’s more any worries from the parents and any questions that come up from that as well as there being a programme and activities that the parents and their children do together to ease them in really – and about answering queries that come up.

Q. So how many sessions would there be of family learning?

A. One for a child on a Thursday afternoonand I think the courses would have been for that half term

Q. For two hours? So quite a chunk of time really.

A. Yes

Q. So is the prime aim is really a settling process ?

A. It gives them opportunities for the school to become familiar and parent and child engaging together in activities.

Q. ... and people who run the family learning, the person who runs that course – are they qualified – what are their qualifications for that? Is it a teaching assistant that runs that?

A. No, it’s a teacher that runs that – she actually teaches in reception so she’s obviously then is going to teach those children. So she’s really working with parents, isn’t she, pre-entry. She’ll also become a familiar face to the parents as a reception teacher.

Q. So in terms of you going to the pre – schools is there anything that way round?

A. We have the home visits before the children start and we can visit the children in their nurseries. For me I would just visit children who I may come in contact with as opposed to generally visiting the complete intake. I will just go and visit the children I am likely to have dealings with.

Q. So that would be special needs children and possibly your own reception cohort?

A. Yes, with that head on it would be my reception cohort – with SENCo head on it would be my special needs children.

Q. Would you be making sure that every child got that contact?

A. Yes, if possible. It's often, with the best will in the world we do try to do that, it's not always possible, not through lack of trying but just timings, and it's often difficult to arrange a convenient time.

Q. What about in terms of exchange of practice between you and the pre-school teachers or assistants?

A. In terms of a passing on information?

Q. Passing on information and perhaps some skills as well that might overlap?

A. Obviously within our school with talking to the nursery that's a frequent – we are early years obviously foundation stage to just reception. We have the Nativity which is done together at foundation stage and it is quite linked with our nursery. We've started to do the e-profile and that will obviously continue from – I mean that's only been really from September.

Q. Can you explain how that works?

A. They are Early Years booklets and it's online and our current nursery, for example, will have their e-profile completed in nursery and fed on line. We will just continue that same document when they are in reception – so we're not starting from scratch or anything. It will have their on-entry attainments in all the different areas of their profile.

Q. So you'll have some social and emotional information?

A. Yes, part the early years foundation stage and social and emotional as well as their as their numbers.

Q. So you've just started that since September?

A. Yes, with the pre-school children and reception – pre-school and reception were started in one go. We had a few teething problems getting it all up and running so it will be more through this term - so this year will be a bit of a trial year just to try and get ourselves OK.

Q. The e-profile will then, presumably, follow them through the school – it doesn't just end at foundation stage?

A. No – as the booklets used to before that.

Q. With your transition arrangements, it sounds as if you have quite a few things happening, Are you pleased with what there is and do you perceive that there any gaps with what you've got?

A. It's good the way that it works especially with our own nursery because they're here - and it's obviously easier because they are here. But because we obviously don't exclusively open our school just to our nursery – it's the wider range of everything. But what does work well is having the smaller intake in September. There are fifteen children and that's a really small class and we find that they really do bond and gel irrespective of where they are coming from. The second cohort then all come in together. So through the year there are a few transitions really because it's a transition, really, even for the existing cohort when the new cohort arrives to adjust to having these other fifteen children in their class. So the whole year is about changing and adapting. By the time they finish reception and go to year one they are solid and a class that is quite established. So obviously throughout their time in school name there are lots of transition projects particularly with PSHE. The way that we do assessment here, aside from academic and the new profile, we have social and emotional attitudes. A kind of questionnaire that we have for each cohort – so for each cohort there will be questions in relation to how they relate to their peers, how they relate to adults and how they cope with certain changes in situations and things like this. It's done in the sense that there's a middle bracket of how you'd expect most children to be – some are particularly emotionally literate and cope really well and then your anxiety and concerns are for the more insecure. Those children are then highlighted into the next year group.

Q. Is that a home grown questionnaire?

A. I've not seen it in any other school – it's something that we've had for a long time even before we did all National Curriculum assessments. Because it works so well we've stuck to that in addition to our doing everything in relation to National Curriculum description conditions. So it is like a separate thing, purely because, I think, it tells you a lot more and the school name way generally is that that is the key and anything else is going to come second. If they are not happy and secure and comfortable, you're wasting your time in doing anything else – so that's what we've always considered to be of paramount importance.

Q. Would I be able to see a copy of it?

A. Yes

Q. That's great – so that would be used throughout the whole of the time
.....

A. Yes, throughout the whole of the time. So, for example, the next key transition that we see is between year two and year three and that's when I used to be with year three before I came down to reception. We did lots of work with year two – we did lots of joint projects between years three and year two. Things like country dancing – doing country dancing together, outdoor days – we do them together. We don't want to eliminate them going to the 'big end' (that's what we call the juniors) but we want them to be familiar. The Year 2 teachers go up to Year 3 and the Year 3 teachers come down here. We have a club called the Rangers which bridges year two and year three for those children that are highlighted on our.....

Q. Social skills ...?

A. Not necessarily mixing very well with the others, very nervous – self esteem. So that was year two going into year three Rangers. Then when they are in year three we had a Pyramid club, which is a self-esteem boosting club – for the quiet, withdrawn and not as confident as you hoped they might be children, who maybe haven't dealt with the transition quite as smoothly. And then again they follow through and then we have Rangers and Cadets as they go into upper juniors. Then at eleven we have the high school coming out to do transitions and it's the same ethos. The children who we've highlighted as we've come through, and often it's some of them who, for various reasons, it happens and they are dipping in and out of that.

Q. How do the children perceive being in that club – is that great fun for them?

A. Yes

Q. There's not a stigma about it?

A. No

A. No – the Pyramid is an after school club and the Rangers is a lunchtime club. It's a bit like Cubs, that kind of thing. It's actually run by an ex Arkala.

Q. So, really, the hidden agenda is about social skills?

A. Yes and it's bonding children. They're Rangers and all of a sudden they have a common ground with somebody who they wouldn't necessarily have bonded with before. Or – it just gives them a link and a bond and they do things like making fires and tasting marshmallows and they have their own little den. The same with the cadets – they have a cadet uniform. They go to the adventure playground. It's not sold as a self esteem exercise. Parents are aware that that's what it is but the children aren't. Pyramid club tends to be arty crafty things, going on trips to the fire station that kind of thing. It's after school and rangers and cadets are at lunch times.

Q. Good, that's good because part of the questions later on, really, about how children across the school are supported to form relationships.

A. It's all followed through, it's all followed through. Really, this sheet just formalises it in a sense but it's in our assessment and that will obviously get passed through from class to class as they leave reception. The year one teacher will be able to see straight away those children that are

Q. Vulnerable?

A. Yes and that may find the transition more difficult. At the end of every year group the new classes come up. So in the summer the children from reception will come up, the children from nursery will come up to reception, our reception class will go on to their year one teachers. Even if it's only for a few hours – they know where their peg is going to be, they know where the toilets are, they know what the teacher looks like – it just gives them a chance before the summer holidays, so they're not fretting about that over the summer – another thing as well, we try and keep siblings with similar...because are familiar with teachers - mainly in reception. As it goes further through it can't be guaranteed because teachers all move round, but it often works out like that so you are not telling the same story to a different member of staff again.

Q. So if we're talking about the emotional curriculum and the lovely things that you've got – the groups, that you've got – what about within the day to day curriculum how do you think that you support children to manage their feelings, their emotions with each other. What goes on there?

A. Again, we're actually a lead school for SEAL, although we don't follow SEAL. We have the box but we don't follow it religiously. Just because it's something that we place in such high importance, we do things like welly Wednesdays in reception, where they have the day in the woods. We have an outdoor classroom in the woods, so every thing is as real as possible. We don't try to place such a high emphasis on doing the SATS.....

Q. on attainments?

A. It's more about an experience and we just try to give them as many real experiences as we can. From that we then develop their writing linked from real experiences and the same with their emotional..... and that provides lots of opportunities to talk to them and to create situations as you saw in the middle room. Scenarios can, obviously, be manipulated. They can be played, they can be in the doctor's surgery and you can just let them be playing there. Or we can have all the babies outside with the pushchairs in our outdoor area. So you can manipulate, if you know, for example, that one of the children in the class is going to have another brother or sister you can get the babies out. Or if there's been something that you know has happened, it just allows us that freedom – providing you've got the communication with the parents so you know what's going on – that is something again that we are very open door about here.

Q. I was going to say – how do you know what is really going on with the children?

A. Again, it's extremely open. When the children come in the mornings or the parents come in, we don't encourage them to come into the classroom now – just solely to promote their independence - obviously, in reception they'll come into the corridor. In the same way that we see them to their parents at the end of the day, you'll have the opportunity every day to see who's picking them up and dropping them off as well as seeing their home/school books – parents' evenings which we have every term. So there are lots of opportunities – we have no 'you have to make an appointment' at a certain time. If a parent wants to come in they can come in any time – and we're very open to If a parent is clearly at the door talking to the teacher we have brilliant LSAs who just come and take over – so it's very open.

Q. Does the family learning continue beyond transition or?

A. It can in the sense that if things come up and Vicky or the SENCo or anybody else within the school thinks "Well, that would be appropriate for that family" it can be by invitation – and often is by invitation then again it's a welcoming way - it often is done like that. Again it's not exclusive; it's not black and white – as the needs arise.

Q. With the parents, then, so parents to staff there's kind of an open agenda – how do parents support themselves? Have they set up any self-supporting groups within the school?

A. We have the parents association – that's more for parents to get together. They do things like the sweet shop at the disco, fund raising ideas or any queries, questions, issues it's their opportunity to put things forward.

Q. Do you think that all parents access that or is that just a small group?

A. It's open to all - it's whether they do it. We also have questionnaires within the newsletters, again that goes home to every parent. It's anonymous questionnaires that can be returned in a box at the office – again it's a free chance and they can have their names on if it's something they want to talk about. As an anonymous opportunity, if people aren't necessarily as confident to go and speak at the Parents Association meeting

Q.they can still voice their complaints?

A. Yes – in addition to, obviously, parent/governors – things like that.....

Q. So do you think that the way that you deal with parents, kind of, minimalises the amount of conflicts that you might have?

A. Definitely. I know in previous schools that I've been in where it's too formal a line of communication. I think the easiest way is the fact that we'll run out into the playground and have a quick two minute chat and have a half past three. Or, if they come in, in the morning and they've got something they want to talk about make time – and I'll happily see any parent any time if they've got any worries. That openness, I think definitely, because it stops things getting too much an issue.....

Q.it's early intervention? The same approach you've got with bringing children into the school – you're spotting issues early?

A. Yes. People have got the chance to talk about things straight away – it's not made into a big deal.....

Q. We haven't talked about the staff – can we move onto that very briefly? The whole structure of the staff down in reception, there seems to be a lot of TAs as well, are they for children who are statemented?

A. We have a child in Class 1 who is statemented. We have a child in Class 1 who is undergoing the process of being statemented. So in D1 we have myself and another teacher – obviously to cover me. Then we have an LSA and a one to one support. In Class 2, again, they have two teachers plus an LSA – and they have a child who has 0.4 but we're applying for additional resources for him – so again, at the minute, we have four one to one cohorts in Class 2 – it's somebody in the morning and somebody in the afternoon. That won't necessarily always be the case – we also have a student in as well, at the minute. We've currently got lots of people support – which is brilliant because the new intake have only just started at the beginning of January so that provides lots of.....

Q. With the staffing is there much turnover within this team?

A. From September there's now myself and Mrs NAME and then two teachers in the other class. Until then, the two teachers that teach Class 2 were both Class 1 and Class 2 and have been for before I started here and the reason they changed is that myself and another lady from Class 1 came back from maternity leave so came back part time, so we've got four part time. With the link in Class 1 of me then doing SENCo time when I'm not with Class 1. I have family learning with not being with Class 1 so it's a mix of the two. Because it's those parents, it makes sense to have the teachers with those parents.

Q. So actually, quite stable with the shifting around with how the time is allocated?

A. Yes, the same people but in a different combination.

Q. Ok. You're probably aware that SEAL taps into staff as well. How well do you think that the staff emotional well being is catered for?

A. We have reflexology and massage. Every other week we have an A and a B group, that's a couple of times a week, again it's available everybody in staff who wants to have a half an hour session.

Q. Is it a practiced therapist who comes to the school?

A. Yes. That started because we do peer massage and we've piloted peer massage and we've carried that on. And originally the lady that taught us peer massage did massage of staff. She then stopped because she had arthritis in her hands we've now, then, since had name and it's become known as being 'Name-d' – so the reflexology and massage definitely becomes available to all staff.

Q.and that's taken up fairly.....?

A. Oh, definitely. To the point that we argue whether it's A week or B week. So that starts mid afternoon and goes on into early evening on two nights a week.

Q. Lovely, so that's a kind of personal?

A. Yes.

Q. How about within the team – the team wellbeing – do you do things?

A. We do team wellbeing kind of days, team building days, we go go-karting and things like that – doing country dancing together for our CPD and for a social bonding thing for us. So we do lots of those kind of things. We've had weekends in France, we've done that twice – part of it being introducing languages – and also part of it for our purposes. The bonding of staff, particularly with such a big school, with two sites really, because we've got KS2 on the site but in a separate building and it's a long way to walk from their site to lower.....to get everybody together, especially since the nursery runs on a slightly different time, and Dartmoor runs on a slightly different time to key stage 2, just purely for logistics for the kitchen and just to get everybody together. So we make regular opportunities to.....

Q. Do you think that that possibly helps the teachers to perceive how the children experience things?

A. Definitely – especially, with things like when we were doing French and doing activities, you are getting to see from their point of view again and remember because it's so easy to forget, when you're learning anything new, really, just to remind you.

Q.being a novice again?

A. Yes.

Q. Ok, so the only thing, really, now that I want to leave with is you've got also this Children's Centre. When was that built?

A. That was built in the summer term and opened in September – well, it was being finished in September and through the autumn, so it's very new to us. The lady who runs the Children's Centre is now a familiar face around the school, again, newly. We've now since started using the Children's Centre for family learning – so we have a timetable where Vicky goes over there for family learning. In fact reception have done some pictures which are going to be made into signs for the front of it. It's all very new.....

Q. It's in its inception, really, isn't it?

A. Yes

Q. So, will the aim be to support families through that who come into the school?

A. We had, over by the swimming pool, what was called a toddler room, next to the music room – that was a bit incompatible having a toddler room where they may be sleeping next to our music room. So a lot of the toddler groups, which are our families, really, are now going to be using that site as opposed to next to our music room – which didn't necessarily meet the needs of either side – so I think it's going to become more of an integral part in terms of family learning and toddler group. And I think things like alternative therapy. I know I mentioned that a bit earlier, but there's also a lady..... in terms of children who may be stressed or anxious – a kind of therapy will happen there - things like that will happen there.

Q. A kind of family therapy, really?

A. Yes, really, a family therapy – again it's in its infancy.

Q. Your nursery is, presumably, three to five, so this one will target those nought to threes for the toddler group.

A. Yes and families, parents of ... – children in the pre-school, really. But not necessarily exclusively, I don't think.

Thank you very much.

Appendix G:

Themes derived from semi-structured interviews for all pre-schools

Summary tables of pre-school beliefs about social competence

Theme Staff-child Interactions	Pre-school 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and emotional development is a priority • Personal approach with children • Key worker role and tensions within role identified • Importance of behaviour boundaries/modelling/play activities
	Pre-school 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal approach with children • Observation of the children advocated • Hands off – intervening if child fell into difficulties socially. • No specific targeting in the planning of social and emotional skills but would be down to staff to try to bring this into the work. • Adult modelling of social skills within a small gp • Adult-led approaches to solve conflict. • Social competence seen as mainly dealing with conflicts. • Key worker highlighted as the 'bridge' across which adults could engage with the pre-school. • Outside agencies to be used as a last resort.
	Pre-school 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal approach advocated through 'real life' social activities like eating together. • Emotional matters introduced through curriculum e.g topic work. • Positive child-adult interactions based on the setting of clear boundaries for behaviour management • Outside agencies would be used if problems became too large to deal with.

Theme Staff-staff interactions	Pre-school 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information systems in place – formal e.g. team meetings and information board. • Flexibility of staff and adaptability to change • Problem solving • Child focused/responsiveness to need
	Pre-school 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis of the staff having a good joint understanding so things run smoothly on the basis that they are all similar thinking people. • No formal mechanisms were mentioned.
	Pre-school 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitting in with the pre-school ethos as well as the other staff was important.

Theme Staff-parent Interactions	Pre-school 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with parents through key worker • Two way process – communication with the parents to facilitate what the parents understood about the pre-school. • Clear boundaries around parental involvement • Broader understanding of the impact that parents could have in pre-school • Importance placed on separation of child and parents.
	Pre-school 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of the parental relationship as a way of keeping behaviour good within the pre-school • Sensitivity perceived as important in handling the parent relationship • Parental involvement was very minimal – by invitation at key times of the year but not generally encouraged. • ‘Picking up’ time was important for communication
	Pre-school 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closer involvement of the parents if the behaviour/discipline issues were persistent. • ‘Good’ relationships with parents impact on relationships with the children. • Sensitivity perceived as important in parent relationship • ‘Picking up’ time was important for communication.

Theme Staff training and qualifications	Pre-school 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems in place to develop staff skills. • Training is targeted to staff needs and development • Training important to protect jobs.
	Pre-school 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff had the appropriate qualifications and range of experience • Staff left to seek further training and qualifications for themselves if they wished.
	Pre-school 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff had the appropriate qualifications and range of experience • Staff training seen as important • ‘Fitting’ in was as important as appropriate qualifications.

Appendix H:

- (i) Themes derived from semi-structured interviews with pre-school 2, and Primary schools 1 and 2
- (ii) Example matrix for pre-school 2 for semi-structured interview

Themes derived from coded semi-structured i/vs

Pre-school 1

TR – within the Learning Community
TR role within pre-school
TR - school visits
TR - Matching pre-sch to sch experience: 'Flow' of consistent approach with chn and staff
TR - SEN support during
TR – Parent – pre-school: Parent-led involvement with transition at pre-sch stage
TR – Parent –child: Individualised approach to problems re transition in pre-school
TR - role of pre-sch in strengthening links with Primaries
TR – role of Primary school in promoting links with pre-school
SC – curriculum
SC – curriculum planning
SC – ethos
SC – child-led approach
SC – support
SC – adult-led approach
SC – behaviour management

PS1

TR – poor links within the Learning Community
TR – poor knowledge of national picture
TR –Timeline
TR – review
TR – review processes
TR – changes to TR processes
TR – teacher perceptions of parental concerns
TR – parental involvement
TR – initial parental involvement
TR – parent support
TR – for attached Nursery and pre-sch chn
TR – non attached and attached Nursery and pre-sch chn
TR – ethos
TR – school actions pre-transition
TR – contact with pre-sch
TR – external sources of support
SC – chn
SC – staff
SC – SEN
SC - priorities

SC - recording
SC - curriculum
SC - ethos
SC - beyond curriculum
SC - child/adult interaction
SC - whole school approaches

PS2

TR - parent, child, sch
TR - initial process
TR - pre-sch roll
TR - school visits
TR - ethos
TR - process for chn
TR - teacher role
TR - pre transition teacher role
TR - pre transition SEN
TR - pre transition activities
TR - assessment and monitoring
TR - pre transition soc and emot input
TR - post transition soc and emot
TR - links with external sources
TR - importance of play-based learning
TR - monitoring and assessment
TR - whole sch
SC - monitoring and assessment
SC - access for parents
SC - adaptability of staff
SC - ethos
SC - ethos and practice
TR/SC - parent voice
TR/SC link - whole sch

EXAMPLE matrix:

Pre-school 2: Matrices showing semi-structured interview, codes and themes:

Data extract	Codes	Theme
<p>We attend cluster group meetings and at these cluster group meetings they have formatted a transition form for all the pre-schools in the 'town' area to use to pass on to schools. <i>So what sort of things comes up at the cluster groups?</i> That would be different areas of learning and concerns - and Ofsted concerns.</p>	<p>Keeping in touch with Learning Community</p> <p>Spectrum of issues within the wider forum</p> <p>LC discussions about transition included</p>	<p>TR - Wider support within the Learning Community for transition</p>
<p>Q. So not specifically about transitions but it could be one of the things discussed? A. Yes</p>	<p>Designated person for transition Form filling – limitations?</p>	<p>TR - role within pre-school</p>
<p>Does anyone within your setting take a role on particularly with transition? It would be me really, initially, and filling in the transition forms</p>	<p>Perception of transition visits</p> <p>Emphasis on play in visits sameness of experience between pre-school and school</p>	<p>TR - School visits</p> <p>TR - Matching pre-sch to sch experience</p>
<p>Basically their first term is the same as they would do here as regards play and learning through play.</p>	<p>Specific mechanisms for AEN chn during transition but no mention of rest of cohort</p>	<p>TR - SEN support during transition</p>
<p>As far as the things that they play here – they've got the sand and the water tray and there's a lot of free play. It's not overly structured as far as sitting</p>		

<p>down at tables and ‘you will do this, you will do that’ it is still done as free play.</p> <p>Do you have any support? Are you aware of input from outside agencies? With the additional needs children there is a lot more support because more agencies are normally involved with those children. There are meetings that we go to in the school to meet the SEN teacher. Yes, to discuss where the child is now and what support they will need going into school.</p>		
<p>What we expect from the children and how we all work with the children and that we are consistent with each other as well.</p>	<p>Pre-school approach</p>	<p>TR - ‘flow’ of consistent approach with chn and staff</p>
<p>Well, apart from coming in and telling me when the child will be attending school, there hasn’t been an awful lot of contact other than that. One parent with _____ school had taken her child to the Friday afternoon link group so she has been more involved that way round the other parents it’s just letting us know when they are going on the school visit.</p>	<p>Parent-led Parent informing the pre-school about visit times</p> <p>Parent taking the initiative</p>	<p>TR - Parent-led involvement with transition at pre-sch stage</p>

<p>We had a couple of parents saying the child was worried about the school visits.</p> <p>What we do there is just sit and talk to the child and say what sort of things they could be doing and so when they've had their school visit ask them what they did and then say 'Oh, that's like what you do here'</p>	<p>Parent involving/informing the pre-school of child diffs</p> <p>Address child's concerns about transition individually with 1:1 conversation with the child</p>	<p>TR - Parent-led involvement with transition at pre-sch stage</p> <p>TR - Individualised approach to problems re transition in pre-school</p>
<p>Well, we all think on similar lines.</p> <p>We don't need to tell each other.</p> <p>If somebody's tied up at a particular time of the morning doing one thing then somebody else will see that that is happening and take over</p>	<p>Staff approaches re working practices</p> <p>Tight-knit team</p>	
<p>Has anyone such as the Early Years Advisor talked to you about how that could strengthen the links between the schools?</p> <p>No, because the last time I spoke to _____ I told her I had sent a letter to the schools. She was quite disappointed that there wasn't the contact back. So apart from that, we can just persist and try and build up the links.</p> <p>we are not connected to a specific school</p>	<p>Pre-sch playing active role in seeking links via letter</p> <p>Schools not responding</p> <p>Problem of not having a specific feeder school</p> <p>Proactive role of pre-school</p> <p>Schools seem to</p>	<p>TR - Role of pre-sch in strengthening links with Primaries</p>

<p>I have made contact with the different schools to try and get some more contact between schools but It's quite difficult really - so it's basically the schools getting in contact with the parents and not getting in contact with us hasn't really happened</p> <p>I did have contact with Miss <u>Name</u> at <u>Castle</u> school</p> <p>asking about the Jolly Phonics and she came in and she gave me some literature and we sort of do it as a part of our register time and with their names and things. But that's the only contact I've had.</p>	<p>prioritise the communication channel with parents rather than this pre-school</p> <p>One isolated link with a specific teacher</p> <p>Pre-school used ideas to inform practice</p>	<p>TR - Primary school contact with pre-school</p>
<p>Not specifically, I don't think. We ask the children to talk about things like, at the moment, because it's holidays we're talking about how they go on holiday, what they like to do when they go to the seaside for a visit.... It's there but it's not specific - it's done as part of other learning.</p>	<p>Embedded social and emot learning</p>	<p>SC - curriculum</p>
<p>Yes, not put in the planning as a fixed thing to do. It's intermingled with what happens in the topic anyway.</p>	<p>Threaded naturally into topics but not specified</p>	<p>SC - curriculum planning</p>

Because we've had a number of children sent to us with behavioural problems through the Health Visitor or just from the Community Nursery Nurse.	Perception of social interaction relating to beh diffs	SC - ethos
If we know there's a problem between children we try to, not direct their play, but just be aware of where they are playing and watching and asking them to share and take turns. But not interfering, just watching and quietly supporting.	Non participative, stepping back role, close obs	SC - child-led approach
if there is a real problem then the child gets removed from that activity and has to go and sit by himself for a little while.	Sanctions for poor behaviour	SC - ethos
We encourage them to play games together... Children that you can see don't necessarily get on it's not to keep them completely separate but to encourage them to do things even if it's taken in turns with an adult as well - 3 or 4 children playing a colour game or shape game - so they have to spend time with that child but not on their own	Supported play to develop positive relationships	SC - support
If we see that there is a conflict then we go over and ask what the problem is and if they can tell us then we'll give options	Managing conflict Adult intervention	SC - adult-led approach
continues to be a problem then the child is removed from that activity. If that child still continues to be a problem at a different		SC - behaviour management

<p>activity they have time out over in the book corner for a couple of minutes. An adult will explain why they are sitting there and if the child has physically hurt someone or snatched something from someone then we will ask them to apologise as well. So they are aware that they have upset somebody.</p> <p>if it's persistent we explain to the parents</p> <p>it's a real persistent problem we wouldn't go back to the parent every time</p> <p>But if we do have to say something then we also give a positive like "he/she did this really well today" so it's not all negative - for the child as well as the parent really.</p>	<p>Parent involvement at behaviour level</p> <p>Sensitivity in handling parent/pre-school relationship</p>	

Appendix J:

Raw data for four cases

Data: Rory

	Child: Rory: Naturalistic obs data
Pre-sch	<p>Child-child interactions: Plays with another child for more than 2 minutes. Expresses same emotion as a peer by smiling together. Leaves a child part way through an activity. Plays alone and refuses to play/share with another child. Verbally confront another child about his wish to have a toy. Shares a toy that he had previously been reluctant to give up. Maintains play in parallel to others. Plays his role game near enough to the others to be noticed but does not manage to recruit new members to his game. Shares his ideas with another child about what he has decided to wear. Encourages other children to join in with his role play – is successful in bringing them into the game by choosing to put (pretend) sunscreen on them. Observes the activities of other children. Assists another child on Lego activity by holding a brick for her and then gives some advice about where it should go.</p>
	<p>Adult-child interactions: Seeks adult's help (from researcher sitting nearby). Asks adult to join in with his game. Accepts being turned down by the adult. Initiates a conversation with an adult. Shares his ideas with an adult. Sits next to an adult and plays with her – using the Lego bricks.</p>
	<p>General play obs: Role play activities – Post Office. Lone Play. Parallel play. Creating his own role play – involving aeroplanes, packing his suitcase (taken from the broad theme of holidays – in the pre-school planning for that term).</p>
Recept	<p>Child-child interactions: Maintains close proximity to 2 girls throughout the playtime activities.</p>

	<p>R takes the role of chasing and does the 'capturing' of the girls. Copies the actions of another child and climbs on top of some tables. Is 'anchored' to a pair of girls who he leaves, rejoins and leaves throughout the obs. Spends some time visiting other groups, looks on but then rejoins his original group.</p>
	<p>Adult-child interactions: None observed.</p>
	<p>General play obs: Physical activity in the playground – running and chasing. Staying with the same group throughout.</p>
Y1	<p>Child-child interactions: Directs other children physically and verbally – both pushes others out of the way and also tells one boy to stop it. Asks other children for money in role – also talks to self in role as the shopkeeper. Interacts with other children in role and object of the play seems to be the taking and exchanging of money. Temporarily wanders to the 'Tool Factory' (another role play area with small tools set up) to observe what the other children are doing – looks on only, makes no comment and then returns to the shop area. RM interrupts the play of the others at the Tool Factory as he puts toys on the 'work bench' in front of them. Joins in with the laughter of the children at the work bench. Tries to speak to a group of boys at the work bench but is ignored. Ignores a girl calling him from the shop area as he tries to have a conversation with the boys at the work bench.</p>
	<p>Adult-child interactions: Teaching Assistant comes into the role play area and asks RM if signs are needed to show what is being sold. He says yes. TA goes away again. RM comes to tell researcher what has happened at the Tool Factory.</p>
	<p>General play obs: Role play area, playing with money and the till, puts himself in charge of the till. Temporary play at another role play station – Tool Factory – though no play seen here, just steps I to speak with and watch the other boys playing here.</p>

?? Pre-sch phase – happy, independent child. Plans own play very well – good imagination with the role play toys. Strong ideas about play and can accept others playing nearby and wants them to join in with his game not vice versa. Chooses to leave others to do own plan/play. Interactions are primarily focused on the adults present – tries to recruit adults in to the game.

?? Recept – anchors his play around 2 girls. Not verbally interactive but based on chasing, imitating, following.

?? Y1 – takes a lead role in a role playing activity with a shop. Wants to take 'pole' position in the game – standing behind the till. This is his chief objective. Lone child who then goes and looks at what other boys are doing in a nearby game involving pretend tools. Interacts with adult as a reference point to tell the story of what is happening with the other boys.

SCBE: Pre-school:

Pre school July 2008		
Child: Rory		
	Staff Tscore	Parent Tscore
Depressive-joyful	≤30	47
Anxious-secure	≤30	49
Angry-tolerant	57	40
Isoalted-integrated	47	44
Aggressive-calm	45	48
Egotistical-prosocial	44	48
Oppositional-cooperative	46	43
Dependent-autonomous	46	43
Social competence	46	46
Internalising problems	≤30	42
Externalising problems	43	44
General adaptation	39	44
T score range : ≤30 (<i>low levels of adjustment</i>) to ≥70 (<i>high levels of adjustment</i>)		
Mean: 50 SD: 10		

SCBE: Primary school:

Primary School January 2009 T scores		
Child: Rory		
	Staff	Parent
Depressive-joyful	≤30	≤30
Anxious-secure	≤30	≤30
Angry-tolerant	34	34
Isolated-integrated	44	46
Aggressive-calm	42	47
Egotistical-prosocial	49	42
Oppositional-cooperative	56	51
Dependent-autonomous	50	43
Social competence	44	46
Internalising problems	≤30	≤30
Externalising problems	39	38
General adaptation	36	38
T score range : ≤30 (low levels of adjustment) to ≥70 (high levels of adjustment) T ≤30 Difficulty with social competence and general adaptation T ≤30 Excessive internalizing and externalizing problems T ≥70 Success with social competence and general adaptation T ≥70 No excessive difficulty with internalizing and externalizing problems Mean: 50 SD: 10		

?? Pre-sch and sch scores from parent and teacher are very similar. Social competence stays the same across both phases. General adaptation in both the pre-sch and sch phases stays 1SD below the mean for both parents and teacher.

Systematic observations:

Rory			
Behaviour/interaction	Pre-sch	Recept	Y1
Emitting same emotion	3.3	5.9	22.2
Verbal/physical	36.6	47	11.1
• <i>Adult</i>	54.4	0	0
• <i>Child group</i>	18.2	0	100
• <i>Child single</i>	27.3	100	0
Sharing	20	0	22.2
Helping	20	11.8	0
Care/concern	0	5.9	0
Sustained neutral	0	0	0
Ignoring	0	0	0
Leaving	20	29.4	44.4
Other discrepant	0	0	0

?? Pre-sch frequencies show that the child prefers to play with others but preferentially interacts with adults. He still maintains some interaction of helping and sharing with others.

?? Recept – this child most frequently interacts with others. In this phase he has attached to a small group. High number of ‘leaving’ episodes feature here but only as part of the game that was being played i.e. leaving indicates engagement rather than disengagement with the game and the other children.

?? Y1 – ‘leaving’ highlighted as the most frequent activity. This was in the form of leaving one play activity and going to another and then returning to the former play activity. ‘Sharing’ (sharing some of the money from the till so that the game could continue) and ‘emitting same emotion’ (laughing with a group of boys) are also frequent activities.

Data: Toby

	Child: Toby: Naturalistic obs data
Pre-sch	<p>Child-child interactions: Gives a toy to another child without being asked. Observes other children but does not join in, continues with his own plan.</p>
	<p>Adult-child interactions: Takes a role assisting the adult to build train track – directs his play mainly towards the adult. Directs his play towards the adult even when there are other children present.</p>
	<p>General play obs: Minimal verbal interaction for the whole period. Parallel play – alongside other children playing with cars but is not interacting with them. Constructing/building activities Playing with trains – pushing them along a track and making track. Very focused for lengthy periods in his own play. Actively moves around the play space to find toys/pieces to improve his play</p>
Recept	<p>Child-child interactions: Shows a book to another child says the key words of the book's title to the other child. Talks to another child about what they will do in the playground. Sits close to another child on the cushions. Within a small group, negotiates with the other children about how to play a chasing game.</p>
	<p>Adult-child interactions: Comments to the teaching assistant that he has lots of books and is asked to go and look at his book. Two adults with one occupied/concerned with checking books in on system, one reading to a small group. Seeks help from an adult on the playground to find a friend of his - adult points and tells him to 'look over there'.</p>
	<p>General play obs: Free choice time taking place in the library. Moves around to different children and the adults in the room, doesn't stay settled with one gp, child or adult. Some wandering – and very minimal focus on the</p>

	<p>book.</p> <p>Playground obs – lone play, T stops off and looks in on the activities of others.</p> <p>Playground play with others involves some chasing, running and catching.</p>
Y1	<p>Child-child interactions:</p> <p>Speaks with one other child with in the 'Lego' group about where to put a piece of Lego.</p> <p>Hands over a piece of Lego when asked.</p> <p>Ignores another child calling his name.</p> <p>Can make comments to another child in the group about the Lego item he is making.</p> <p>Accidentally knocks over and breaks another child's piece – no comment from T when the boy shouts 'no'.</p> <p>Steps in to help another child with their shape – tries to take charge but other child says no.</p> <p>Another child asks T to make him a shape but he makes no comment.</p> <p>Wants to help the others who are less successful than him but just says I can do it.</p> <p>Tries to explain to another child that it is impossible to make a shape using 3 triangles.</p> <p>Becomes known in the group for being expert at making shapes – does so very efficiently.</p> <p>Comments to the others about having very good handwriting.</p> <p>Does not want or accept help from the others.</p>
	<p>Adult-child interactions:</p> <p>Direct comments from Teaching Assistant to T about an item he making out of polydron shapes. Adult asks questions to probe next steps, ask about the shape, comments and praise – T accepts the comments makes very few back.</p> <p>T shows his next pieces to the adult.</p>
	<p>General play obs:</p> <p>Construction game with Lego, near a small group of boys.</p> <p>T very focused on making a complex building.</p> <p>Minimal communication form T – very focused on his own activity.</p> <p>Lone activity with complex shapes – exploratory, discovery.</p> <p>Stays for lengthy period on the same activity – polydron shapes, repeats making the same shapes that he has so far been very successful with.</p>

?? Pre-sch play is very focused on self – playing on carpet and active planning for his play. Some interaction with helper but not with the other children on the mat. Makes a solitary gesture to give a child a toy/piece that will assist them. Language is very limited i.e. no explanations, no single words/expressions etc

?? Recept – a lot more interactive within a session in the library. Does not settle with one child or adult but moves around to different children and groups. Minimal focus on the task in hand (reading library books) but looks at the pictures and wants to talk to other boys. Uses small phrases rather than sentences e.g. 'Bear Hunt' for 'We're going on a Bear Hunt'.

?? Y1 Focused on a construction activity and stays with this for the whole of the observation. Intense focus on the task. Clearly is more successful compared to the others on the table as he turns out more shapes of greater complexity. Some limited verbal interaction – accepts praise from an adult but does not reciprocate. Helps others but does not react to the upset when he accidentally spoils his work.

SCBE: Pre-school

Pre school July 2008 Child: Toby		
	Staff Tscore	Parent Tscore
Depressive-joyful	≤30	58
Anxious-secure	≤30	62
Angry-tolerant	34	45
Isoalted-integrated	43	≥70
Aggressive-calm	49	47
Egotistical-prosocial	44	56
Oppositional-cooperative	55	45
Dependent-autonomous	50	54
Social competence	48	57
Internalising problems	≤30	60
Externalising problems	37	44
General adaptation	37	55
T score range : ≤30 (<i>low levels of adjustment</i>) to ≥70 (<i>high levels of adjustment</i>)		
Mean: 50 SD: 10		

SCBE: Primary school

Primary School January 2009 T scores Child: Toby		
	Staff	Parent
Depressive-joyful	≤30	≤30
Anxious-secure	31	≤30
Angry-tolerant	38	31
Isolated-integrated	33	41
Aggressive-calm	42	39
Egotistical-prosocial	40	51
Oppositional-cooperative	48	55
Dependent-autonomous	45	58
Social competence	43	45
Internalising problems	≤30	≤30
Externalising problems	39	38
General adaptation	35	36
T score range : ≤30 (<i>low levels of adjustment</i>) to ≥70 (<i>high levels of adjustment</i>) T ≤30 Difficulty with social competence and general adaptation T ≤30 Excessive internalizing and externalizing problems T ≥70 Success with social competence and general adaptation T ≥70 No excessive difficulty with internalizing and externalizing problems Mean: 50 SD: 10		

?? Pre sch phase and the SCBE scores are approx 1SD higher for parent compared to teacher therefore parent has a more positive view of the child's general levels of social competence.

?? In the school phase, parent scores have decreased overall with parent and teacher scores being very similar. Both have scored the child with excessive internalising problems (depressed, isolated and withdrawn behaviours).

?? Teacher scores in both phases are similar – both score for excessive internalising difficulties.

Systematic observations:

Toby			
Behaviour/interaction	Pre-sch	Recept	Y1
Emitting same emotion	0	5.9	0
Verbal/physical	16.6	47	12.5
• <i>Adult</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>0</i>
• <i>Child group</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
• <i>Child single</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>100</i>
Sharing	33.3	23.5	50
Helping	33.3	0	12.5
Care/concern	0	5.9	0
Sustained neutral	0	0	0
Ignoring	0	0	0
Leaving	16.6	17.6	25
Other discrepant	0	0	0

??Pre-sch phase – some episodes of helping. Physical closeness to adult also noted.

?? Recept – stays physically close to others within this obs and partic to other children. Most interactive phase of the 3 phases.

?? Y1 – sharing recorded as the most frequent behaviour.

Data: Tessa

	Child: Tessa: Naturalistic obs data
Pre-sch	<p>Child-child interactions: Seeks help from another child e.g. asks to read a book Takes turns with a book and doll's clothes Plays with one child for longer than 10 mins Laughs with a other child Shares an activity with another child e.g. jointly pushing a pushchair around the room, looking at pictures in a book – commenting on the pictures</p>
	<p>Adult-child interactions: Seeks adult's (researcher) help e.g. asking to read a book</p>
	<p>General play obs: Role play activities Physical activity e.g. racing around the room with a pushchair Picking up a book and 'reading'</p>
Recept	<p>Child-child interactions: Asks other children to look at her face now she has made it bubbly. Plays alongside other children with a toy garage - upsets one child and receives a car from another child. Physically tussling for space with another child.</p>
	<p>Adult-child interactions: None noted.</p>
	<p>General play obs: Chooses 'messy' play. Independent with routines and procedures for playing with water e.g. putting on apron etc. Some lone wandering, looking a little lost. Scanning room for a friend to play with. Parallel play – playing with a toy garage.</p>
Y1	<p>Child-child interactions: Playing with one other child (same sex). Stays with one child through an observation. Talks to one key friend about the drawing they are going to do. Interactions are focused on the drawing the girls are making – comments about what they are trying to draw. When new girl joins the group, TS shares some felt tips with her. Tolerates her friend laving the table but seems happy to see her return. Accepts direction from the friend and listens to friends ideas and questions. Physical closeness between TS and the friend – hugging,</p>

	giggling, smiling. The friend is mainly chatting and at times, TS makes no response.
	Adult-child interactions: Adult comes to ask the girls if they want to continue drawing or to make their snowman (class activity) – they choose to stay drawing.
	General play obs: Drawing activity – collaborative work with one other child.

?? Pre-sch attaches to one other child. Follows other child's activities – some 'reading' and running up and down the room with push chairs.

??Recept – lone child within the observations. Plays alongside a group and tries to engage another child. Doesn't interact with the group

??Y1 – exclusively with one child for all obs. Creative activity and fairly static throughout activity with the other child leaving her for a while. High levels of interaction from each with dialogue and questions interchanged.

SCBE: Pre-school

Pre school July 2008 Child: Tessa		
	Staff Tscore	Parent Tscore
Depressive-joyful	≤30	62
Anxious-secure	≤30	55
Angry-tolerant	≤30	58
Isolated-integrated	35	55
Aggressive-calm	47	66
Egotistical-prosocial	45	65
Oppositional-cooperative	61	56
Dependent-autonomous	54	47
Social competence	46	58
Internalising problems	≤30	54
Externalising problems	34	62
General adaptation	36	60
T score range : ≤30 (<i>low levels of adjustment</i>) to ≥70 (<i>high levels of adjustment</i>)		
Mean: 50 SD: 10		

SCBE: Primary school

Primary School January 2009 T scores Child: Tessa		
	Staff	Parent
Depressive-joyful	≤30	≤30
Anxious-secure	≤30	≤30
Angry-tolerant	≤30	≤30
Isolated-integrated	39	41
Aggressive-calm	47	42
Egotistical-prosocial	45	50
Oppositional-cooperative	57	61
Dependent-autonomous	56	56
Social competence	47	48
Internalising problems	33	≤30
Externalising problems	34	34
General adaptation	38	37
T score range : ≤30 (<i>low levels of adjustment</i>) to ≥70 (<i>high levels of adjustment</i>) T ≤30 Difficulty with social competence and general adaptation T ≤30 Excessive internalizing and externalizing problems T ≥70 Success with social competence and general adaptation T ≥70 No excessive difficulty with internalizing and externalizing problems Mean: 50 SD: 10		

?? Pre-sch and teacher and parent qs offering a very different perspective of the child. Teacher scoring 1SD below the mean and the parent 1SD above the mean for general adaptation.

?? School phase – parent and teacher scores are almost identical. Teacher scores in both phases are also almost identical. Therefore great shifts in the parent perspective of child's behaviour.

Systematic observations:

Tessa			
Behaviour/interaction	Pre-sch	Recept	Y1
Emitting same emotion	21.4	20	50
Verbal/physical	28.6	40	8.3
• <i>Adult</i>	25	0	0
• <i>Child group</i>	25	25	0
• <i>Child single</i>	50	75	100
Sharing	21.4	20	25
Helping	14.2	0	0
Care/concern	0	0	8.3
Sustained neutral	0	0	0
Ignoring	0	0	0
Leaving	14.2	20	8.3
Other discrepant	0	0	0

?? Consistent across all 3 obs has been this child's preference for being physically near to other children as well as communicating similar emotion states (e.g. laughing and smiling) and sharing toys/information.

?? Leaving was also observed with some degree of frequency and this was linked to episodes where the child had been left alone by a child she had been playing with and therefore wandered off to find another activity to engage with.

Data: Sally

Naturalistic data summary:

	Child: Sally
Pre sch	<p>Adult-child interactions: Sits close to helper for longer than 10 mins. Receives 1:1 input from helper. Interacts with the helper by sharing a toy/ ideas. Seeks adult approval by asking helper to look closely at her piece of train track. Stays close to same helper throughout across different days of observation – uses this person as an ‘anchor’ . Speaks to helper about her plans and explains what she is doing.</p>
	<p>Child-child interactions: Shares an activity with another child. Takes turns with one other child. Looks at a child who is crying but does not step in etc.</p>
	<p>General play obs: Role play activities – interactive, speaking, using a telephone, imaginary destinations etc. Sitting in one place for longer than 10 mins. Focused 1:1 attention and interaction from an adult. Plays with train track.</p>
Reception	<p>Adult – child interaction None – does not seek adult help and none given.</p>
	<p>Child-child interactions: Negotiation with friend – asking and saying no to requests. Some physical jostling for control of the pen. Takes the lead with her friend on the writing activity. Leaves friend on her own and finds someone else. Returns to original friend and says she has a ‘good letter’. Stays close to one friend throughout the obs – some ignoring of friend but also some talking, negotiation, some physical handling of friend (holding by the shoulders to get her attention).</p>
	<p>General play obs: Fairly sedentary. Sitting in one place with a particular friend playing with a pen and whiteboard.</p>

	Playground obs – open space
Y1	<p>Adult – child interaction None sought. Teaching assistant steps in to organise the queue for the tent and S finally gets turn. Told by the teaching assistant to go and play with a particular activity.</p>
	<p>Child-child interactions: Mainly focused on her own activities but can share some of the equipment in the play space. Takes a lead role with the play inside the Post Office, offering advice and help to another girl. Also shares a letter and envelope that she has created successfully. Is interactive with others, initiating conversation. Versatile ‘player’ – with an activity where there is less adult supervision, she makes sure she gets a good selection of the parts and can make a successful marble run. Plays a part in organising the queue for the activities – speaks to another child about waiting their turn. S joins in with the same activity as a number of others, keeps separate/independent from others and follows own plan. Shows another child what she has made. Takes a marble from another child. Joins in with one other child (male) – both cooperating as they build a marble run. Makes comments to the group about the size of the marble run they are building. Can also hand over something when asked by another member of the group. Emerges as the leader of the group and takes charge of building the marble run – directing where pieces should go.</p>
	<p>General play obs: During the limited time dedicated to play, S manages to do a number of activities: Some lone play, playing with the farm activity. Some joint play with 2 other girls, cutting up magazine pictures. Post office, playing in parallel. Plays with a marble run (construction/problem-solving) activity. Chooses to play with different activities. Fails to get in the tent for the tent activities so goes to</p>

	<p>find something else to do – some wandering but can cope with disappointment. Playing with the Globe and reading the names of continents and countries by herself.</p>
--	---

? Pre-sch play is very interactive and involves complex levels of communication with an adult e.g. telephone conversations but minimal contact with other children

? Prim/reception – reliance and attachment to one other child. Beginning to take a clear role, leading, directing, making suggestions. No involvement from adult – neither sought by child nor offered by adult

? In Y1 much more independent. Seen working with groups and being able to negotiate her way around the group. Not dominated by the gp and not dominating within the group. Quiet and persistent with the plans she has. Shows some ability to share and be kind to others e.g. making a letter and envelope to give to another child. Appears organised and can direct others in the rules of the class e.g. asking a child to queue and wait. No involvement from adult – neither sought by child nor offered by adult

? Increased independence with child moving away from sole play with helper to play with another child and then play with a group

? Not more socially interactive within the group but seems able to fulfil her plans and ideas about play e.g. finds a way to use parts of the marble run to make her own structure.

SCBE: Pre-school

Pre school July 2008		
Child: Sally		
	Staff Tscore	Parent Tscore
Depressive-joyful	≤30	59
Anxious-secure	≤30	41
Angry-tolerant	≤30	44
Isolated-integrated	34	46
Aggressive-calm	44	50
Egotistical-prosocial	49	50
Oppositional-cooperative	63	48
Dependent-autonomous	54	40
Social competence	48	46
Internalising problems	≤30	47
Externalising problems	35	52
General adaptation	38	48
T score range : ≤30 (<i>low levels of adjustment</i>) to ≥70 (<i>high levels of adjustment</i>)		
Mean: 50 SD: 10		

SCBE: Primary school: reception

Primary School January 2009 T scores		
Child: Sally		
	Staff	Parent
Depressive-joyful	≤30	≤30
Anxious-secure	≤30	≤30
Angry-tolerant	≤30	≤30
Isolated-integrated	35	35
Aggressive-calm	35	35
Egotistical-prosocial	36	43
Oppositional-cooperative	47	52
Dependent-autonomous	46	51
Social competence	42	44
Internalising problems	≤30	≤30
Externalising problems	32	34
General adaptation	33	34
T score range :		
≤30 (<i>low levels of adjustment</i>) to ≥70 (<i>high levels of adjustment</i>)		
T ≤30 Difficulty with social competence and general adaptation		
T ≤30 Excessive internalizing and externalizing problems		
T ≥70 Success with social competence and general adaptation		
T ≥70 No excessive difficulty with internalizing and externalizing problems		
Mean: 50 SD: 10		

? Teacher scores decrease over the transition with child perceived to be less socially competent.

? Parent scores also decrease over the transition with parent perceiving child to be less socially competent, except on 2 subscales where the child is perceived to have become slightly more cooperative and autonomous over transition.

? Within both pre-school and school phase parent perceives child to be more socially competent than the teacher. This is more so in the pre-sch phase with there being 1SD difference.

? Child perceived as having most difficulty with internalising behaviour during both the pre-sch and school phase (except by parent in the pre-sch phase).

Systematic observations: %age of time spent on each behaviour

Sally			
Behaviour/interaction	Pre-sch	Recept	Y1
Emitting same emotion	0	9.1	5.5
Verbal/physical	42.1	36.4	5.5
• <i>Adult</i>	75	0	0
• <i>Child group</i>	12.5	0	0
• <i>Child single</i>	12.5	100	100
Sharing	36.8	27.3	33.3
Helping	10.5	9.1	11.1
Care/concern	10.5	9.1	11.1
Sustained neutral	0	0	0
Ignoring	0	9.1	0
Leaving	0	0	33.3
Other discrepant	0	0	0

? Pre-sch reliance on adult to play with/close attachment formed.

? Prim/reception – reliance and attachment to one other child.

? In Y1 much more independent, seen interacting much less with single children, groups or adults. Seen working within a group mostly but also in parallel.

? In each phase shows high percentage of time spent sharing, initially with an adult and then in later phase with other children

Appendix K:

SCBE Questionnaire (permissions not sought for reproduction)

Appendix L:

University of Exeter ethical certificate

Appendix 1

STUDENT HIGHER-LEVEL RESEARCH



School of Education and Lifelong Learning

Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS
You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, then have it signed by your supervisor and by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guides.php> and view the School's statement in your handbooks.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter).
DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND

Your name: Julie Elkins

Your student no: 560021524

Degree/Programme of Study: DEdPsych in Child, Educational and Community Psychology

Project Supervisor(s): Brahm Norwich and Jo Rose

Your email address: jae212@exeter.ac.uk

Tel: 01984 623018

Title of your project:

An investigation into Social Competence of Pre-school children (3 – 4 year olds) in North Devon pre- and post-transition to Primary school

Brief description of your research project:

This involves an evaluation of children's social competence in the naturalistic setting of their day preschool as well as an investigation into how teachers support the development of children's social competence.

This will involve the Early Years Advisor team in Devon.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

Phase 1 will involve 3-4 years old children. Phase 2 will involve children in the reception year of main stream schools. Also parents and pre school staff at every level.

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
last updated: September 2007

Give details regarding the ethical issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) a blank consent form can be downloaded from the SELL student access on-line documents:
Participants will be assured of confidentiality and anonymity with information used only for analytic purposes at the aggregate level. Participants will be informed of the measures, interviews and data collection methods. Data collection methods will be closely monitored and support given as appropriate.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:
Interviews will focus on the processes involved when supporting a child's emotional competence. Children will do a simple emotion recognition task and will be observed during their free play using a checklist derived from Denham (1986). Teachers will also be observed in the classroom using a checklist derived from the Inclusion Development programme. Parents and teachers will be asked to fill out the Social Competence and Behaviour Evaluation: Pre-schoolers Short Form (SCBE-30). School and individual level performance data will also be collected

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):
Ensuring that only the children for whom consent has been given are observed and included in the data collection.
Possible feedback arrangements may need to be made with staff after observations.

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

This form should now be printed out, signed by you below and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's Research Support Office for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given above and that I undertake in my thesis to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed: *J. McEvoy*
Date: 19 May 2008

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

This project has been approved for the period: May 2008 until: June 2009

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): *B. Mowat* date: *27/5/08*

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
last updated: September 2007

Appendix M: Literature review

Literature Review

This review aims to investigate the concept of social competence in preschoolers with particular emphasis on the process of transition from the preschool to the primary school. Over the past twenty years, there has been a growing interest in social and emotional intelligence because greater competence in this area is regarded as protective against long-term emotional problems (Berrueta-Clement et al., 1984; Schweinhart and Weikart, 1998). How children learn and practice the skills of emotional competence and how key adults (teachers, in particular) support them are partly the focus of this review. This review also investigates whether organisations themselves may have differing levels of social competence. For example, if staff are better trained does it follow that they will be more emotionally sensitive to their preschoolers and therefore better enabled to deliver this kind of curriculum?

The early identification of young children's additional needs has also been a major issue (Gipps, Gross & Goldstein, 1987; Lindsay & Wedell, 1982; Lindsay, 2000; Carpenter, 2005). The current Government agenda aims to achieve early identification leading to early intervention ('prevention rather than remediation') and ultimately to more positive academic outcomes and more equitable, targeted resourcing. The quality of young children's educational, social and emotional experiences are crucial in any setting - home, Nursery, Pre-school and Children's Centre. Surestart's Children's and Families' Centres are part of that vision with 3500 centres expected by 2010 in disadvantaged areas. Performance indicators will be based

on a number of outcome areas. For example, in the Learning and Development outcome, there will be a focus on the percentage of children achieving in the areas of Language, Communication and Literacy as well as personal, social and emotional development.

Focusing on these areas has the potential to generate long-term outcomes for children. It is acknowledged that developing a good sense of emotional competence has been found to protect emotional health and well-being. The most important developmental task for children is to achieve 'sustained positive engagement with peers' (Denham, 2006). Listening, negotiating and cooperating are essential skills and if children use these successfully they are a crucial predictor of later mental health and well-being. On this basis targeted programmes have been used to contribute to making a difference in the Early Years. In the USA the Headstart programme began in 1965 and involved the provision of early childhood development services to low income children through the *High/Scope* curriculum. Weikart (OECD, 2004) describes *High/Scope* as a set of guiding principles and practices that can be adapted across educational settings and age groups. The central position is that children learn best through active experiences and by following their own interests, rather than through direct teaching. As children make choices and play in an environment arranged around specific interest areas they become 'naturally' engaged in what the curriculum developers call 'key experiences'. Children's experiences are based on five themes: creative representation, language and literacy, initiative and social relations, movement and music and logical reasoning.

Longitudinal research from the Headstart programme (Berrueta-Clement et al., 1984; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1998) has targeted groups of 'disadvantaged' children randomly allocated to three different types of pre-school programmes: the High/Scope approach (based on the child-initiated plan-do-review cycle), Direct instruction (which were more formal, academic and teacher-led) and the Nursery school approach. Participants were tracked over a long period of time until into their twenties. Early differences appeared with High/Scope and Nursery children performing better. Although some of these differences later disappeared, it was when the participants become adults that significant gains were, once again, revealed for the High/Scope and Nursery children in terms of 'real-life' measures. For example, these participants were less likely to experience emotional problems, being in trouble with the police or unemployment compared to the other children. The Direct instruction sample tended to develop social problems later on in life. Over such a long period of time direct causal links to a particular style of pedagogy are problematic due to the number of other variables within the intervening years. However other evidence has indicated that pre school children under 5 do less well long term when they are taught formally and do best in an environment which promotes their ability to socialise, to be free to choose and to take some responsibility for their own learning, alongside more adult-led activities (Sharp, 2002).

The broad aims of Headstart were to improve conditions for children educationally, health, nutrition, social and other services but research has suggested that problems have

lain with assurances of quality and the sustaining of positive effects over a long period of time. In part, assurances of quality have been addressed through the increase in competency expected by the programme's teacher – now expected to have higher qualification (associate/bachelor degrees). This is not, however, a simple equation that better qualifications assure greater quality. Other research has shown that qualifications alone are not a guarantee of better practices. Some research (Whitebrook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989); Helburn, 1995) has indicated that it was the type of interaction that mattered equally, that is, better qualifications coupled with sensitive care-giving behaviours. Also the issue of compensation has been highlighted with low pay likely to create greater staff turnover which is a factor associated with poorer-quality programs and poorer child outcomes in language and social skills (Whitebrook et al, 1989).

In gathering the literature supporting the effectiveness of the Headstart programme, Sissel (2000) highlighted the fade out effects of the programme and the unresponsiveness of school systems to children from low-income families. She also questioned the political aims and the real value for parents of becoming involved in such a programme. Its two generational nature (parents and their children) was very underfunded for the parent aspect of the programme. However a more positive conclusion lay in the fact that parent participation had led to parents understanding their children's needs better and being better able to communicate with their children's teachers. Though projects like the Headstart research have broad objectives and far-reaching aims for children, the social

competence of parents and vital others is a core element in facilitating their success. Children's emerging social competence is facilitated when there are sustained high quality interactions within and between key proponents such as teachers and parents/carers (Sammons, Elliot, Sylva, Melhuish, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart, 2004).

These aims have also been pursued in the UK. EPPE 3-11 project (Effective Pre-School and Primary Education) is a project commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills. It is the extension of EPPE 1997 – 2003 and is the largest longitudinal study in Europe investigating 'educational effectiveness'. A key focus of the report was on the quality and practices in the Pre-school. The quality was particularly high in those pre school settings that were integrated: nursery schools and nursery classes. A 'high quality' setting yielded better intellectual/cognitive and social/behavioural development in children. In a similar vein to Headstart, staff with higher qualifications and a greater proportion of trained teachers also showed better quality with children making more progress. How settings viewed educational and social development was also important – where they were seen as 'complimentary and equal' the children made better all round progress. Finally effective pedagogy was characterized as the 'provision of instructive learning environments and 'sustained shared thinking' to extend children's learning' thus leading to better all round progress.

The EPPE research suggests that pre-school can play an important part in combating social exclusion by offering disadvantaged children, in particular, a better start to

primary school. The research also points to the separate and significant positive influence of the home learning environment (HLE). Social class and levels of education were less important compared to the quality of HLE. In other words, it is what parents *do* that has a greater impact on their children, not what the parents *are*. This finding is also supported by a study commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation that found how crucial parents' input is in supporting their children at particular transition times (Madge and Wilmot, 2007). Strategies which encourage and support greater parental engagement in home learning activities (teaching songs/ nursery rhymes, reading to young children, playing with letters and numbers, drawing and painting) for the most vulnerable are also likely to show benefits in terms of children's subsequent cognitive and social behavioural development (Sammons et al, 2004). EPPE's research involving Preschool provision found that children who stayed at home prior to school entry and had received no early provision were likely to be identified as 'at risk' during their first school year. In addition a preschool provision of high quality was seen as protective particularly for the 'vulnerable' and that this effect could be felt until the end of Y1 in Primary School (Sammons et al, 2004). The duration of attendance was important with an earlier start related to better intellectual development, improved independence, concentration and sociability.

A key point that leads from the EPPE research which leads into this project concerns the quality of adult-child verbal interactions. They define 'sustained shared thinking' as the

process by which two or more individuals 'work together' to solve a problem, evaluate an activity, extend a narrative. They found that periods of 'shared sustained thinking' were a prerequisite for the most effective early years practice. This raises a number of issues including the quality of resources within the environment, the staff base and the parent/home background to create and foster the conditions for such a process to occur. Parent interviews revealed that parents from middle class settings were proactive towards their children in this way whereas in more disadvantaged settings, staff were more proactive in supporting the parents to develop this at home. This research aims to focus on the extent to which staff encourage children to use emotional problem-solving and also the extent to which children use these skills spontaneously without adults' intervention. Studies like EPPE posit that better training and staff qualifications will lead to better outcomes for children. What is argued here is that teachers and pre schools also need to create a very proactive and long term discourse with parents to ensure that positive engagement protects those long term ameliorative effects mentioned earlier. Crucially, parents' experiences at this stage with their child's wider context has great potential to shape future interactions, experiences and levels of engagement as the child moves onto school.

With 'social interaction' as a core vehicle through which relationships grow, how children are supported to develop social talk is vitally important. Previous work into children's talk/conversations/language has focused on both theory of mind skills and emotion understanding. There

has been some support for the notion that where families talk more about psychological states there is a probability that their children will do the same. De Rosnay and Hughes (2006) comprehensively gathered the literature that supports how children's social and emotional understanding is enhanced through their conversations and discourse. They posited that the key factors that promote socio-cognitive understanding are the presence of siblings, especially older ones (Perner, Ruffman and Leekham, 1994), maternal disciplining strategies that encourage the child to take the perspective of the victim (Hughes, Deater-Deckard and Cutting, 1999), higher economic status (Cutting and Dunn, 1999; Dunn, Brown, Slomkowski, Tesla and Youngblade, 1991) and secure attachment (Fonagy, Redfern and Charman, 1997). This research seems to support the message that families with 'social capital' have better potential to promote social and emotional understanding. What is not made clear by the research and by EPPE is how this evidence can be generalised to become meaningful within less advantaged families.

Language evidently has a key role to play in enabling children to experience, express, understand and regulate their emotions. It is an important tool that can be used by children and their carers to protect and enhance emotional stability as a child moves from pre-school to infant/primary school setting. The role of teacher and how they use their skills in scaffolding children's emotions is central to helping children towards building an emotional repertoire - recent studies show that teacher/care giver training should focus on validating children's emotions and at the same time creating and sustaining child/adult

conversations about emotions. Teachers/carers have an important role to promote: problem-solving strategies, communication skills, reading of social situations and promoting and modeling the use of positive self-statements (Webster-Stratton, 2002). The Government's vision for Surestart Centres is to employ staff who can move towards being qualified to NVQ Level 3 and thus increase their understanding of child development and that volunteers in the setting should be 'trained and supervised' by a qualified member of staff.

However though there is some support for the targeted interventions and 'quality' provision has the potential to make a difference for children and families, we cannot make confident assertions about the overall effectiveness of specific programmes in promoting children's attainment and developing their social/emotional competence. So far there is very little evidence to suggest that one curricular approach is more appropriate than any other. The BERA-SIG (2003) review points to the lack of evidence on the impact of alternative forms of curricula and concludes that from a review of research on curriculum in the early years, what is revealed is 'how little hard evidence we have to guide policy and practice'. The reviewers conclude that the debate about the benefits of varying curricular approaches for under-fives is 'stronger on assertion than evidence' and cannot find a distinction between attendance at a particular type of provision from the impact of the educational provision experienced there. So there appears to be a mixed picture regarding the effectiveness of models and curricula. There is inconclusive evidence to show that any

one particular type of provision has a greater impact than any other across the range of varied pre schools.

Theoretical perspectives

Moving more specifically to children's social/emotional skills and competence, this review will now consider a number of perspectives and how they enhance our understanding. Within the literature there has been a tension between the child's innate individual capacity and disposition for social and emotional understanding and their potential to develop the skills for greater effectiveness. Gresham (1986) had argued that social skills can be categorised in two ways – by focusing on a trait model which takes account of the 'underlying, cross situational response disposition' and by focusing on a molecular model which is situation specific, where behaviours are unrelated to personality or trait. The trait model has less credibility due to lack of empirical data to support it. Though the molecular model is favoured because relies on aspects that can be seen and measured, McFall (1982) suggested that the molecular model had unresolved issues such as the selection of appropriate units of behaviour, the classification of social skills and the classification and evaluation of outcomes.

McFall also provides a useful distinction between social skills and social competence – social skills being the specific behaviours that an individual exhibits to perform competently on a task. He asserts that social competence is an evaluative term based on the judgments that a person has performed a task adequately. These judgments may be provided by significant others e.g. parents, teachers etc. Furthermore Reschly and Gresham (1981)

note that social competence has two components – adaptive behaviour and social skills. Greenspan (1981) described social competence using a three-layered model – outcome oriented, content oriented and skill oriented. Using a golfing analogy, he described the outcome as the final golf score without any understanding of how it was achieved, the content derives from the specific behaviours that led to competence e.g. in golf this might be the swing/stance/grip. The skill component may take account of the interpersonal processes (knowledge, skills and attitude). Gresham asserted that the content approach is the most favoured because of its emphasis on observable behaviour. This definition relies on what can be directly observed and measured.

Moving to more recent years, Susanne Denham (2001) has categorised social competence as emotional expressiveness, emotional knowledge and emotional regulation. Her definition eschews the concept of social competence as a set of skills and considers it in relation to functionality i.e. ‘what does the expression of emotions “do for” a child and his/her social group?’ Denham considers the importance of how connected the young child’s emotions are to the wider social circle of peers, parents and adults and also to other relational contexts such as church, home, playground. She makes the assumption that maintaining positive engagement and managing emotional communication are key developmental tasks for the pre schooler. But also included in Denham’s research is the caveat that social competence does not wholly reside within relationships but also includes some aspects of temperament and attachment style.

Katz (1995) has developed this position by expressing the belief that we have some degree of innateness but also have the potential to learn, develop and modify our dispositions. Adding to this Katz claims that some early personal and social behaviour can also be unlearned and modified. This has led other researchers to suggest that children's have the ability to develop skillful abilities to meet complex predicaments. They put the developing dispositions argument above the content-based emphasis pursued by the curriculum. Claxton and Carr (2004) added to this debate by identifying potentialities in young children. This is also supported by Riley (2007) who asserted that key social skills can be modeled for children to learn turn-taking, sharing, negotiating, cooperating and empathising. Whilst each child will have the individual characteristics and ability to take the perspective of others, understand and appreciate point of view, Riley proposes that this can be identified and fostered. Underlying her views is the implication that teachers' skills play a vital role in maximising the potential of young children – through sound identification and targeted teaching, children's skills can be developed. Pons and Harris' (2005) reviewed the individual differences in emotion understanding and suggested that there are a number of skills that can be taught but found no evidence to show that individual differences in emotion understanding can be narrowed by the use of any specific intervention programme. They found that children may improve their emotion understanding with classroom intervention but essentially their individual differences remain stable over time. What this does show, however, is the importance of teachers knowing their pupils very well and engaging closely with

the child's individual needs on all levels, educationally, socially and emotionally. Part of this profile may include an authentic and sustained engagement with parents (as suggested earlier) but what is also crucial is that teachers of young children feel that they can create an individual approach and are not blocked by lack of skill, access to information and resources.

Whilst upholding the aspect of social and emotional competence that is related to individual dispositions or traits, Denham's work takes a largely ecological perspective. Bronfenbrenner (1979) is recognised as the major proponent of this perspective when he suggested parents were the best potential for change in the child's life. He identified a number of systems impacting simultaneously upon an individual's life. In the case of the pre schooler, the microsystem may consist of the settings containing the child and others, such as home and school with its dyadic units. In turn, the mesosystem is the set of microsystems "the interrelations among major settings containing the developing person at a particular point in time". For the pre schooler this entails the transition between home and pre school, and the possibility that the cultural interface will be vastly different (Rogoff, 2003). The exosystem is another layer which may not directly involve the developing child but would impact indirectly on their route through pre school; in relation to the pre school, this could mean the Government policy which drives the pre school curriculum, structures that shape and alter practices such as the Ofsted procedure. The macrosystem overarches every other system and is characterised by the complexity of the wider cultural

influences and how these interact with the subsystems as well as other global macrosystems. It is the intention here to explore how the child's emotional and social competence equips them to access new settings from the age of three through to five i.e. the pre school and then the primary school. The mesosystem is perhaps the most important level at this stage in a child's life as they oscillate between their home and their pre school. Informal and ad hoc evidence from parents suggests they believe their children are very different at pre school compared to home. Ecological systems theory might account for the qualitative differences between the two settings and in turn, lead to perceptual differences between parents and teachers view of the pre schooler. Therefore another foci will be to explore the potential impact these inter-relating systems could have on the child and how they are appraised by key adults.

Early work by Bronfenbrenner consisted of behaviourist training procedures in people's homes – toy demonstrators. What is difficult to assess is the real potential for changes after the training programme ceases. Working within this tradition, Carolyn Webster-Stratton (2000) has highlighted the essential role of the teacher as effective mediator in conflict situations with their potentiality to teach problem-solving skills, communication skills, support to read social situations and modeling appropriate behaviours. This behaviourist paradigm supports the belief that teachers/parents have a set of identified and formalised skills to 'pass on' and that children are equipped to assimilate these when developmentally appropriate. This might appear a somewhat reductionist approach to account

for an individual's social competence and their increasing social interaction. By contrast the theoretical principles explored by Mead (1934) provide a larger picture of human beings as 'social selves'. We form social relationships and our minds develop as a result of our social, cultural and linguistic interactions. The formation of mind and self is through the 'communicative activity of the group' and through social experience (Mead, 1934). As part of that cultural and social group, parents have a crucial role in supporting the child to develop social relationships and in supporting personality growth as do significant others in the child's world - friends, siblings and teachers. A key component here is how we maintain and develop our position within our social groupings and nurture a healthy emotional life. Children need to be adept at managing seemingly conflicting aspects of emotions. For example where emotional regulation is concerned children must 'moderate emotional intensity when it threatens to overwhelm, enhance it when necessary to meet a goal, and shift between emotion states in order to maintain genuine and satisfying relationships with others as well as pay attention to pre-academic tasks and learn the intellectual and social rules in a varying settings'. Within this Meadian framework and considering social work practitioners, Howe (1997) suggests that to help children develop social understanding and interpersonal competence, social workers need to foster opportunities and promote environments that 'allow children to be in secure, warm, consistent, reciprocal, attentive, responsive, constructive and sensitive relationships'. There is a richness and complexity here that cannot be easily categorised and labelled. This fits with the work already cited by the EPPE

study into how children interact and consists of 'good quality' interactive work with children.

Psychodynamic theory has also been cited to account for the key processes that shape the child's developing social and emotional understanding. May, Ashford and Bottle (2006) claim that Winnicott holds the key to how young children develop social and emotional competence. Winnicott (1971) advocated play as a primary source of creativity. Also the use of the transitional object is key to how the child forms an understanding of its separateness from its mother/caregiver. The involvement of the transitional object is the first step for the child to start playing and from play to shared playing and then to further cultural experiences. However what is not clear is how a child resolves the frustrations and anxieties deposited in the transitional object and how relationships may qualitatively impact on how the transitional object is used. Also there is no indication that all children need this object. The transitional phenomena shifts its function when a child moves on to preschool and is then related to play and the 'spaces' in which children can engage in activities and invest their imagination and manipulate objects. To facilitate the child's burgeoning social skills and competence, a practitioner needs to intuit the child's (sub)conscious world by observing the social mediation of talk through play. The difficulty lies in how the practitioner 'intuits'. Greater clarity is needed to delineate how to operationalise the resources required for social mediation in exactly the same way we might wish to elaborate how children and teachers achieve 'sustained shared thinking' (EPPE).

Where there appears to be more support for the psychodynamic approach is within the field of Play Therapy as children's enacted acts of aggression are perceived to be cathartic. This gives children an opportunity to symbolise wishes, fears, preoccupations and other troublesome mental phenomenon. Psychodynamic theory would account for children being better able to process these mental phenomenon in an adaptive way. Examining the subconscious urges of a child through the raw material of fairy tales and stories leads a more enhanced understanding and expression of real feelings. However Dunn and Hughes (1998) reiterate Harris' conclusions from his review (Harris, 1994) that whilst children may have real feelings and causal explanations for these, they have no real relationships or emotional bonds with story characters so generalisation to real relationships and situations is not possible. For the purposes of this research, the psychodynamic framework cannot offer a starting point for exploring the social interaction of children and adults. It is the observable, interactional processes between children and between their teachers that will offer a clearer picture of the meanings and purpose of social interaction as delineated through the ecological perspective.

The social constructionist perspective is the traditional approach advocated in preschools. Reciprocity is central to the relationship between the adult and the child. Play is perceived as a social activity and based on the observable interactions between the child and their peers/adults with the notion of 'scaffolding' to help the child to move onto the next stage. Ambrose (1978) polarises two perspectives: the empiricist perspective of reducing

behaviour down to 'invariant complex processes of behaviour' and the ecological perspective as a synthesis of man and environment continually changing. The latter perspective has two features – the concept of the active organism and the concept of developmental change as quantitative as well as qualitative. The core idea is that man actively shapes the environment and due to the process of active interaction with the environment this undergoes transformation too. Implied in the approach is that the adult uses their knowledge to lead the child into further experiences and the ensuing interaction leads both into regenerative joint action.

De Rosnay and Hughes (2006) found that conversational interactions are crucial for the development of children's socio-understanding. The factors that play a role are how and whether mothers explain 'feeling states' and elaborate explanations of emotions (Garner et al 1997). Treating children as independent beings with their own mental life (thoughts and feelings) is also important for increasing children's performance on socio-cognitive tasks (Meins et al 1998). Mothers who can play a key role in situating emotion discussions within a broader context are likely to promote their children's emotion understanding as do mothers who provide causal explanations within the context of shared positive interaction. This review also looked at the association between inner-state talk and reciprocal play among toddler and siblings. The literature suggests that future research would conceive of measuring socio-cognitive understanding not through relatively limited cognitive task but through the 'spontaneous use of psychological discourse'.

Returning to the ecological framework, Rose-Krasnor's (1997) work has explored how social competence meshes within this perspective. She found that researchers held several meanings for the construct of social competence. So her work focused on deriving an operational definition of social competence based on three general levels of analysis: Theoretical, Index and Skills. The theoretical level is consistent with general research perspectives on general competence (Block and Block, 1980; Nakamura and Finck, 1980 and White, 1959). Competence is identified as transactional emerging from the interactions between people rather than residing within an individual. Social competence is viewed as context dependent. The effectiveness approach also stresses the performance of the individual in 'typical' interactions, rather than under ideal conditions. At the Index level there is a distinction between the self and other. The two orthogonal attributes of autonomy and belongingness form two basic human dimensions. This is considered to be one of the major challenges during the life span – to be able to achieve self-orientation and other-orientation (Baltes and Silverberg, 1994; Connell, 1990). Rose-Krasnor explains that the indices in the Self domain include the success in achieving one's own goals and feelings of efficacy in social interaction. Indices in the Other domain include healthy relationships with peers and adults, achieving an appropriate place in social groups and fulfilling society's expectations for responsible social behaviour'. For the Skills level there are several specific abilities included that have been pinpointed by a skills approach to competence. These incorporate perspective-taking, communication, empathy, affect regulation and social problem solving.

This summary of social competence meshes well within the ecological perspective of transition. Social competence is an inter and intra dependent concept.

Though this review has established that children have individual differences and potentialities to become socially competent, there are also a growing number of contextual factors and interactive opportunities that make an impact at every level – interpersonally and between organisations. These are especially the focus as the review moves on to consider children’s transition experiences when they move from Preschool to primary school.

Transition

There will be comment on the recent definitions and theoretical frameworks for understanding the processes involved in transition. Included is a consideration of the broad ranging research into factors that enhance and constrain a child’s experience of transition to school. Transition will also be seen through the lens of children’s developing social competence. With social and emotional skills high ranking within Government priorities and at the heart of the National Children’s Plan, this review aims to explore the current situation regarding the ‘emotional curriculum’ and the messages from the research. The current Government are committed to promoting social and emotional skills in the early years through a focus on bonding and through initiatives like SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning). The Government have also committed to develop a national measure of children and young people’s social and emotional skill at key transition points in their education. One of the 2020 goals

is to enhance children and young people's wellbeing at key transition points.

A growing body of evidence reveals that at transition between Pre school and Primary School, important and lasting attitudes to learning are shaped in the Early Years (Cassidy, 2005). Amongst those characteristics are aspiration, pro-socialisation, self-esteem, motivation and confidence. Experiences at this time can have a lasting influence on how a child views themselves long term, how others value them and their general sense of wellbeing and readiness for learning (Dunlop, 2000). Expectations might be that the Pre school would model such competencies and that children would have opportunities to increase and develop these skills once they move onto school.

In defining the particular features of transition, the research provides a spectrum of definitions. A basic definition of transition consists of moving from one setting to another or it consists of the moves that a child experiences within a school. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) describe transition as 'a phase of intensified and accelerated developmental demands ... not quite complete until a child is in a state of well-being'. Barrett (1986) and Cleave et al (1982) believe that there are many uncertainties within the transition process (e.g. different journey to school, new words spoken by a new person, participating in a large group) and the potentialities for this are anxiety, tiredness and discomfort. This gives a sense that transition is a time of disequilibrium and perhaps there are some children who can never achieve that state of 'well-being'. Burke (1987) perceived the process in an optimistic light by claiming that the conditions and

processes predicate an individual to 'gain direction and encouragement through increased understanding'. The literature tends to explore the difficulties to be found within the transition process and how individual children, teachers, schools and parents deal with it. Lam and Pollard (2006) summarise with the notion that though transition is understood as the move from the home context to the kindergarten context, recent studies show that transition can be viewed as a time when there is a shift from the identity of 'child' at home to 'pupil' in kindergarten.

In seeking a definition and context for transition, many researchers explain transition using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework (mentioned earlier) with particular emphasis on the mesosystem – the level where a critical direct link between two settings (home and school, preschool and school) occur. This has already been explored in relation to the child's personal interactions and how this supports their developing social competence. Kay Margetts (2002) posits that transition is best understood within this framework. This allows practitioners to understand better children's developmental journey through transition. Lam and Pollard (2006) rely on this conceptual framework to explain children's sense of agency as they move from home to kindergarten. Citing Vygotsky (1978) they also employ a social constructionist view to explain the mechanisms of a child's adjustment on school entry. They claim it is imperative to conceptualise a child's entry to school by taking account of the historical, cultural and institutional context that shapes the individual child's development and view of the world. These are views supported by other researchers including Margett (2002)

and Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) who also acknowledge the complexity, diversity and intertwined relationships between the home and the school. In summary, this critical period of change makes complex demands on both the child and their wider network.

From this ecological position, Lam and Pollard crucially use a concept called 'adaptation' which enables transition to be seen as an active, dynamic process – children are not just 'fitting' into the new system but are viewed as active, creative and strategic practitioners. Children have their own ways to reconstruct the classroom, and these ways are suitable and personal for them. They may strategically 'negotiate' and respond creatively to the situated classroom. This is viewed as a dynamic and continuous negotiation process for children in order to adapt to the situated classroom as pupils. This position fits well with the notion of 'pupil career' as explored by Pollard and Filer (1999) and other educational theorists (Carr and Claxton 2002, Grolnick et al 1999) who have identified the shift in focus from that of academic attainment to one of 'developing capacity and confidence to engage in lifelong learning'. It is therefore pertinent to view children's transition to school holistically. A major theme from the Literature that supports this is the focus on how individual children cope with transition and how their needs are addressed. It is assumed that on entry to school children arrive with a wide range of personal characteristics and differing levels of resilience, social competence and agency. The area for focus here is the micro level where individual children, their parents and the settings are the focus of the study. At the individual level the literature has assessed

this as an important time in a child's development regarding a child's self awareness, emotional understanding, moral judgments, peer relationships, understanding simple symbolic concepts, mastering physical skills and increasing independent self help skills (Love and Yelton, 1989). Researchers have also stressed the transition as providing a 'critical path'. Children have a fair number of adjustments to make and progress well when they have a positive self-image related to academic learning, social functioning and ability to cope with school's challenges. Fabian (2000a) and Maxell and Eller (1994) identify social competence, problem-solving skills, self reliance and determination, cooperative behaviour, non disruptive group entry strategies and skilled verbal communication as among the factors that support a child's adjustment to school.

In Margett's (2007) summary of the Literature, she accounts for children's adjustment to school as dependent on their individual characteristics e.g. anxious temperament, gender (with boys predicated to have more difficulties with adjustment) and position in family. A core area that influences adjustment are the social and emotional skills that a child possesses. There are strong associations between low-level behaviour problems and high levels of academic competence (Margetts, 2004) if a child is able to cooperate, assert themselves, exercise self-control in conflict situations and respond appropriately to peer pressure. There have also been suggestions of a strong link between peer acceptance, friendship and satisfying relationships. In an earlier study Margetts (1997) had found that children who started school with a

playmate had better academic and social skills and less problem behaviours. This is reinforced by Porath (2003) who emphasised that social understanding of one's role and the ability to interpret other feelings and intentions was a key factor to establishing satisfying relationships at the start of the school career.

The research indicates that the core teacher's role is crucial to a successful transition. The evidence is mixed regarding the link between teachers' practice and input and the success of transition. However there is some evidence to show that though the teacher's role is very important in the two way process, in Stephen and Cope's (2003) study of school adjustment in Scotland, it was shown that teachers are less concerned with children's developmental progress on entry (except for some aspects of social and emotional development). Only half of the 20 teachers in the study actively used transition documents to inform their practice with only 4 speaking positively about them. The crucial role of teachers in the transition process is also reinforced by Cassidy's (2005) study that elicited teachers' views via confidential questionnaires, focus group discussions and confidential interviews. These findings support the view that what teachers find important are the social and emotional aspects of transition such as becoming familiar with the children and ensuring their well-being in the first stages. However teachers in this study felt constrained and unable to achieve this with a major barrier being the pressure to deliver the pre-set curriculum. The teachers questioned the value of transition documents as they believed that informal talking was more useful than further paperwork. This is also corroborated by

Wallace (1985) who found that Primary School teachers perceived little value in the exchange of documents for children at transition except for those with SEN. Meisels (1992) revealed that teachers would prefer to rely on *current skills, accomplishments, knowledge and life experience* and to follow these up with teaching and learning of new concepts related to these. This therefore contrasts with the evidence that there is meaning in transition documents that provide prior information about a child's development and history.

Equally transition visits were found to be of little value as often the Reception class teacher was juggling the needs of the pre school children alongside her current reception class who were present in the classroom. Another key point in this study was that most of the teachers viewed 'fitting in' as a key objective for children when they start school. A different picture is provided by Yeboah (2002) who acknowledges that teachers in both pre-school and primary school have a 'significant potential to influence the outcome of the transition' as they implement the teaching methodologies, procedures, rules and regulations'. By this claim Yeboah overstates how powerful their role is. Teachers do not feel they have full agency in shaping the curricula, policies and practices within their settings. Yeboah alludes to other evidence in the literature that suggests a need to equip teachers with the necessary tools to facilitate a smooth transition for the children (see, for example, Briggs & Potter, 1990). Whilst the EPPE project (see earlier) emphasized the importance of 'high quality' staff and training, Rogers and Rose (2007) have found evidence to suggest that practitioners in the Foundation

stage lack confidence, knowledge and training to teach early literacy and numeracy through play activities. They highlight a recent study (Adam et al 2004) that exposed the gaps between questionnaires and interviews with practitioners and the data collected through observation of practice. The conclusion in this study stated that children received a better quality experience in their first year of the Foundation stage compared to the second.

The detailed views, perceptions and attitudes gathered in the previous study contrast with a larger study targeting Iceland and Australia which focused on transition to school practices. Einarsdottir, Perry and Dockett's (2008) large survey across Australia and Iceland was constrained by the nature of the closed questions in the survey used. The findings revealed that teachers believed that talking to parents around the time of transition was useful, reading the records of the upcoming children was relevant and sending a letter home pre and post transition may have some value. The methodological process did not allow for exploration of views and more fine-grained perceptions, however a few open-ended questions at the end of the survey lent this study a qualitative angle. A key point was made about the relationship between the Pre school staff and the teachers in the Primary School which support previous work by the authors: that is, the relationships between the two settings are not often based on professional respect and trust. Teachers' perceptions are explored as part of an Irish study carried out by Kiernan et al (2008). This large-scale study endeavoured to investigate the factors that contribute to school readiness

among disadvantaged children and families. There were no comparison measures between the school and Pre school thus the study failed to capture the contrast between the two systems. However the thematic component of the study provided some insights into teachers' negative and positive beliefs and attitudes about transition and where capacity lies. Teachers most frequently cited supportive families and having parents/older siblings who promote learning as helping children's early school progress. They most frequently mentioned poor parenting practices as likely to hinder children's progress. The researchers note the fact that they also mentioned other factors in children's lives, families, school and environment and this might indicate that the factors influencing school progress are systemic in nature.

The research highlights another theme core to making a successful transition. Margetts (1997) first explains how children are required through transition to experience a number of 'discontinuities' – physical discontinuities of setting as well as discontinuities with curricula, teaching staff, methodologies and peer groups. When children are familiar with their new situation, when parents are informed about the new school and where parents can provide information regarding the child's development and prior experience, the transition can be expected to be easier. In Yeboah's (2002) review of the factors that make transition successful, Wartmann and Kindergarten (1997) are mentioned for their research into the good practice in transition for children with SEN. Here the relationship between the school and the parent was vital. Successful transition was located when individual planning, family

support and collaborative working occurred between the Pre school and the school.

The literature review by Rogers and Rose (2007) makes some interesting concluding points in relation to social competence and transition to Key stage 1. A gap for practitioners within Primary schools is that there need to be specialist teachers within the reception classroom who are able to deliver the appropriate assessments and curriculum for these children. Where classrooms can be reorganised, they should be redesigned with a view to encourage active modes of learning and social interaction. Another key message from the review considered how the curriculum is explained to parents. Parents need guidance about what are realistic academic expectations for this age group. Rose and Rogers clearly see the introduction of the EYFS as an opportunity strip away some of the formal learning in the reception year by offering play-based and child-initiated experiences. But even as the EYFS takes root there are other pressures from the curriculum including National Strategies in Literacy and Numeracy that threaten its integrity.

In conclusion, this review has aimed to explore the current research on children's transition from Pre school to Primary school within the context of recent changes to the Early Years curriculum. The aim has been to review and understand the key factors that enable success and inhibit academic and social failure. Current research makes long reaching claims about the lasting effects of smooth transition and these are especially linked to childrens' emotional and social competence. The EYFS brings a change in pedagogy and practice within the Reception

year. One focus in this review has been on how teachers perceive transition and how they shape their practice to accommodate it. The evidence suggests that teachers prefer informal handing-over practices and are somewhat pressured by curricular demands. The Early Years Transition and Special Educational Needs Project (Taggart, Sammons, Smees, Sylva, Melhuish, Siraj-Blatchford, Elliot and Lunt 2005) conclude with a clear message which is also reiterated in the research evidence: Early identification practices need to be shored up with practitioners who are confident about their skills and who are also reassured that they will receive strengthened support to intervene early and carry out supportive measures. It is the spontaneous use of 'psychological discourse' that is of interest here. This perspective provides the basis for key ideas and questions around children's developing social competence: How do children talk/react naturally about their feelings and those of others in their own environments? What are the differences between adults and peer interaction in terms of how children are supported to begin and develop their emotion understanding within the preschool context? Does this vary across different contexts? Do parents and teachers perceptions differ regarding social competence and if so does this have an effect on the way that children are supported to become more socially competent within the preschool setting?

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