

**An exploration into the understanding of the responsibility for teaching children and young people with challenging behaviours: perspectives on supporting these pupils in mainstream classrooms.**

Submitted by Jill Ruth Corfield to the University of Exeter as the thesis for the degree of Doctor of Education in Special Educational Needs in October 2014.

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature.....

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Dedicated to the memory of my father who died on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2015, who suggested that I get this done and then get out and do something wild!

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## **Abstract**

The overall aim of this research is to explore my interest in the influences on teachers' attitudes towards behaviours which challenge them and to illuminate my experiences and perspectives through those of others. It sets out to explore and to gain understanding about what affects how teachers feel about supporting pupils in mainstream classrooms with behavioural difficulties.

As a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) in a secondary school, I saw the difference a teacher's style of classroom leadership could have on children's engagement with school and learning. I became extremely frustrated with the way that some teachers appeared to have little inclination to meet the needs of some of the pupils in their classes, particularly those with special educational needs. Comments such as "S/he's one of yours! YOU deal with it," because the children were on the Special Educational Needs Register, summarised this. Here, I attempt to scrutinise what may affect teachers' understanding of their responsibility towards the specific special need of challenging behaviour.

For the research, fifteen in-depth interviews were carried out with a variety of professionals whose roles involved supporting the needs of pupils whose behaviour can challenge teachers. All the participants were asked the same questions and a hierarchical questioning structure was used (Tomlinson 1989). The responses indicated a diverse range of factors influencing teachers' tolerance towards challenging behaviours and these were used to construct a framework which gathers these together.

The research has implications in two main areas; the links between school ethos and teachers feeling supported and able to manage challenging behaviours and the development of opportunities to share good practice.

## Introduction

In this research, I attempt to scrutinise what affects how teachers understand their responsibility for teaching children and young people with behaviours which challenge them and to explore what teachers feel about supporting pupils with them in mainstream classrooms. Teaching is a complex activity and educating children a complicated task; observing a good teacher at work belies the attitudes, knowledge and skills which underpin successful learning. On one level, what the teacher does in the classroom is only part of the bigger picture of a child's learning experiences. More widely, choices such as educating children in similar age groups, in large buildings and the inclusion (or not) of those with additional needs makes assumptions about how society thinks children learn best.

Over time, my professional journey has provided me with experience, confidence and competencies and has brought me to this place in my thinking. After a two year NNEB (National Nursery Exam Board) course I worked as a live-in, and then a live-out nanny; an experience that gave me insight into children's development and their behaviour away from an educational setting. After a four year primary science degree, I graduated and have since worked in primary, special and secondary schools.

As a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) in a secondary school, I saw the benefits of good classroom practice and the effects of poor classroom practice on children's engagement with school and learning. I became extremely frustrated with the way that some teachers who, although qualified to teach, appeared to have little knowledge or inclination towards meeting the needs of some of the pupils in their classes, particularly those with special educational needs, and who viewed the expectation for inclusion in classes solely as a political ploy to save money rather than a professional responsibility. If the apparent lack of willingness to meet a range of needs was frustrating for me, comments such as "S/he's one of yours! YOU deal with it," because these children were on the Special Educational Needs Register, were even more so. I understood that this might be due to either skills or knowledge gaps or both, therefore my inclination was to become involved in attempts to bridge these gaps which ultimately led to my being assessed as an Advanced Skills Teacher (AST).

As an AST, I worked alongside colleagues at my own and other schools to improve their understanding and practice. I also wrote and delivered training courses aimed at those with different levels of experience with colleagues from the wider profession in an attempt to broaden practising teachers' confidence and competence. Following this, I taught at a Higher Education Institution (HEI) where trainee teachers had specific input into supporting pupils with special needs and where there were specialist tutors to do this. This enabled me to widen my understanding of the importance of supporting teachers to develop positive attitudes, knowledge and skills at the earliest stages of their careers. Despite my own career path being focused on special educational needs, I made a conscious decision to teach on the Professional Studies parts of the HEI courses rather than as an SEN specialist. This is based on my belief that SEN practice should be integral and firmly embedded in the everyday practice of class teachers, enabling them to teach a diverse range of abilities and needs that reflect the variety of individuals in society, rather than the remit of a 'specialist' teacher. In other words, this is about teachers recognising their social and moral responsibilities to welcome and meet the needs of a diverse range of learners in their classrooms. Separating the special educational needs component of the course away from the subject component seemed to me to exacerbate the 'specialism' or the 'separateness' of it.

Over the duration of my EdD and as this research has progressed, I have come to see that this is rather a simplistic way of viewing the situation. Indeed, my current position as a SENCo at an education centre (until recently a pupil referral unit) allows me to work with children with additional behaviour needs who are separated from mainstream schools. Some students who attend the centre may be in danger of being permanently excluded from mainstream school and some will already have been excluded whilst others have been referred because of emotional and social difficulties.

The experiences described form the basis of my interest in this research area. I understand that there are challenges for teachers in busy mainstream classrooms to support all children with additional needs within their class groups and that for this reason those with behaviour needs may be less welcomed than those children with other kinds of special educational needs. That said, I have seen that children and young people can be very kind and supportive towards each other and that schools

and teachers are in a good position to lead this. Furthermore, I have also observed that some teachers appear more successful than others at supporting those children and young people with labels of 'challenging' behaviour in mainstream classes. My aim in this research is to explore my interest in the influences of teachers' understanding of the responsibility for teaching children and young people with challenging behaviours and what affects how teachers feel about supporting pupils with them in mainstream classrooms.

As a culmination of all of my experiences of teaching, I wish to augment and illuminate my own experiences and perspectives through those of others.

## **CHAPTER 1: Literature review**

### **Introduction**

This chapter describes the education system for children in England and the place of special educational needs (SEN) within it. The discussion is set in the context of historical perspectives which have influenced what currently exists and looks at teachers' attitudes to supporting pupils with additional needs. At the time of the research, Behavioural, Emotional and Social difficulties (BESD) were a discreet area of need included within Special Educational Needs legislation (SEN CoP 2001). In September 2014 The Code was updated and this category of need no longer exists. Instead, Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties recognise that these types of difficulties manifest in many ways, including challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviours (Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014). Here, I consider which behaviours might challenge schools and explore historical perspectives which underpin them. Following this, I turn my attention to the development of teacher attitudes and refer to initial teacher education (ITE) where attitudes are developed (Avramidis Bayliss and Burden 2000, Brownlea and Carrington 2000) and skills and knowledge learned. Finally, I present a synthesis of the research which explores how teachers understand their responsibilities to teach pupils with behaviour which challenges them.

Relevant literature is reviewed under the following sub-headings:

- 1.1 Understanding teachers' responsibilities to teach children with special educational needs (SEN) and some historical perspectives which underpin them.
- 1.2 Challenging behaviours as an SEN (Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties BESD) and teachers' attitudes towards them.
- 1.3 S/He's one of yours; factors which influence how teachers understand their responsibilities.

## **1.1 Understanding teachers' responsibilities to teach children with special educational needs (SEN) and some historical perspectives which underpin them.**

In England, children attend compulsory schooling from the term in which they turn five until they are sixteen years of age, and in employment, education or training until eighteen (Education and Skills Act 2008). For some, there are options of beginning school earlier both in formal educational settings and in private nurseries. In the state school system children are generally educated in schools within commutable distances in groups of similar aged children of approximately thirty pupils. Although there is a system of parental choice, some schools are oversubscribed whilst others have vacancies.

Some parents choose to pay for private education where they can expect smaller class sizes, extended school hours and greater resourcing. Pupils are assessed at the end of each key stage where, since 1988, there has been a National Curriculum (NC) (revised 1999, 2004, 2012). Its aim was that all children should have access to a broad and balanced curriculum and to provide educational opportunities for all pupils to learn and achieve as well as to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The most important assessments occur at age 16 when pupils sit public examinations, the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSEs). Once students complete these, they have the choice to go on to further education for further academic study or training or to gain employment.

This educational system has developed from and is informed by what has gone before it. Trohler (2007) highlighted the importance of understanding context because what becomes dominant historically informs how concepts are constructed. This research focuses on education and specifically challenging behaviour which is often considered a 'special' or 'additional' educational need. Historically, disability (including learning disability) has been perceived in predominantly negative ways (Hodkinson and Vickerman 2009) and is now briefly described.

Historically, some members of society were considered to have less desirable traits associated with religious notions of punishment and sinning and been treated in

negative and exclusionary ways (Corbett 1996). As long ago as 1895, three types of childhood deviation were referred to as 'intellectual dullness, emotional instability and deviations from acceptable conduct' (Cooper 1999). The eugenics movement supported programmes of social improvement encouraging those with good hereditary qualities to marry well and have many children while those who were 'unfit' were discouraged from doing so (MacKenzie 1976). Whilst these terms did not carry the same degree of negativity as they do now, it is still the case that there was a group of children and young people who had not been included in the parameters of the mainstream school settings (Cooper and Jacobs 2011).

Alongside this rather gloomy picture, there existed charitable and philanthropic institutions which pioneered various forms of care and developed the pattern of educating children in the segregation model of "special" schools which were usually residential (Leyden and Miller 1998). Two examples follow; Mary Carpenter set up a number of schools for juvenile offenders where discipline was maintained through firmness and kindness (Cooper 1999). Homer Lane set up a small community in 1913 which catered for delinquents and focused on a system of self-government whereby the children and young people took an active part in the running of the community and for self-discipline. There were other examples and the crucial focus was the quality of the relationships between adults and children. In order to support good quality relationships adults had to be strong, forgiving, tolerant, resilient and moral (Cooper 1999). The idea that moral conduct and emotional difficulties could be improved through environmental changes developed the idea that children's 'deviations from acceptable conduct' were not fixed (Cooper 1999).

The 1944 Education Act was designed to challenge the deprivation which became apparent when urban children were evacuated during WWII by raising compulsory school age to fourteen. It brought children in to classrooms that had previously not been there and many of them found it a difficult adjustment (Cole 2007). In 1945, Handicapped Pupils and Health Service Regulations introduced 'maladjustment' as a term to describe such pupils, along with ten other terms used to represent groups of children for whom special educational measures were required. Maladjustment attributed the problem to the child and implied that they needed to be 'treated and cured' in order to be able to fit in (Cooper, Smith and Upton 1994:21). These areas of

handicap from the 1945 Act were informed by a medical approach and the emphasis was on 'diagnosis', 'treatment' and 'cure'. The assumption was that there existed a clearly distinguishable group of pupils that required specialist help (MacBeath, Galton, Steward, MacBeath and Page, 2006). It followed that any child who failed to conform was labelled as maladjusted (or similar) and the issue remained theirs, or 'within-child'. However, Ravenette (1972) criticised the use of such labels as those which might reflect that teachers may be disturbed by pupils' behaviours. The Warnock Committee report (1978) about special educational needs, recognised the lexicon of 'eleven areas of handicap' from the 1945 Regulations was inappropriate. They also thought that all children shared the "common goals of independence, enjoyment and understanding" (1978:12) and emphasised the desirability that children should and could be "integrated" into local community schools. In order for integration to happen, *teachers* needed to understand special educational needs provision and procedures and to understand their responsibility for them and work closely with parents. Furthermore, SEN would become a taught element in all teacher education courses. These recommendations were enshrined in the Education Act of 1981 and led to an increase of children previously labelled as maladjusted being taught in day schools (Cooper 1999). In this Act, the term used was emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). The perception that it could be the school environment to which the children were maladjusted grew (Cooper 1999) as did the idea that settings could become more accessible to pupils. Nonetheless, there were still a number of 'units' for maladjusted pupils in existence which were not governed by minimum standards and were poorly resourced.

In 1988 the National Curriculum was rolled out to all mainstream settings. The curriculum was prescribed and focused on achievement which meant that children's progress was scrutinised against national measures. The following year the Elton Report (1989) was released. This looked at school discipline in general and at behaviour as a specific *educational* need, recognising that some children had additional behavioural support needs. The report surveyed teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards classroom behaviour and brought valuable insights into emotional and behavioural difficulties to mainstream teachers. The Education Acts of 1993 and 1994 established that local authorities should provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils, yet the focus on achievement and progress was maintained. With regard

to special needs they replaced the 1981 Act and aimed to rectify the lengthy delays which had become part of the statementing process. Furthermore, they established the right of parents to query local authority decisions with regard to the education of their children through a tribunal system. Significantly, the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (SEN CoP 1994) guided schools to identify needs early and recognised that the majority of pupils with special needs would be educated in mainstream schools.

The New Labour Government of 1997 was elected on the manifesto promise of “Education. Education. Education.” (Labour manifesto 1996) To this end, there were a number of strategies designed to support the emphasis on pupils’ progress and achievement such as reducing class sizes, teaching phonics, the creation of education action zones and the establishment of Advanced Skills Teachers (ASTs). On taking office they published a SEN Green Paper: Excellence for all children: Meeting Special Educational Needs (DfEE 1997). Here they set out their policy promoting the central values of responding to diversity, overcoming barriers to learning and assessment for all. The aim was to spread good practice in order to improve the achievement of *all* pupils using approaches to reduce the gap between lower and higher attainers. As with Elton, there was an acknowledgment that behavioural difficulties may be a product of a wide range of factors, and that teachers and schools may need to do more than ‘manage’ classroom behaviour in order to support some pupils to have their learning needs met. It was also the first time that the term ‘inclusion’ was used in policy. In 2000 all schools were provided with copies of *The Index for Inclusion* (Booth and Ainscow, 2000 (updated in 2012)) and expected to go through a process of self-review and inclusive school development by identifying barriers to participation enabling access to access education. Foci included building supportive communities and fostering high achievement for all staff and students. A further document, *Removing the Barriers to Achievement* (2004), proposed social inclusion and integrated working between professionals in order to support pupils to achieve. However, it has been criticised for failing to recognise the complex and controversial nature of inclusion (Lloyd 2008).

The SEN CoP was updated in 2001 and emphasised preventative work to ensure that children’s special educational needs were identified quickly and early action taken to

meet those needs. Monitoring and reporting on progress were important with specific targets being set for children. As in previous legislation, there was reference to developing the strong partnerships between parents, schools and other agencies crucial to success in removing barriers to participation and learning.

Having briefly introduced and summarised the historical context of 'special' educational needs in order to understand what informs concepts (Trohler, 2007), the following section will identify how special educational needs are now conceived and defined.

### **Defining special educational needs (SEN)**

It is commonly understood that learning is a complex activity and children make progress at different rates and have preferences for particular subjects (Hart, Dixon, Drummond and McIntyre 2004). When planning lessons, teachers are required to account for this by carefully considering how they organise their lessons, classrooms and the resources they use. They are required to select appropriate ways to ensure progression of all pupils which is often described as differentiation (Teachers' Standards 2012). If pupils make slower progress or are having particular difficulties in one area, they may be given additional help or differentiated activities to help them access the curriculum in order to succeed. Just because pupils are receiving help in class or differentiated activities, this does not necessarily mean that they have special educational needs. Supporting learning is about the quality of children's experiences and how they are helped to learn, achieve and participate fully in the life of the school (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee report 2005-6).

Difficulties arise for practitioners, parents and others involved in the education system because of the contextual nature of a need. There may be circumstances where a significant need can be ameliorated with the right support and attitude or conversely, a simple need can be exacerbated by the absence of support or positive attitudes. There are a number of issues which can impact on children's learning and specifically their behaviour. Examples include family attitudes to education, disrupted relationships, difficulties in concentration, teachers' knowledge or a child being diagnosed with a

medical condition. Special educational need was defined in the 2001 Education Act (under which this research was carried out) in these terms;

Children have special educational needs if they have a *learning difficulty* which calls for *special educational provision* to be made for them. Children have a *learning difficulty* if they: a) have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age; or (b) have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local education authority (c) are under compulsory school age and fall within the definition at (a) or (b) above or would so do if special educational provision was not made for them.

And continued;

*Special educational provision* means: (a) for children of two or over, educational provision which is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally for children of their age in schools maintained by the LEA, other than special schools, in the area (b) for children under two, educational provision of any kind (SEN CoP (2001:6)

Schools must 'have regard' for the SEN Codes of Practice (1994, 2001 and 2014) all of which have adopted some form of graduated response in which pupils receive any necessary support as early as possible. In the 2001 Act, there were four dimensions of special educational need; Cognition and Learning, Sensory and/or Physical Impairment, Communication and Interaction and Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD). Vocabulary and acronyms such as Code of Practice (CoP), Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and School Action Plus (SA+) became part of contemporary educational lexicon. The 'staged' or graduated response to need has been articulated and ranges from early identification and in class support to the issuing of an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) (SENCoP 2014). Schools may aim to enhance their capacities to support pupils with SEN by building productive relationships with parents, compensating for environmental challenges and developing within school support systems. Conversely, environmental factors and feelings of lack of support can exacerbate even a minor need (Wearmouth, Glynn, Richmond and Berryman 2004).

In the 2001 Code of Practice (current when this research was carried out) behaviour was identified as a specific category of need within the context of emotional and social difficulties; Behavioural, Emotional and Social difficulties (BESD). However, 'emotion',

'behaviour' and 'social difficulties' are vague terms and like 'special' give very little clarity of meaning and so exacerbate the issues of identification. Visser (2003:15) noted how terms used throughout the 2001 CoP changed; 'EBD' was used and then "BESD" which exemplified the confusion around policy and practice. The need for radical reform was identified in the Green Paper (2011) Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability. It identified that the SEN CoP had not "kept pace with wider reforms" (2011:15) and referred to the perverse incentives to over identify children with special educational needs. There were issues with what was 'special' as well as the number of children identified as falling behind their peers. The Green Paper proposals were radical for the area of BESD stating that "the current category of BESD is unhelpful because it is overused and does not lead to the right support being in place" (2011:46) and it highlighted some complexities in this area; legislation, the existence of schools which are 'special' and specialist support services when schools are supposed to include, financial and governmental pressures. Ofsted (SEN and Disability review 2010) claimed that special needs were identified when really it was poor teaching and failure to intervene early enough which were responsible for some pupils' lack of progress. Pupils at the school action stage of educational need were much more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds and be absent from school and it was felt that better teaching and attention to raising attendance may address some of these needs. Nonetheless, there remained a lack of clarity regarding the relationship between special educational needs and socio-economic circumstances (Strand and Lindsay 2009). A crude measure of socio-economic status is the free school meal indicator (FSM) and the House of Commons Committee reported that in 2006, 13.6% of secondary and 16% of primary school children were eligible for FSM. For children with statements of special educational needs, the figures were 26.5% and 26% respectively, much higher than the general population. In April 2011, the 2010-15 Coalition Government introduced the Pupil Premium in an attempt to address the underlying inequalities between children eligible for free school meals (FSM) and their peers by ensuring that funding to tackle disadvantage reaches the pupils who need it most (DoE 2014).

It is understood that the *responsibility* to teach all children, including those with the SEN category of BESD, belongs to mainstream schools (SEN CoP 2001). Yet, there is an apparent mis-match between legislation and practical experience for some pupils.

In the case of behaviour, specialist alternative provision exists in the form of education centres or Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). Set up after the Education Act of 1996 they make provision for pupils who are excluded (or at risk of exclusion) from mainstream schools (Tutt 2007). Shearman (2003:55) noted that “there have been extreme difficulties and stresses in trying to include children with EBD”. She highlighted that whilst schools have done some restructuring for inclusion of children with for example, physical disabilities, there remain questions about what sort of restructuring there is for those with additional behaviour needs such as employing staff with a wider variety of skills like therapists and counsellors.

Having looked at historical perspectives and the identification of special educational needs, I will move on to behaviours which teachers find challenging.

## **1.2 Challenging behaviours as special educational needs (Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties BESD) and teachers’ attitudes towards them.**

Research identifies a variety of pupil activities which teachers have difficulties in managing such as high level aggressive actions (Elton 1989, Bielby, Sharp, Shuayb, Teeman, Keys and Benefield 2007) or low level, work avoidance and out of seat behaviours (Axup and Gersch 2008). Moving on to contemporary classrooms, I now look at legislation, research and models of how behaviour can be understood. I will then discuss how this understanding can inform and impact on classroom practice.

BESD, no longer exists as a category of special need and the new Code (2014) points teachers towards the Mental health and behaviour (2014) document to support meeting children’s behavioural needs. There are a number of issues which according to this document, may challenge schools such as conduct disorders, anxiety, depression, hyperkinetic disorders and attachment disorders. Children and young people may be affected by behavioural issues at different times during their education (Bowers 2001, Hanko 2002) and poor behaviour may be explained by a number of broad and vague unmet academic or emotional needs such as difficulty in accessing the curriculum or underlying causes such as responses to past incidents. They are commonly associated with disruptive behaviour and interpersonal conflict and disaffection with school (Cooper and Cefai 2013).

Schools may find themselves in difficult positions whereby they struggle to manage classroom behaviour as well as nurture the children and young people in their care (Maras, Moon and Gridley 2014). Hanko (2002) found that children described as 'difficult' increased levels of teachers' stress. Teachers leaving the profession citing behaviour as one of the factors, as well as pupils being excluded permanently from schools, are evidence that these tensions exist (Barmby 2006, MacBeath, Galton, Steward, MacBeath and Page 2006, Harris, Vincent, Thomson and Toalster 2006). Research shows that continual negative media reporting of issues in school such as behaviour, affect recruitment and retention in the profession (Bielby, Sharp, Shuayb, Teeman, Keys and Benefield 2007). Schaubman, Stetson and Plog (2011) found that stress for teachers increased when they felt unable to educate students in their class groups. Research discovered that similarly negative terms such as 'nutter' and 'heller' existed in staff rooms and that by focusing the need on the child, the requirement to question school regimes or teaching practices was removed (Cooper, Smith and Upton 1994).

There have been concerns regarding the drive to increase teaching standards and the narrow measures of this (Croll 2001). Current policy arrangements place considerable demands on mainstream teachers faced with an increasingly diverse population of pupils (Evans and Lunt 2002, Avramidis and Kalyva 2007). Schools are under pressure to ensure and provide evidence that all their pupils make the expected levels of progress, yet for a child with a special educational need, measures of progress may be less than expected of those without any additional need (Wedell 2008). Rather than promoting inclusion, published measurements of success and progress may challenge schools which fully adhere to inclusive practice where overall school results can be brought down by pupils who do not attain such high grades (Hodkinson 2010). MacBeath et al (2006) commented that as schools include more "disturbed and damaged children the need for pastoral care increases commensurably" (2006:25), with the effect that this diverts teachers from their other duties which may support pupils' academic progress.

There are a variety of theoretical perspectives which can explain challenging behaviours and these are now briefly described.

Simply put, challenging behaviours are said to occur on a continuum which “overlaps with psychiatric disorder and ends with disruptive behaviour” (Poulou and Norwich 2002:112). Teachers may describe and label *pupils* as challenging, rather than their behaviour (Orsati and Causton-Theokaris 2013). This response indicates the focus as the child’s problem, rather than considering wider factors which may explain the behaviour (Davis and Florian 2004) and as in the comment above (MacBeath et al 2006) the terminology “disturbed and damaged” places the problem firmly with the child.

A behavioural perspective to understanding challenging behaviour focuses on behaviour modification with the emphasis on compliance. Desired behaviour is encouraged through positive reinforcement of praise and reward and undesirable behaviour is sanctioned. There is a plethora of literature on classroom management such as Rogers (1997, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012), Long (2008) and Cowley (2001, 2013). Some limitations of this approach include whether the modified behaviours can be transferred to other situations and whether the child learns to self-manage without the external reinforcement (Maag 2007). Difficulties in compliance may mean that children are perceived to be *choosing* to behave inappropriately (Broomhead 2013).

Cognitive behavioural approaches to understanding behaviour extend it to include social aspects. The conceptual understanding is that a person has maladaptive responses to situations with high levels of hostile cues to which they respond. The model makes attempts to support the individual to reflect upon and take responsibility for their behaviours by enhancing self-regulation. Therapies attempt to modify cognitive distortions and increase self-regulation by teaching problem solving skills with range of possibilities. An example is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) which examines emotions and feelings and attempts to re-frame these more positively. It attempts to explore how individuals think about an issue and to have an influence on how you behave as a result. It does not focus on causes, but looks for ways to improve states of mind towards issues (Royal College of Psychiatrists 2015). However, a limitation to this approach is that participants must fully engage with the process.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) proposed a systemic way of understanding behaviour with the child at its centre of overlapping contextual influences. He believed that a child is influenced by their immediate environment *and* wider factors such as the community and school. So if a teacher wished to understand a child's behaviour, they would need to understand the child's wider world. To support their behaviour, teachers would look at group and school systems. Systemic models look at the bigger picture and are based on the premise that the purposes of human behaviours are essentially interactions between humans and their environment (Cooper, Smith and Upton 1994). An educational example would look beyond an individual's oppositional behaviour in the classroom to analyse family and home life to improve it in school. Molner and Lindquist (1989) suggested a systemic approach to understanding where teachers see the goal driven nature of oppositional behaviour as fulfilling a need for the child. Once the barrier, such as confrontation with a teacher, is removed the behaviour loses its original effect. However, limits to this approach are that humans are not seen to be wholly free to behave as they choose and there can be an over emphasis on contextual factors and ignoring child factors (Cooper, Smith and Upton 1994). More recently, Cooper and Cefai (2013) proposed that holistic views of schools' roles in supporting social and emotional development is thought to have a positive influence on meeting children's needs. Teacher relationships are key and teachers need to appreciate the cumulative influence that warm relationships can have on pupils' mental health and resilience. In addition, strategies for promoting positive social and emotional engagement are proactive and beneficial to all children, not just as a response to difficulties. An example is whole school programmes such as SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning 2005) where children are taught to understand and manage feelings and relationships. Ofsted (2005) and the Steer Reports (2005) stressed links between good behaviour, teaching and learning. Strong leadership, a sense of community and good links with parents were all seen as supportive to this approach.

Bio-medical-neuro-psychological approaches aim to understand how behaviour and cognition are influenced by brain functioning and are concerned with the diagnosis and treatment of behavioural and cognitive effects of neurological disorders. The notion is that the problem is due to faulty chemistry in the brain (Brandau and Pretis 2004). Interventions tend towards the medical, an example being the prescription of Ritalin for

attention difficulties such as AD/HD. Neuropsychology studies the structure and function of the brain and how these may impact on behaviour with the aim of diagnosis and treatment. Limits for behaviour are the side effects of the drugs, the medicalisation of the behaviour, that is, the diagnosis and solving of the 'problem' with the administration of drugs.

The bio-psycho-social (BPS) model identifies a number of related areas which explain behaviours. It is a general model or approach stating that biological, psychological (which entails thoughts, emotions, and behaviours), and social (socio-economical, socio-environmental, and cultural) factors, all play a significant role in human functioning. The 'bio' part refers to genetic inheritance and biochemistry in the body. The 'psycho' part refers to distortion of thought patterns and the 'social' part refers to difficulties such as attachment and separation. Rather than separating the parts there is continual interaction between the three elements within the child as well as between them and their environments. A key feature of this perspective is a positive change in one area can bring about change in others because the child responds in new and more functional ways (Cooper 2008, Cole and Knowles 2011).

Models of understanding classroom behaviours can support teacher responses. An example of this is a teacher's ability and willingness to make a compulsory subject/topic relevant to pupils, and who as a consequence may be willing to engage (Visser 2003). Furthermore, Visser made links between pupils' damaged confidence and impact on their learning behaviour, suggesting that there are some curricula factors such as fear of failure which may create emotional and behavioural difficulties. Wedell (2008) suggested that most people would agree that there are inadequacies in the education system but that some pupils are more 'vulnerable' to these than others because they have less resilience to these inadequacies. Pupils with behaviour which challenges teachers are often less resilient as they have fewer personal resources to draw upon to resolve them (Efrati-Virter and Margalit 2009). For example, for some pupils, the fact that they are grouped with thirty other pupils can be an issue even before learning demands begin to be made on them. Supporting these pupils in mainstream classrooms to access an unsuitable curriculum may even construct their deviance given that the curriculum is inappropriate to meet their needs (Wishart, Taylor and Shultz 2006). Gotch and Ellis (2006) argue parts of the compulsory

curriculum can only be justified by viewing it as a national measure of academic achievement rather than something that will be of life-long use to individuals. Some pupils may feel unwelcome in schools and therefore fail to attend as a coping strategy (Ofsted 2010) and consequently fail to access the educational support which could really benefit them.

Understanding the perspectives described above can support and inform teachers' classroom practice. In an extensive review of effective approaches to inclusive practices, Rix, Hall, Nind, Sheehy and Wearmouth (2009) highlighted the shortage of research into strategies to support pupils with BESD, although it also recognised that those who saw inclusion as part of their role as a class teacher were more likely to have positive interactions with pupils and plan effectively for their progress. They summarised research based strategies and implications for teachers and acknowledged the "complexities of a diverse mainstream classroom" (2009:92) as well as reflecting on the perceived role of teachers themselves to teach all the pupils in their class group. Brusling and Pepin (2003) were clear that preconditions for successful inclusion included teachers' attitudes, skills and knowledge. If teachers were not positive about meeting a range of special educational needs or felt there was a gap in their confidence regarding skills, knowledge or attitudes, there may not be successful inclusive practice in their classrooms. Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000) reported that teachers who perceived themselves as competent enough to cater for pupils with special educational needs, held positive attitudes towards inclusion. Nevertheless, a number of researchers have asserted that good special needs teaching is good teaching for all children; despite the existence of the idea of a specialist pedagogy (Hanko 2003, Peacey 2005, Norwich and Lewis 2007). Teachers already possess the skills necessary to teach children with special educational needs (Corbett 2001, Hanko 2002).

Within the policy driven changes of recent years, such as the National Curriculum, Literacy and Numeracy strategies (DFE 1988, 1998 and 1999) with their emphasis on pupil performance and attainment, it has been suggested that teachers need only be trained as deliverers of a nationalised curriculum at the expense of a responsive and active pedagogy (Davies and Ferguson 1997, Ball 2003, Edwards and Protheroe 2003). A shift in focus towards inclusion necessitates a change in pre-service training

(Brownlee and Carrington 2000, Golder, Norwich and Bayliss 2005). Much research on creating positive attitudes amongst trainee teachers has been done; Dew-Hughes and Brayton (1997), Robertson (1999), Garner (2000), Pearson (2005), Mintz (2007) and McIntyre (2009). Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000) found that younger teachers were more likely to have positive attitudes to integration. Enabling teachers to support all pupils' effective learning should begin during their training. Trainees should have opportunities to develop knowledge and skills in order to respond to the range of needs (Pearson 2005) in classrooms. A difficulty is that trainees can be particularly susceptible to poor classroom behaviour because children may not attribute proper teacher status to them (Stephens, Kyriacou and Tonnessen, 2005). In addition, training must be seen as an ongoing process rather than a series of acquisitions both during and after formal training; new teachers should not be viewed as the finished article and commitment to lifelong professional learning is important (Harrison 2006, House of Commons 2006). Steer (2005) recommended ongoing training and the planning for good behaviour as part of school development, repeating the value of training teachers, involving parents and working with wider agencies such as Child and Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The report recommended the use of Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) (DCSF) 2004) and the Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) (DCSF 2004). The Behaviour and Attendance strand of the National Strategies (DCSF 2004) was also developed and aimed to train middle and senior school leaders to develop staff skills.

The discussion thus far has highlighted some of the conflicts and issues around special educational needs, specifically behavioural difficulties, including the challenges of identification and support of children with them within the mainstream education system. It then considered how teachers gain necessary skills and knowledge in order to support this diverse group of pupils. I now move on to explore issues surrounding the perspectives on supporting pupils with behaviours which challenge them.

### **1.3 “S/he’s one of yours!” Factors which influence how teachers understand their responsibilities.**

Most people would not disagree with inclusive principles (Oliver 1996) and it has been shown above that teachers are crucial in the successful execution of inclusive

legislation and philosophies (Hodkinson 2010). Legislation (SEN CoP 2001) makes it clear that teachers are responsible for all the children in their class groups, yet it has been shown that in practice, this does not represent the reality for some pupils with behavioural needs. “If class teachers do not accept that education for all pupils as an integral part of their job, they will try to ensure that someone else (often the specialist teacher) takes responsibility for pupils with SEN and will organise covert segregation in the school” (The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education 2003:12).

At this point, it seems pertinent to focus on teachers and their role in classroom leadership and managing challenging behaviour, although given that there are a number of variables, this is a complex discussion. Some examples will serve to illustrate the point. A pupil arriving late to a class already knows that they are late and there may be a variety of reasons for this. When deciding their response, the teacher will consider a range of factors such as whether the pupil is often late, if they are to be believed when they give their reason or if they disrupt the lesson following their late arrival. The teacher has a variety of responses available to them such as welcoming the pupil in to the room, acknowledging their arrival and requesting them to settle quickly or humiliating the pupil in front of their peers by publically chastising or disciplining them. In addition, some teachers are more bothered by late arrivals than others. Some are more adept at encouraging pupils to want to participate in their lessons and encouraging them to arrive on time. Others will get irritated by low level disruption whilst others will ignore it. As the professional, it is the teacher, who responds to the late arrival of the pupil and sets the tone of the interaction. The response may result in a number of consequences such as a late slip, a confrontation or an immediate removal from the room. These will elicit responses from the pupil which may escalate the initial behaviour. Again, the teacher has choices about whether they de-escalate or escalate, for by welcoming a late pupil in to a room there is more likely to be a positive outcome. In addition, the same teacher may respond in a different way to the same behaviour if they are in a poor mood, or they are tired and a usually well handled situation may have a negative outcome. My perspective on how teachers react to challenges is informed by professional experience which I will now endeavour to make explicit. In the first instance, renaming ‘challenging behaviours’ to ‘behaviours which challenge’ individual teachers, illustrates a fundamental underlying

assumption; it is the teacher who should be the professional adult in control with the skill to turn situations around. There are individual differences in what teachers find challenging and this is not fixed. Children and young people with challenging behaviours are not a homogenous group (House of Commons 2010) yet there are some teachers who are more successful at turning situations around.

As an Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) I visited many different schools and it was clear that schools 'felt' different when entering them. Indeed the Elton (1989) Committee members were struck by differences in the atmosphere within schools and those with the most positive atmosphere could not simply be explained by home backgrounds or the school's geographical area. Disparities can be found between schools in the same area; in one, visitors may feel welcome and in another, an intruder (Gruenert and Whitaker 2015). A highly motivated workforce can ameliorate for difficult circumstances in schools as well as challenging circumstances beyond school (Nieto 2005). Improved connections between school and children's wider worlds may increase understanding of pupils' cultures and support teachers to make considerations in their interactions (Hargreaves and Fullan (1998). Teachers are individuals with personal responses to classroom interactions; relationships between all members of the class play a role in creating atmospheres (Efrati-Virter and Margalit 2009). As noted earlier, there is anecdotal evidence suggesting that some teachers appear to be able to build relationships and support the learning of even the most challenging of pupils. Understanding that the time of day and curricula demands can affect pupils' behaviour, some teachers attempt to ameliorate for it, thus reducing behaviours which might challenge others (Wearmouth, Glynn, Richmond and Berryman 2004). Expectations in schools where the responsibility of pupils remains with the teacher (even they have been sent out as a punishment) may encourage teachers to work harder to keep their pupils with them (Clegg 2011). Indeed, anecdotally, there is evidence to support this approach, whereby senior leaders will collect pupils to support teachers, yet will also require the teachers to follow it up with a sanction, phonecall home or work being provided.

Hanko (2002) found there was sometimes a perception that children with challenging behaviours should be helped by experts rather than class teachers, as in the comment "S/he's one of yours". It has been noted too that "special school provision was thought

to be particularly appropriate for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties” (Croll 2001:139). What is seen frequently in the classrooms (or outside them in the corridors) of schools are pupils who have been sent out of their classroom, awaiting another member of staff of higher status, a special knowledge or a better relationship with the pupil to come and ‘deal’ with them. If teachers are sending pupils out of classrooms there are limits to what they are able, or feel able to manage in the classroom. Evidence presented by Broomhead (2013) suggested that teachers and parents of pupils with BESD find it more difficult to establish productive relationships and this itself may have an impact on how teachers *feel* towards certain children in their classrooms and it also is understood that children are very sensitive to these sorts of messages (Poulou and Norwich 2002). A correlation has been found between school enjoyment and school engagement (Gutman and Vorhaus 2012) and educational success,

We know that some children who feel excluded or are actually excluded from mainstream education have been struggling for some time for reasons such as poor attendance, behaviour or because of a special educational need, sometimes exacerbated by the school failing to support these needs (Taylor 2012). Parents and children may feel excluded or unwelcomed in school due to assumptions being made about their behaviours (Croll and Moses 1985, The Elton Report 1989, Miller 1999, Evans and Lunt 2002, Ofsted 2010, Broomhead 2013). Orsati and Causton-Theoharis (2012) found that schools excluded pupils they found challenging, in order to support other pupils by maintaining control in class groups. Evans and Lunt (2002) reported unanimity in responses indicating that children with emotional and behavioural difficulties were the most difficult to include in mainstream schools and Croll and Moses (2000) that these children could be regarded as exceptions to the principles of inclusion. Davis and Florian (2004) indicated that despite an emphasis on inclusion, many responses to BESD included relocation.

Given that there is understanding of the importance surrounding teachers’ attitudes, attempts have been made to support teachers to develop positive attitudes through improved knowledge and understanding. During training teachers are forming their identity as a professional and one would expect that it is at this time that they are most receptive to new ideas. It seems an ideal time to introduce positive experiences and

attitudes towards children and young people with a variety of additional needs. Using approaches such as building relationships, improving skills and understanding to inform teacher confidence and competence, Richards (2011) carried out a small study in which trainee teachers were provided with opportunities to work one-to-one with pupils with special educational needs. Trainees felt more skilled and confident in their teaching as well as more able to approach more experienced colleagues for support. A similar programme was implemented by Golder, Norwich and Bayliss (2005) where Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students worked using a case study approach in which a key aim was to build a relationship with the pupil studied. The aim was that strategies and understanding would be generalised to wider teaching and although results were varied, it is an approach that has been taken up in other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with some success. Other approaches to support teachers have included a manual for non-specialist HEI lecturers in areas of special educational needs including BESD. Teacher efficacy appears to be a good predictor of attitude towards inclusion (Sharma, Loreman and Forlin 2012). However, for practical school experiences, HEIs are only permitted to use schools which have been judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted. With specific reference to behaviour, there is some evidence that whilst in schools during training, trainees are given easier classes to teach. As a result, they may not get experience with children with challenging behaviours. Since September 2013, HEIs have been able to use alternative provision for placements, but as yet there is only anecdotal evidence as to how well this may support student teachers' development.

At the outset of this paper, I referred to personal experiences. As a SENCo in a large secondary school, the comment "S/he is one of yours" was one I heard frequently at the outset of my time there from colleagues who were having difficulties in their classrooms. When I became a SENCo in 2001, the role was perceived very differently and co-existed with a model of 'motherly helpers'. If a child was experiencing some difficulty in class, the difficulty was perceived as the child's and if they were included on the SEN Register, staff were liable to hand over the responsibility of 'sorting them out' to me in the sentence, "S/he is one of yours".

My personal position begins from the premise that teachers should have positive attitudes towards all pupils which is informed by genuine regard for children and young people who have a variety of educational needs. If they find a pupil's behaviour

challenges them, the responsibility is theirs to look at the bigger picture, explore and reflect to support the pupil in different ways. My experience and research lead me to believe that 'challenging' behaviour is socially constructed by an educational system which emphasises control in classrooms and high academic achievement. It appears to me that some teachers see the responsibility of finding better solutions for their pupils as beyond them. How behaviours are understood is informed by a combination of numerous, complex relationships between factors which are both historical and contemporary. They may also vary at different times in the school day, week or year (Nieto 2005). Despite all this, there is evidence that many teachers are successful and do achieve good outcomes with children and young people with labels of challenging behaviour (Poulou and Norwich 2002, Norwich 2003, Nind and Wearmouth 2006, Wedell 2008). I have also seen and worked with teachers who *do* appear to be able to support young people with behaviours which some consider challenging and have worked with young people who are able to articulate why they behave in ways which they know challenges teachers. My position is that teachers need to make greater efforts to *understand* behaviour and formulate positive approaches to it in order to meet additional behavioural needs and so that pupils are able to do as well as they can (Schaubman, Stetson and Plog 2001). My experiences also inform the position that teachers are the adult professionals in the teacher/child relationship and should be in a position whereby they have the knowledge, skills and understanding to de-escalate situations (Ginott 1978, Rogers 1995, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2002, Long 2000, 2008, Cowley 2001).

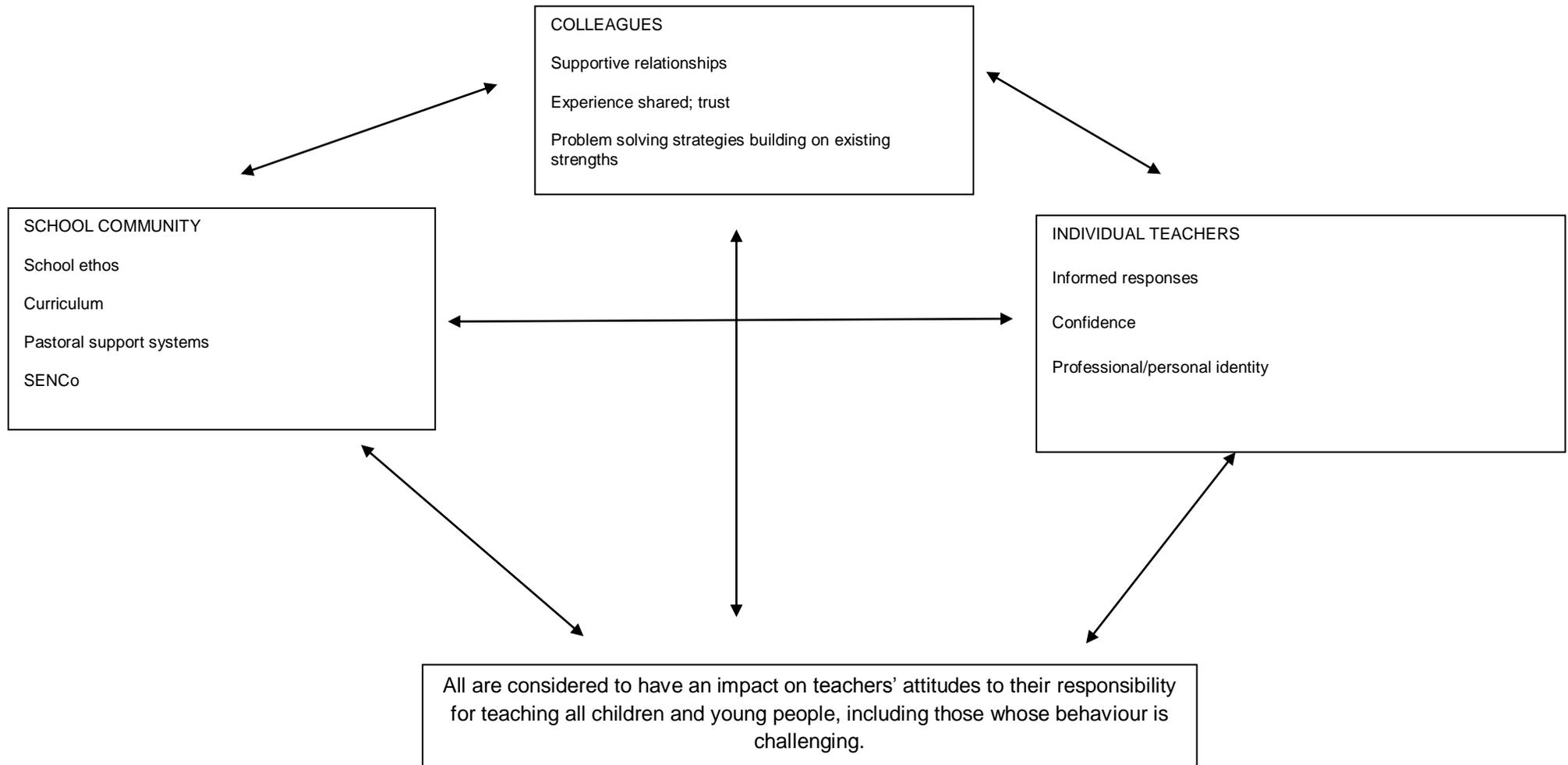
#### **1.4 Constructing the initial framework to collect together themes which may impact on teachers' attitudes to behaviours which challenge them**

The research gap that I aim to fill draws together the knowledge and understanding from the research cited above with my own experiences into one framework of themes which reflect the key aspects of the reality of contemporary classrooms. Given this complexity, I have organised my thoughts into three themes in a similar way to Nieto (2010); school community, colleagues and individual teachers. Within these themes, I have attempted to identify factors which my experience and reading suggests may inform how teachers respond to behaviours which challenge them. My framework

which shows the relationship between the themes is shown on page 31 and discussion of each aspect follows it.

The arrows are two way; how teachers go about supporting individual students occurs within the wider context of teaching the whole class and continually responds to both. Some examples may illustrate the point; an individual teacher who feels anxious and unable to manage a particular group effectively, may feel unable to ask a colleague for support for fear of being criticised by colleagues or labelled as 'weak'. A SENCo who does not have the professional respect of colleagues may not be approached if teachers do not feel that he or she is able to move a situation forward. Teachers who have low self-efficacy or who do not feel valued or successful may be more likely to take time off school due to illness, exacerbated by fear of returning to the same difficult situation. On their return teachers may have to re-establish classroom routines and structures which can feel challenging. Colleagues may not be as supportive to an individual who they do not feel is pulling their weight and taking a lot of time away from school. Teachers may become isolated, more stressed and less resilient to behaviours which they find challenging. These examples make links between school ethos, colleagues and individuals and are continually developing in parallel to many other activities which occur in school. The framework is an attempt to unpick, summarise and make sense of these.

Initial framework to collect together themes which may impact on teachers' attitudes to behaviours which challenge them constructed to reflect literature review and anecdotal evidence prior to interviews



## **Themes associated with school community**

School community represents the physical space as well as the sum of the individuals who teach and learn within it. There were four areas identified as being pertinent to this theme; **school ethos, curriculum, pastoral support systems and SENCo.**

**School ethos:** understood as the things which contribute towards creating the 'climate', such as the feelings of respect for all parts of its community, including teachers, learners and the physical environment (Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore and Ouston 1979). As previously noted, there are differences in school atmospheres which cannot simply be explained by pupils' home backgrounds or the school's geographical area (Elton 1989). Even though individuals have personal responses, relationships between all members of the school play a role in creating an atmosphere (Efrati-Virter and Margalit 2009). Are all welcomed into the community; do pupils feel safe and valued or are they repeatedly removed from classrooms when their behaviour challenges teachers (Evans and Lester 2012)? Such 'organisational' exclusion could imply that some children are unwanted, or feel unwanted, in mainstream schools (Broomhead 2013).

**Curriculum:** this aspect refers to the curriculum offered to pupils which motivates them to participate in lessons. Barriers to learning are created or exacerbated by curricula that are considered irrelevant by pupils, or by assessment which is seen as difficult or inappropriate (Florian and Rouse 2009). A flexible curriculum would adapt content or methods of delivery to accommodate the needs of individual pupils with behavioural difficulties. Not to attempt this suggests to pupils that they should fit into the system as it exists rather than the system being adjusted to meet their additional needs (Grieve 2009, Farmer, Reinke and Brooks 2014).

**Pastoral support systems:** at a mainstream school where I worked there was a pastoral support system which had full-time staff attached to the Heads of Year and Heads of House. Pupils who found accessing the curriculum difficult at certain times during the week, or at particular times in their lives could access support in a variety of ways. They may have been on positive report cards, borrowed bits of uniform or have

different homework arrangements. In essence, they had adults with whom they could form relationships whose role was to remove barriers and support access to learning. These adults were an integral part of the support systems of the wider school, a proactive way of supporting pupils to compensate for challenges in their lives (Schaubman, Stetson and Plog 2011).

Finally, my experiences showed me that a key aspect of the **SENCo** role was supporting colleagues; a member of staff with additional expertise and knowledge of individual pupils and often good relationships with them (Hallet and Hallet 2010, Ekins 2011). Legally, SENCos have the responsibility to share information pertinent to pupils amongst staff and to liaise between them, professionals and parents (SENCoP 2014) but additionally could diffuse potentially difficult situations, work one-to-one with pupils or support the development of creative solutions.

### **Themes associated with colleagues**

Colleagues were considered to impact on teachers' feelings towards challenging behaviours in a number of ways: formal or informal **supportive relationships** between staff, **experiences shared; trust** and the use of **problem solving strategies building on existing strengths**.

**Supportive relationships:** This idea came from my experience in a secondary school where multi-agency meetings were held termly about specific young people causing concern in school and attendees would offer suggestions about how they could support them and their families. An example could be an apparently unexplained deterioration in behaviour in school, but a social services representative bringing information regarding a change in family circumstances to the meeting might explain it. Knowing this information, school may be able to plan an appropriate response such as supporting the completion of homework at school. Another example of supportive relationships in school is senior leaders supporting teachers to manage behaviour as long as they followed procedures. Teachers could be expected to support each other within year groups or departments.

**Experiences shared; trust** In a school where I worked, voluntary meetings were organised by a senior member of the school staff for teachers to talk about specific children causing concern. The object was to find out which lessons they were not finding challenging or with which teachers they were choosing to behave. The premise of these meetings was to explore patterns of behaviour and to see where a child was 'getting it right' in order that strategies could be more widely used. These formats encouraged teachers (and other staff) to discuss and learn strategies from each other in order to develop their own practice. These shared experiences supported the formation of trust between school staff which in turn, developed informal support which could look like teachers backing each other up in front of children, diverting a child with challenging behaviour, chatting to each other at the end of a frustrating lesson or support with a difficult parent.

**Problem solving strategies building on existing strengths** might include formalised mechanisms such as Teacher Support Teams (TSTs) (Creese, Norwich and Daniels 1998 and 2000), Behaviour and Education Support Teams (Hallam 2007), or 'Care Committee' a multi-disciplinary format for problem solving or informal ways of working with discussions between staff (see review of various teacher support and problem solving groups: Bennett and Monsen 2011).

In practice, these codes proved problematic during analysis and this is discussed further in Chapter 3 (section 3.2).

### **Themes associated with individual teachers**

Individual teachers are undoubtedly pivotal in the successful inclusion of all pupils in mainstream class groups (Hodkinson 2010). This is because no matter what educational law, school ethos or policy dictates, it is individual teachers who are responsible for welcoming in and working with children in their classes (Ginott 1978, Sharma, Forlin and Loreman 2008). The aspects of my framework pertaining to individual teachers focused on **informed responses, confidence and personal and professional identity.**

**Informed responses** refers to knowing individual children, personal experiences, teachers' understanding of the whole child, underpinning theories, teachers' knowledge of pupils' prior knowledge, learning and experiences. In classrooms, this knowledge and information supports teachers' understanding of behaviours which challenge. An example of this would be that if a teacher knew a pupil was a young carer or looked after child (LAC) and they had knowledge of research which looked at the effects of these on academic achievement, they might adjust their teaching style and classroom routines to support these pupils (Jackson, Whitehead and Wigford 2010). Small things such as setting different types of homework or supporting pupils to be able to complete it in school may ensure success. In addition, understanding that pupils are individuals and that young carers or LAC children are not homogenous groups is also important to enable them to succeed in school. Whilst these aspects of support are key, understanding that nothing works for all teachers all the time is also important (Hirn and Scott 2014).

Teachers' **confidence** refers here to the feelings of success (or otherwise) in managing behaviours which are challenging which supports teacher resilience to it. As has previously been discussed, there is no shared understanding of what is 'challenging' and terms such as challenging behaviours and behavioural, social and emotional difficulties are socially constructed (Grieve 2009). However, what seems to be important is the skill and commitment shown by staff in their capacity to remove barriers for children in classrooms (Daniels and Cole 2010, Nieto 2005). Teachers' ability to produce a desired outcome or intended result for pupils could be expected to raise their feelings of confidence in their competence of managing aspects of their role. Feelings of enhanced competence (knowledge and skills) improve as efficacy increased (Cooper and Cefari 2013, Forlin, Sharma and Loreman 2014).

**Professional and personal identity:** was included to reflect a sense of belonging to a school; feeling valued and successful at the job of teaching and competent at managing classroom behaviours. Teachers' personal qualities play important roles in exacerbating or alleviating behaviours which challenge and promote positive student engagement (Cooper 2011). When teachers are unable to achieve professional goals such as educating their pupils, they feel stressed (Schaubman, Stetson and Plog 2011a). Yet if they felt skilled in managing classroom behaviours and respected by

their colleagues for doing so, they were proactive about classroom leadership and felt able to alter situations before problems escalated (Schaubman, Stetson and Plog 2011a).

My positions as classroom teacher, SENCo and Assistant Head teacher come with the requirement to work alongside and to support colleagues. As my experience and continued professional learning have developed, I find it useful to consider the factors discussed above as well as their relationships to each other. I perceive my role to involve developing practice, supporting understanding and ultimately, improving outcomes for individual children and young people whose behaviours some teachers find challenging. To understand what may underpin children's behaviour I rely on 'a big picture' where all factors which may have an impact on behaviour are considered. The bio-psycho-social (BPS) model discussed earlier identifies related areas of biological, psychological and social factors as all playing a significant role in human functioning with an emphasis on continual interaction between the elements within the child as well as between them and their environments. This model perhaps best summarises my position for understanding behaviours, yet there are tensions for me as *teachers* are *key* in classroom interactions. As a practising teacher, I see them having an impact on the behaviour of young people and it is this area of challenging behaviours that I wish to focus upon. Whilst I passionately believe that there is a great deal to be achieved by schools, teachers and parents for the good of children and young people whose behaviour is constructed and labelled as challenging, I believe it is counter-productive to wait until difficulties become established. Teachers promoting positive and practical support and caring relationships will encourage the development of strengths for all young people who they teach. In order to understand all the factors at play and to feel successful it is important to try to comprehend the fluidity between all of the factors identified here.

In my framework of themes I have drawn together knowledge and understanding about behaviours which challenge teachers, from research cited and with my own experiences which reflect key aspects of the reality of contemporary classrooms. I aim to test the framework for this research to answer the following questions which will offer insight into the realities of teaching and learning. My questions arise from this

examination of the literature and personal experiences which offer insight into the everyday realities of teaching and learning.

- What whole school factors were seen to impact on teachers' attitudes towards children and young people with additional behavioural support needs?
- How are relationships between colleagues perceived to influence teachers' attitudes towards children and young people with additional behavioural support needs?
- To what extent were school ethos and colleagues' support seen as relevant to teachers feeling responsible to accept and teach all pupils including those whose behaviour was challenging in their classes?

This chapter has discussed the history and context of challenging behaviours. In the following methodology chapter the ontology and epistemology of research are explored as well as stating my chosen research methods.

## **CHAPTER 2: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter explored some themes around challenging behaviour and some of the difficulties raised for teachers in mainstream education. The overall aim of this research is to explore the influences on teachers' attitudes towards behaviours which challenge them and to augment my perspectives with those of other professionals. The following chapter explains how the research design fulfils the aim by beginning with ontological and epistemological perspectives and followed by methodology concerned with this area of research.

### **2.1 Theoretical positions; ontological and epistemological**

The ontology of research into children and young people with special educational needs and behaviour difficulties assumes that there is something 'special' or that some behaviours are more challenging than others; that there is also an acceptance of the very existence of behaviours that challenge professionals. The assumption that there are learners in class groups whose behaviour is 'challenging' leads professionals to label it as such, without reflecting on their own part in it. For example, presenting tasks mis-matched to pupil ability or not taking account of environmental factors affecting behaviour prior to setting work (Cooper 2011b). Individual teachers have personal belief systems of behaviour and what constitutes a 'challenge' to them or their authority and also what impedes their teaching (Grieve 2009).

Policy makers also have experiences and beliefs which impact on their decisions. For example, David Blunkett (Minister for Education 1997-2001) was clear that inclusion for all pupils in mainstream schools was an aim of education policy; he hoped to improve society's attitude towards people with disabilities by mixing children at school. Amongst the many factors that influenced him were his blindness and being sent away to a school which he disliked (2004). Mary Warnock (chairperson of the Warnock Committee, Department of Education and Science 1978) had an older brother who she never knew because he was sent to a care home as he was severely affected by

autism. These examples are likely to have impacted on personal constructs as well as professional decision making (2008). All research is a reflection of different perspectives (Pring 1999) so the only safe way of using sources of research is by limiting the notion to the place and time where the idea was conceived (Darnton 2003, Trohler 2007). When looking at any research, readers are already seeing it through the perspective of those who carried it out. In this case, the concepts of 'behaviour' reflect how it is understood and is constructed in the contexts of education and wider society and behaviour which disrupts teaching and learning is often understood as 'challenging'.

Further ontological considerations are personal and informed by my experiences and reflections since beginning the educational doctorate (EdD). As part of a cohort of doctoral students, we have been consistently challenged to identify assumptions made and reflect on previous experiences which informed our current thinking. New experiences have forced myself and my peers to reconsider and reflect on our beliefs. When teaching in schools, there is rarely time to do this and sometimes personal constructs can become strongly held beliefs without the benefit of being challenged by others with different perspectives. As I have progressed through my recent studies, I have found myself in an unstable position, less able to give straightforward answers and more appreciative of the wider impact of many influences in classrooms. For example, the political agenda which has constructed the accountability culture that ranks schools in league tables to enable parents to make judgements about which is a 'good' school for their child. As an experienced teacher, I know that children and young people with the label of special needs may not make the same academic progress as their peers or may be perceived to hinder the progress of others and therefore can affect the school's league table position. In reality, they may make as much progress as their peers, but over a longer time or in different areas of the national and hidden curricula. For those with challenging behaviours, their progress may be measured in non-academic terms such as attendance, social or emotional progress, but unless these are recognised as *progress* and reflected and celebrated by schools, some children and their families may feel less welcomed and more readily excluded (Broomhead 2013). Those who focus solely on league table data to 'measure' a school may not obtain a true picture of how good (or otherwise) a school actually is. This research has to be understood within current understanding of 'special

needs' and 'behaviour'. In the new Code of Practice (2014) 'behaviour' does not exist as a label as it did in the 2001 Code, yet a new category of "Social, Emotional and Mental Health" was created (DoE 2014) to reflect underpinning difficulties. As a teacher, my conceptions of children's behaviour and teachers' responses are relevant here; I already understand that behaviours which challenge are different for different teachers. As a researcher, I am interested in what influences teachers' attitudes and searched for clues to what teachers used to form judgements about what they found challenging. Researchers can never believe that they have found *the* answer and then move on to the next thing, so ideas are constructed through a plethora of experiences (Swann 1998, Charmaz 2006) and should remain tentative forever. Genuinely reflective teachers and researchers may always be constructing, re-constructing and adapting theories for themselves based on experience and understanding that there are multiple perspectives (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2008, Leyder 1998).

Epistemology considers the basis of knowledge; how it is acquired and communicated and how it fits with the constructs of what is already known (Newby 2010). Epistemological assumptions are about the forms of knowledge, how it can be explored and understood. This research involves studying the interactions between individual human beings who make choices of their own and respond within the complexity of power relationships and professional integrity and all that these involve. A researcher merely observing behaviour (challenging or otherwise) may not see the whole picture of its underlying complexity (Layder 2013) and their presence may well change the behaviour of those being observed. A snapshot of a pupil/teacher confrontation, for example, may occur as a result of a previous incident rather than as a direct response to a current teacher request. A pupil apparently working hard and carrying out teacher instructions may conceal that this compliance is due to fear on the part of the child. Neither of these observations would give researchers a true understanding of the nature of observed behaviour and the interactions between two human subjects without taking account of this wider context. In the research field of children's behaviour, attempts have been made to understand it by interviewing pupils and teachers (Garner 1996, The European Agency for Special Education 2003, Harris, Vincent, Thomson and Toalster 2006, Hobson, Malderez, Tracey, Homer, Ashby, Mitchell and McIntyre 2009, Richards 2010). The challenge of getting repeatable and useful understanding or knowledge for other teachers is considerable as behaviours of

both teachers and pupils are so influenced by the wider contexts in which they occur. Nonetheless, the concept of 'how' we gain knowledge and understanding through research indicates that there are some research methods that are more appropriate than others.

## **2.2 Rationale for methodological approach**

In Chapter One a selection of research which used a variety of methods was cited. Some were literature reviews (Miller 1999, Davis and Florian 2004, Rix 2009). Others included a longitudinal study (Hobson et al 2009), case studies (Campbell and Husbands 2000, Corbett 2001) and surveys (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden 2000, Pearson 2005, Sharma, Forlin and Loreman 2008, Nash and Norwich 2010). Some research used a combination of methods (Harrison 2006) which can be useful to match the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. Trainee teachers represent a relatively accessible research group and can be involved in a 'before' and 'after' type design of research where a novel input can be implemented (Garner 1996, Brownlee and Carrington 2000, Lambe 2007, Richards 2010).

Qualitative research attempts to understand experiences in life and to present a convincing case to draw out valid recommendations in order that insight provided can be transferred to similar settings. Research designs which conform to a generally accepted template are used to ensure that results gained from the data are credible and dependable. Approaches used to collect data and the analysis used to convert them to evidence have to be reasonable, and the arguments used to draw conclusions logical (Newby 2010). Rather than setting out to prove or disprove a theory, this kind of interpretative research is interested in exploring individuals' experiences of the area of focus and then attempting to make links with theory and interpreting it (Bryant and Charmaz 2007, Layder 1998).

It is important to consider the aims of the research in selecting a method with which to approach it. The research questions in this study assume that for some teachers there are differences in attitudes to challenging behaviours and aims to find out what they are and what informs them. There is no hypothesis to test, to prove or disprove and the research aims to understand perspectives by asking teachers questions and then

interpreting their answers. If a lot of statistical data were required in order to be able to generalise knowledge and findings, surveys would be a possibility (Sharma, Forlin and Loreman 2008), yet may have a low return rate (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007). Deeper data is desirable in this case as I wish to explore what underpins teacher attitudes, perhaps involving reflections on specific points. When involving humans in research, it makes sense to take advantage of the fact that they can tell researchers about themselves (Robson 1993). One-to-one interviews provide opportunities to map ambiguity and allow flexibility within conversations. Interviewing professionals supports the understanding of the idiosyncratic way we use words in specific fields such as education (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2008).

Nonetheless, there are several challenges to gaining worthwhile and accurate data by interviewing, such as the interviewer's ability to facilitate the emergence of the interviewees' own definitions and perceptions of the issues being discussed (Tomlinson 1989) and the ways in which participants understand and choose to respond to the questions. Without a clear knowledge and understanding themselves, there is a chance that interviewers may miss subtle reactions and responses, which is precisely what they hope to understand. Tomlinson (1989) also noted the relative roles of the participant and interviewer and the possibilities of social influence on the interview encounter and therefore, data gathered. This he termed the "validity dilemma" (1989:155) and designed a systematic approach to questioning during interviews, structured in such a way as to resolve the dilemma. Semi-structured interviews with clear foci framed through Tomlinson's (1989) hierarchical focusing approach seemed the most appropriate way to explore issues around responsibility and attitude. In the broadest sense, the principle of hierarchical focusing is where the interviewer seeks to elicit "construals with a minimum of framing and uses a hierarchical interview agenda to raise topics only as necessary" (Tomlinson 1989:165). What this looks like in an interview situation is an opening general question followed by elaboration of emergent themes with the interviewer knowing the full remit of the questions, so moving away from the perception that interviewing is a simple way of data gathering. Tomlinson (1989:155) points out that hierarchical questioning is a relatively complex method as it attempts to "have it both ways", both to define and pursue the interview topic accurately and pick up on interviewees' responses as well as to facilitate their perspectives on it. It may be that

the questions are not all asked in a specific order, that the participant covers them within other responses, yet it strives to ensure that valuable research data is not missed. A strength of this approach is that interviews can be digitally recorded and later transcribed ensuring that the interview proceeds without loss of flow. It is an approach which is key to eliciting underlying values.

### Quality of evidence

Research is a process which not only entails gathering data, but converting it from its raw state to information which is useful (Newby 2010). It is not enough to assemble and then present it, it needs to be interpreted so that readers can see what conclusions are drawn and then make a judgement on whether they understand the same (Newby 2010). Researchers need be clear about what they are asserting from their research data (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2008). Qualitative data takes many forms and are usually described as referring to people's feelings and thoughts (Newby 2010). A type of qualitative data is reported activity and beliefs in which primary sources (people) are invited to report their opinions and views through interviews. This type of data is accurate, yet unstable. As Newby (2010) explains, once a thing has happened, it has happened and that remains a fact, however, over time opinions and views can change. During interviews, researchers should be aware that interviewees may give responses they feel they should as well as what they really think and actually do in their classrooms. Further options open to researchers include collecting different perspectives, perhaps by observing participants teaching or asking their colleagues to corroborate responses. However, this was not deemed appropriate in this case as behaviours which challenge teachers are a sensitive issue and the presence of an observer will change the behaviours of those in the class group. Similarly, asking colleagues about a teacher's behaviour management could have produced levels of anxiety which prevented participants from volunteering to be interviewed.

Given the complexity of the issues thought to be pertinent to 'behaviour' and 'challenge' and the personal nature of people's responses to it, face-to-face interviews were deemed the most appropriate. An aim of the research was to facilitate the emergence of the participants' perspectives (Tomlinson 1989) and to collect 'rich' data in order to make a convincing contribution to the understanding in this field. During

one-to-one interviews the interviewer can show empathy and sensitivity to the interviewee and respond appropriately in order to explore issues deeply (Newby 2010). They may need to ask a question in a different way, change pace, clarify a point or probe to get clear responses (Newby 2010). Personal responses to issues such as 'attitude' (as well as behaviour and challenge) are understood in complex ways by individuals and simply to ask a list of questions will not unpick how they are construed (Tomlinson 1989). This is important in this type of research as asking interviewees how they understand an issue or their attitude towards it, will not necessarily give answers which enable researchers to fully comprehend values and idiosyncrasies (Tomlinson 1989).

A small sample of interviewees can mean that there is more time to talk around topics which may reveal insights, rather than accepting a general comment before moving on. Yet it also means that results are limited to those few interviewees, rather than being generalisable to a wider population. When exploring sensitive research topics such as attitude and challenging behaviour, the interviewer's role is significant as there could be a tendency for interviewers to see the interviewees in their own image and seek answers which support preconceived notions (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007). A further pitfall is that there may not be a rapport conducive to honesty during interviews yet in research aiming to understand underlying attitudes and feelings which interviewees may prefer not to express publically, this is key (Leyder 2013).

Thorough preparation is important for interviews; a typical design of open ended questions can facilitate participants going in to depth with their responses, yet in order to remain focused the interviewer must have "an active follow up strategy" (Wengraf 2001). This could be prepared prompts and probes such as those suggested by Tomlinson (1989). To avoid contaminated data each interview must be structured to ensure participants are asked similar questions and care should be taken to avoid giving clues about preferred responses (Wengraf 2001). Many participants feel vulnerable opening up and if the interviewer lets them know in any way that there is a preferred response then this can further contaminate data (Wengraf 2001). Non-verbal communication is important too and interviewers should use active listening skills which demonstrate a lack of judgemental feedback (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007). Interviewers need credibility in sensitive interviews in order to be able to

demonstrate their knowledge and understanding through relevant prompts and good handling of unexpected responses. Rather than assume that interviewees' attitudes towards behaviour will be ascertained by talking to them, there is a job to be done to understand the underlying values which inform responses in order to support the interpretations and claims made. Interviewees may not be consciously aware of how they construct their understanding of behaviours, so practical considerations such as the questions used and the way in which the participant and interviewer question and respond to each other will affect the way the conversation develops. The interviewer needs to have some focus as to where the conversation may lead, yet simultaneously be as flexible as possible in their questioning to ensure that real understanding is achieved. Interviewees may not self-consciously have articulated ideas regarding the phenomena under discussion and may formulate them as they talk or have apparently incongruous viewpoints. Thus interviewers require mental agility as they assert that they are not concerned with one perspective on reality (Newby 2010). There may be time variables allowing some participants to give more detailed responses and there may be power and status effects between the participant and interviewer.

It was important to make time to explain to *potential* participants the nature of the research and give them an indication of my motivations for doing it in order that what was proposed was reasonable and of interest to them. Supporting teachers in their classroom leadership, informing the trainee teachers I work with and continuing my own professional development were key. Those with experience of teaching, have had chances to reflect on their understanding of behaviours which they did or did not find challenging and their responses to it. As confident practitioners, some of whom have supported teachers with less experience, interviewees could be expected to be skilled in observing, breaking down behaviours, discussing and listening as well as reflecting on behaviours that they saw. It was hoped that this supplementary information would prove useful in proactively supporting emerging and established practitioners more effectively. Ascertaining what guidance may be useful could go some way to support not only teachers in classes but children and young people who find them challenging places to be.

## 2.3 Ethical considerations

There were a number of ethical considerations prior to commencing the research. My first thoughts involved interviewing excluded pupils and asking them what would have improved their experiences of school; anecdotally I know pupils are more than able to give this information as well as taking responsibility for many of their own actions which led to them feeling excluded or to actual exclusion. However, parents of these pupils would need to act as gatekeepers and in my experience, are often angry and sensitive towards the education 'system' which I represent and which they may perceive has 'failed' their children. An approach such as this would yield intensely personal and very insightful data such as O'Leary (2011) and would be a very individual piece of research. However, rather than risk causing upset and negative feelings, a consideration was to seek insight into proactive measures to minimise similar situations occurring for others. I wished to focus on improving practice for a wide range of pupils, hopefully *prior* to them being excluded. Careful thought had to be given to interviewing participants about sensitive issues such as their attitudes and views on behaviours they found challenging.

Preparation of a detailed proposal and extensive discussion with supervisors ensured that proposed research would meet the ethical standards required. As a student of the University of Exeter, it is a requirement that research strives to protect safety, rights, dignity, confidentiality and anonymity of participants (Ethics policy, last accessed 25/7/14). In addition, the University maintains a Code of Good Practice in the Conduct of Research which it requires all researchers to follow (last accessed 25/7/14). Furthermore, all University research must take account of the British Educational Research Association Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA 2011). Whilst guidelines provide rules by which to abide, principles also reflect the moral position that researchers have concerning honesty, responsibility, publishing and the right to withdraw from research (Newby 2010).

BERA (2011) believes that educational research should be carried out with responsibilities towards the research profession, participants and to the public. The research profession needs to represent honesty and integrity so carrying out research in such a way which does not jeopardise future research and reporting data to reflect

specific intentions of participants is important. There can be some reluctance to participate in research given that in the past some researchers have deliberately misled participants (for example Zimbardo 1972); even a slight lack of transparency may encourage suspicion. It is also important to be as transparent as possible during research in order that there can be no accusations of being open to bias (Oliver 1996). Given that there was no sponsorship of this research, there were no issues around declaring interests.

As part of the planning process, consideration had to be given to the time taken for interviews, distances travelled for participants and participant availability. Researchers have a responsibility to the wider research community to be sensitive to the amount of time which participants have available in order that future researchers are able to recruit participants.

Anonymity refers to the participants being unrecognisable (Oliver 1996). Given the sensitivities of researching behaviour, careful thought was also given in order that job titles or names could not identify participants. During interviews with colleagues with whom I had previously worked, examples were given to illustrate points made. Whilst we used real names in the conversations, they were changed for the purposes of transcription. In addition, the names of participants are not used in order that should they wish to read the finished research they could not identify themselves or colleagues. Some of my interviewees were elite, the head of a service or organisation with considerable authority and responsibility (Newby 2010). I took care not to include any identifying information. Finally, the county in which the research took place is not given, rather vaguely referred to as “South East England” in order that participants were not identifiable by job role.

Clearly, conversations cannot be confidential as defined by Wengraff (2001) given that the thesis is read by supervisors and examiners as well as being available as an e-thesis. The University of Exeter library website draws students’ attention to this prior to submitting work (last accessed 27/7/14). In any research, it is important that participants can be assured that their comments are treated with respect. So, for example, I needed to make sure that there was a clear distinction between my professional role as a teacher and that of researcher as well as my role as a

researcher speaking to a headteacher and then staff in his/her school. Interviewees had to be reassured that what they said would be treated with respect especially given the sensitive area of classroom behaviour and teachers' attitudes to challenging behaviours.

All research must be undertaken with consent. Where participants are children or vulnerable adults, responsible adults must act as gatekeepers. Where participants are part of an organisation, consent must be obtained from its gatekeeper as well as parents (Newby 2010). Participants must be volunteers and persuasion and pressure must be considered. In this case, where I previously worked with four of the participants they must have felt able to refuse as well as participate without prejudice. Given the sensitive subject, I decided to talk to adults who were able to give informed consent themselves. In order that consent can be recognised as 'informed' I was clear that participants understood the purpose of the research and the safeguards in place. Organisationally, this meant interviewing in a quiet room where discussions could not be overheard. I clarified that data would be recorded by me and transcribed by a professional audio typist who was nothing to do with the research and who understood the necessity of storing the data securely. She was not permitted to keep any copies of the material. In a school where I interviewed a head teacher and three of her staff, I was clear that this was done out of school time and that no information could be shared between participants or by myself and them. Where I knew a participant, I had to be clear that any previous conversations we had had were not brought in to the research and not referred to afterwards. Also important is the right to withdraw (Newby 2010). Participants were able to do so prior to and subsequent to the research being carried out. This also included the time the research was written up.

Since four of the participants were former colleagues, this could have helped to make them feel relaxed and that professional trust and respect existed. Yet it also had the possibility of inhibiting responses as behaviour may have been discussed on earlier occasions informally. Given all these aspects, it is fair to assume that participants would wish to please an interviewer and knowing how hard the challenge of research is at this level, would have wished me to do well, both of which would impact on their trying to give me answers they thought I wanted.

As a researcher, I have done further academic study in connection with the area of special educational needs and have read more research literature than many practising teachers. Teachers and students may well have felt more comfortable discussing issues with a researcher whom they consider to be empathetic and understanding of their situations, perspectives and the realities of the classroom. My position was one of wanting to find out from those with different experiences how something that I feel passionately about is understood by others. As a teacher, I had anecdotal evidence of colleagues who appeared willing and able to include all children in their class groups, sometimes with no specialist or additional training but also of those who appeared to pay lip service to meeting any additional needs in their classrooms. My research position as an insider of the profession, as well as one who had supported struggling teachers with challenging behaviours in their classrooms, ensured a high level of sensitivity and empathy throughout the research.

## **2.4 The research design**

Traditional paradigms of research may assume a truth to be discovered and aim to prove or test a theory. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2008) discuss the development of emergent research methods where researchers are able to begin not with a hypothesis to be tested, rather hunches to be explored. With behaviour, what is already understood is that a complex interaction between a number of factors occurs throughout each interaction between pupils and teachers and pupils and pupils; there is no right or wrong or 'if you do this, then behaviour in your classrooms will be like that'. In this research, I set out to try a particular approach to developing knowledge and understanding, aiming to explore a number of factors around what I consider may influence teachers' attitudes and draw them together to create a map of suggested interactions between the factors. I began with a framework of themes informed by my experiences, hunches and reading and adapted it as a result of interviews (Layder 1998). Ideas can be pursued and analysed and revisited in the light of additional data gathering which can enable us to refine and question emerging ideas. The process of constructing theory is not linear; rather one which stops and starts and returns to earlier data, using it to inform that which is gathered at a later stage (Charmaz 2006).

A range of participants with different levels of experience was needed to explore perspectives and to understand human actions and professional meanings. To be successful, a convincing methodology which takes little for granted and uses evidence generated from good quality data must be used to shape an argument for this type of small scale research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007, Charmaz 2006). The understanding gained relies on credible interpretation and the showing of connections and assumes that the social world is complex and multi-layered (Layder 1998). The complexity of factors affecting classroom behaviour make it impossible to separate the 'single thing' of teachers' responses away from the situations in which they occur and Layder's (1998) adaptive theory approach reflects upon the multiple interconnections between humans, social activities and the organisation of structures and systems.

### Content of interviews

When constructing my questions I used Tomlinson's (1989) hierarchical focusing as a framework. This forced me to be explicit about how I construed the issues around challenging behaviours, using research as well as my own experiences. This informed my design of the initial framework of themes and its subsequent updating. I decided that the research focus would be attitudes and what informs them in relation to challenging behaviours and used 'big' open ended questions to support interviewees to think and formulate their responses as the interviews progressed. Initial questions using Tomlinson's (1989) framework reviewed the concepts of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties from the perspectives of the interviewees, followed by factors which they felt affected them and finally the effects on attitudes to children with challenging behaviours. My framework began by thinking of children as part of the 'big picture' of school and gradually focused into individual children.

Research questions aimed to get perspectives on attitudes to challenging behaviours in mainstream schools. As already stated, I needed to understand what participants understood as challenging behaviours and to ascertain the level of teacher commitment to teaching them, before being able to look at support structures for it.

The hierarchical question schedule for interviewees, with prompt questions, is shown in appendix 2, but here I will explain how it was constructed.

The first question set out to ascertain what were construed as challenging behaviours by participants; as you see it, what does the concept of 'BESD' involve for you? What do you see as its key features? To take the discussion in to the classroom, I then asked about what aspects of challenging behaviours they thought teachers would be confident dealing with. I used 'teachers' in order to de-personalise the question, although thought that they would talk from their own experiences. I asked about 'aspects' of the behaviour to reflect my understanding that the terms around behaviours are often collected together into a negative term of 'challenging behaviour'. There was an implicit thought that there is a continuum of behaviours, some of which teachers could manage. By asking where they felt less confident, I hoped to find out the limits of these. I then asked about where teachers got their ideas about what is challenging and what informed responses to this. In order to deepen my understanding of the importance of response to the behaviour I asked a final question which probed the key features of successful responses; again, there was an underlying assumption that some responses are less successful than others.

I wanted to find out what participants felt underpinned teachers' responses to teaching the range of pupils in contemporary classrooms. By phrasing it to enquire about 'commitment' to ALL (this was emphasised) children I thought I would get some responses which would reflect if there were limits to either teacher commitment or the range of pupils. These responses would inform the areas of research around attitude. The next probing questions were designed to unpack this a bit; what professional input do teachers need/get to respond to challenging behaviours implied that 'something' (that is some sort of professional support) was necessary. I deliberately avoided asking about training in order to keep the responses open and reflected that fact that I knew support is much more than training with a probing question asking about colleagues' diverse experiences and how these can be extremely valuable. The next two probe questions asked about emotional support for teachers and where this could originate from as well as the consequences of it not being there.

The third question assumed that some structures in school needed to be adjusted to support challenging behaviours, both for teachers and pupils. The probe questions explored whether these were formal or informal. I hoped to identify whether support systems were in place as part of formal school practices such as a strong pastoral

team, regular training about underpinning knowledge of challenging behaviours or unmet needs. Alternatively, if staff coped alone was it that they were skilled at doing so and did not feel the need for additional support or did they feel able to support each other amongst themselves. Examples, might be that there was an expectation that teachers managed their classroom leadership themselves without referring it out of the classroom or that they supported each other by 'parking' children or providing alternative activities. By exploring what needs these structures fulfilled, I hoped to gain some understanding both about how teachers utilised resources for support, yet also whether they understood that pupils had needs. Asking about flexibility was an opportunity to get a flavour of what support *actually* looked like. By this I mean that if the school policy says 'x' yet a pupil responds better to 'y', do the teachers feel able to make this professional judgement.

The final question was designed to explore what participants really understood about school ethos and its impact on behaviours which challenge the school system. It has been acknowledged that some behaviours *are* challenging and that this could be for a variety of reasons beyond a schools' control, yet there is evidence that some schools are better at managing or supporting it. So, implicitly the question assumes that children need to feel welcomed in to the community, and if they do not feel it there could be issues. I wondered if there are limits to what the school could be expected to do and by asking about 'what' and the 'limit' of the school role I was attempting to cross reference with understanding what participants believed and felt about challenging behaviours and school support for them. So for example, if at the beginning a participant had said that all children should be included in mainstream class groups in answer to question one, but then said later on that they thought children should learn to conform to school expectations, I would have understood that they thought that the child had most to do in order to succeed at school. If they answered that they thought that knowledge and flexibility were necessary, I would understand that they may be thinking about what they or the school could do to support the child.

These considerations of feelings and experiences and what contributes to teachers' attitude informed the research design. I assumed that the responses I got would be truthful, although I knew this to be more likely if interviewees had certain reassurances

such as that they trusted me enough to believe that their comments would remain anonymous, and that the data would be constructively used so that their time was well spent. To try to respond to these and similar factors, interviews were conducted one-to-one so that there was time for contemplation and considered responses as well as personal reflection. I ensured adequate time was allowed for interviews so that they were not rushed and used several techniques to support this; prior to the interviews I was explicit about the time I hoped to speak to them as well as checking at the outset of each interview how much time there was available. I allowed approximately an hour for each interview. I attended the interview place with plenty of time to spare to allow for hold-ups and had to be prepared to begin later if an interviewee was themselves delayed.

#### Participants: purposive sampling

My participants were from the teaching profession or concerned with strategic overview of schools, with a specific focus on behaviour. Within this sample, there existed a plethora of experiences of teaching pupils with challenging behaviours as well as supporting teachers to do so and ranged across primary and secondary phases. The advantage of interviewing these participants was that they would have a wider perspective than just one school, as well as experiences of working within schools which required support in order to develop their provision to meet a wide range of needs, especially challenging behaviours. A number of participants worked in a geographical area widely understood to have a diverse range of pupils with a range of additional needs, whilst some participants worked in a school understood to represent an advantaged area of the population. Four of the participants were former colleagues and so were known to me, so there were additional considerations. An advantage was that there already existed professional relationships which included respect, trust and a shared vocabulary. Trust was very important in this research; behaviour and people's opinions on it are sensitive issues and I needed participants to be open and honest knowing that they could trust my integrity. There is a delicate balance to be found between interviewing professional colleagues in a research capacity; care had to be taken to discuss data only gathered during this research, ignoring any previous conversations that had taken place. Extreme care had to be taken to maintain the same ethical judgements with regard to anonymity, the right to

withdraw from research and receiving copies of the final research or any other feedback which was requested just as with participants who were not known to me.

Interviewees had a variety of levels of experience in teaching and in their specific roles and were approached in order to cover a range of perspectives. All responses were recorded, transcribed and coded using the same process in order that their perspectives were treated with equal respect. I asked all participants for an hour of their time, although in the event, most overran. All participants were asked the same hierarchy of questions.

Purposive sampling ensures that hand-picked interviewees are in possession of particular qualities sought (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007), although this means that results could be biased and so should not be generalised to a wider population. The fact that in this case the sample was deliberately selective for the sensitive issue of ‘challenging’ behaviour meant that levels of professional trust between participants and interviewer were necessarily established; it was important that they trusted that they were unidentifiable and that colleagues would not become aware of the content of their discussion.

**Table 1: A table to show the list of those interviewed for this research from an authority in S.E.England, their roles and duration of interviews**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Principal educational psychologist P	1h 10m
Educational psychologist - behaviour team D	1h 08m
Lead Advisor for Vulnerable pupils J	1h 07m
Specialist Teacher for behaviour in resourced provision L	1h 06m
SENCo in secondary mainstream H	1h 01m
SENCo in alternative provision J	1h 03m
Primary Headteacher in mainstream primary with inclusion unit J	1h 10m
Primary Teacher school 1 A	1h 09m
Primary Teacher school 1 D	1h 10m
Primary Teacher school 2 E	1h 07m
Primary Teacher school 2 J	1h 07
Primary Teacher school 2 S	25m
Secondary Teacher A	1h 05m
Secondary Deputy Headteacher T	1h 06m
Secondary Deputy Headteacher G	1h 06m

## Procedures

After participants had agreed to be interviewed, I sent them a straightforward and brief questionnaire (see appendix 2) designed to reduce interview time by getting some basic information. Questions asked about their route in to teaching, post-graduate training and current role. There followed two open questions enquiring whether there were any limiting factors to their role and what their general thoughts were about children and young people with challenging behaviours in mainstream school.

Interviews were held in places of participant's choice, usually their place of work to ameliorate issues around travel time and to help them feel more comfortable. I was completely flexible about timings to fit in with interviewees, so they occurred at different times of the day and at different stages of the term. Nonetheless, it is possible that after all this my participants could have perceived me as a researcher with a hidden agenda in which they felt tricked into responses or that judgements were made about the information or opinions which they expressed.

The environment was considered carefully as the interviews were recorded. Interruptions were minimised (although unfortunately not totally preventable-there was one interruption in one interview of a few moments). The aim of recording the interviews was to facilitate a free flow to the conversation. Therefore in order for interviewees to feel as relaxed as possible, the recording device was placed to one side so as to be unobtrusive. Interviewees often thought aloud and considered their position as they talked. Sometimes hesitations or gaps were signals that they were formulating responses to difficult questions. The data collected was digitally recorded and notes made immediately post interview. This was done in order that valuable data such as points of interest, tone, inflection and non-verbal data were noted whilst prominent in my mind. I did my utmost to create an atmosphere conducive to obtaining good quality data by ensuring that I travelled to participants in order that they were as relaxed as possible and that there were no or minimal interruptions. I clarified how much time they had available prior to the interview beginning and adhered to that time. I clarified who would transcribe the recordings, how they would be stored and how long they would be kept post research.

For all participants, I was very clear about when interviews began and did not use any information divulged prior to or after the interview given in unguarded moments. Prior to interviews I informed participants about the aims of my research in writing and clarified who the audience would be. Nevertheless, I repeated this at the beginning of all the interviews in order that there was absolute clarity. I also created the opportunity for interviewees to ask any questions in order that they felt fully informed. I repeated the right to withdraw which meant any data collected during interviews could be withdrawn from the study.

### Coding the data

Post interview, notes were made of ideas which engaged my thoughts on the themes from the framework. Subsequently, I listened to the recordings carefully and augmented my notes as re-hearing them as part of the process of gathering data adjusted and adapted my thought processes (Layder 1998). The transcripts were produced in written form, yet with the caveat that they formed a selective record because some of the interaction is lost from the dynamics of the situation; the relationship between meaning and language are contextually situated, being unstable and capable of endless re-interpretation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007). The transcript data was interrogated using the NVivo computer software program which is a platform for analysing unstructured textual data. It was important to use systematic approaches to analysis given that interviews were carried out over a period of time which could have affected interpretation as interviews progressed. Cohen et al (2007) point out that it is necessary to execute coding with great caution given that it is the researcher who sets the codes and categories and it is the researcher's agenda which drives the research. They point out that coding is the process of disassembling and reassembling data; data is dissembled when they are broken apart into lines, paragraphs or sections. These fragments are then rearranged, through coding, to produce a new understanding that explores similarities and differences across a number of different cases. Even given that the framework of themes was drawn up prior to the interviews, it was also important to use it and to revise it in response to the garnered data and their analysis. In addition, a notebook was kept in order to record personal responses to the data and to support checking and rechecking interpretation of data over time. It is necessary to ensure that data does not lose the integrity of

what the individual participant meant to communicate; so care was taken to avoid the decontextualisation of data. To support this, phrases used by interviewees were coded rather than individual words. It was necessary to continually be thinking about the data. An emergent theme may mean that whilst interpreting and coding for previous codes were re-visited (Newby 2010). (See appendix three where the NVivo node structure is shown and appendix four where there are example transcripts).

There are a number of things that the NVivo program can do such as text analysis and word counting, but there is a danger that computer generated searches for word strings or words will lose the contextual attributions and meanings which humans are able to make and subtleties will be missed. An example from this research is “here comes a naughty boy” which the computer may recognise as a teacher labelling a child as naughty, yet this is subsequently followed up by the teacher commenting that the behaviour is attributable to an argument at break time or “possibly because they are struggling to access the curriculum” (secondary teacher A). In response to a question about what challenging behaviour is, a different teacher says, “I think it’s more severe than naughty children” which the computer search may recognise as a related search to ‘behaviour’ or ‘naughty’ yet which belies the understanding that she is aware of deeper or alternative explanations. A further extract illustrates another issue when coding, “I met his mother and father and I could see straight away....there was a force field of animosity” (deputy headteacher G). This was coded in ‘support systems for teachers: understanding the whole child’ because the context was that the parents had been summoned to school because of their son’s persistent poor behaviour. The parents were going through an acrimonious divorce and were involving the child in this. He was unhappy and unsettled at home as there was not a clear plan for him and it appeared that he was not wanted by either parent. The behaviour at school was attributed by the participant as a response to his situation out of school, so staff were expected to take this in to account. The code I attributed to it reflected the story of the data, yet as listed in a set of codes, its removal from the context may not make this easy to see. Another illustration of this complexity was exemplified when primary teacher A, school 1, commented on the low staff turnover at his school. The point I understood him to make was that knowledge and understanding remain within the school and this experience can be shared with other staff as they get to know the children. Information regarding individual children and their families and their specific

needs is built up over time and remains with the teachers and within the school. Much of what we know and understand about children may be intuitive and not formally recorded, yet could be useful in meeting a variety of their needs. For example, knowing when to or when not to ask questions which may be difficult for pupils or engaging them in conversations about hobbies or family. Another implication of low staff turnover is that teachers feel supported in their role and therefore choose not to leave the school to find another job. The participant had made a comment regarding low staff turnover, yet I had made all the inferences from it based on my knowledge and experience. I could not know if my inferences truly reflected the original meaning, but as a researcher I would always need to be aware of justifiably reflecting participants' intended meaning (Newby 2010).

NVivo is also able to calculate frequencies of occurrences of words in a transcript. However, this would have identified single words or short phrases whereas the depth of my data depended on the complexity of understanding the meaning of the communication as well as the content. It benefited from the human understanding which could interpret and appreciate the inferences and subtleties of the way language is used. To ensure consistency and to benefit from the contextual understanding in which the conversations were held, the coding was done by myself. This enabled me immerse myself in it in order to process and interact with the data as I proceeded. I was careful to continually check that the coded data justifiably reflected the original meaning of the participants.

Ethical considerations were also adhered to after the interviews. Great care had to be taken when material was coded and interpreted so that it did not become decontextualised either because of the sequence of quotations or because of what is selected from transcripts. Some data might require understanding which preceded comments made so careful selection was important in order that data did not become fragmented (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007).

Researchers must at all times be mindful of the strengths and weaknesses of the methods chosen and of the need to maintain ethical responsibility throughout the interview, transcribing and data analysis processes as well as research being communicated in clear and straightforward language (Newby 2010).

## **Chapter summary**

As researchers analyse data they will have insights, comments and reflections to make about the data (Layder 1998, Cohen et al 2007, Newby 2010). There is no single or correct way to analyse and present qualitative data, rather decisions to be made by the researcher regarding caution and self-awareness (Cohen et al) in order that claims made as a result of the research are viewed in context (Layder 1998). For these reasons, I have taken considerable time in this chapter to explain and explore thoroughly issues around the research questions and aims. I hope that what has emerged is clear and representative of my participants' data as well as forming a convincing method for the research. Ultimately, it is hoped that this thorough discussion underpins convincing recommendations and conclusions to be drawn. The following chapter presents and analyses the data gathered as a result of this research.

## **CHAPTER 3: Initial analysis and findings**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter coded interview data is reported. Summary data from the coding is presented in the simple form of lists using the framework themes of school community, colleague and individual levels (Nieto 2010). To ensure transparency, each response cited in the research is referenced to the speaker.

This research was very much an evolving and adaptive process (Layder 1998) which began with an extensive literature review, anecdotal experience and professional discussions. The initial framework of themes was constructed to reflect these and interview data was coded using the themes as the structure. The procedure of analysis demonstrated the quality and diversity of data available using the probing questions (Tomlinson 1989) as an interviewing technique and enabled the refinement and adaption of the initial framework. However, the substantial amount of data garnered had to be analysed and further sorted within each theme in order to manage it. To ensure clarity, the process is explained in summary form at the beginning of each theme where the data is presented and then discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Deeper analysis, discussion and links with literature are made in the Chapter Four.

### **3.1 School community level**

From the initial framework of themes, school community was organised into sub-themes as follows:

School ethos  
Curriculum  
Pastoral support systems  
SENCO

School ethos was understood as the things which contribute towards creating the atmosphere of the school and attempted to identify attitudes therein which could support children with challenging behaviours and were easily identifiable. When including curriculum in the initial framework, it was thought that responses such as

alternative curricula (BTEC or vocational courses, 1-1 session) would be evidence of adaptive or alternative content. There were examples such as not wearing uniform or absence of rules restricting jewellery as well as finding activities that the pupils were individually interested in to motivate them, yet these all came from an alternative provision. A specific example of alternative curriculum was the provision of an off-site activity, horse riding (SENCo J in alternative provision) which was within the centre's ability to arrange. It was clear that other participants understood the need for personalising or supporting access to the curriculum in order that pupils could succeed and much data was generated about this aspect. Examples included teachers developing their own knowledge through training for specific difficulties (primary teacher J) and in-service training (secondary SENCo H) or speaking to colleagues and agreeing clear models of who the children were and knowing about their traumatic early lives (educational psychologist D). Other examples were building good relationships with pupils (specialist teacher L and secondary SENCo at alternative provision J), working with parents in (primary teacher S) or supporting them to feel part of the class (primary teacher E). Therefore, the codes became much more specific to reflect the active engagement in addressing teaching skills and understanding of the whole child for teachers and supporting pupils by reaching agreement on who pupils are as well as supporting a sense of belonging. These codes were judged to cover pastoral support too.

Coding for SENCo code was interesting, given my background of being an active SENCo deployed across my own schools and in different schools across the authority. The SENCo was mentioned twice in all the data. As a general comment, the lead teacher for vulnerable pupils J said what a tricky job they had to change hearts and minds to include pupils with challenging behaviours; and the secondary SENCo H commented that she had heard many teachers say that they would only consult SENCos if they had good and trusted relationships because they were always so busy. It was kept in the framework but moved to colleague level to reflect this evidence.

**Table 2: A table to show the initial framework sub-themes and how these were developed to reflect the data coded for the school community theme**

Initial framework	Revised framework
School ethos	School ethos
Curriculum	Support systems for teachers: active engagement in addressing teaching skills, understanding of whole child  Support systems for pupils: reaching agreement re who pupils are, supporting sense of belonging
Pastoral support systems	
SENCo	Moved to COLLEAGUE LEVEL

The data shown below relates to the revised codes.

### SCHOOL ETHOS

- There should be no limit [to inclusion] because we are an inclusive society. At the end of the day, school is a little tiny microcosm of the community isn't it? Of society. If we can't be doing it in school then what are we saying about society? (secondary teacher A)
- They [teachers] still have to manage them because its an inclusive comprehensive education (secondary teacher A)
- If you're not A) prepared to deal with BESD children, you're in the wrong job (primary teacher A)
- Every child you pass, you smile and say hello (primary teacher A)
- It [behaviour] is pretty well understood here.....see what the behaviour is communicating (primary teacher D)
- Putting things in place to deal with it (primary teacher D)
- Find a different way to help that child (primary teacher D)
- We're very lucky. We really don't have any behaviour issues (primary teacher E)
- Some schools have an ethos anyway so that everyone feels a sense of belonging .....sense the atmosphere ....at reception really (secondary SENCo H)
- Some schools are better than others (secondary SENCo H)
- Attitude is just so important (educational psychologist D)

- It's a can do or can't do mentality (educational psychologist D)
- All sorts of pressures that ....sway them [schools] away from being open armed and embracing children with additional needs (educational psychologist D)
- One example of a school in the area who have a real commitment to inclusion, a real dedication to developing staff expertise and skills (educational psychologist D)
- Culture of openness which says it is absolutely normal for us to feel challenged by behaviour of children and pupils with whom we work (educational psychologist D)
- A good head creates an ethos in the school; these are my expectations an this is what you do (secondary deputy head teacher G)
- Key to success is liking children (secondary deputy head teacher G)
- There should be room for all pupils in comprehensive schools (secondary deputy head teacher G)
- I heard an interview with David Blunkett...he was blind but he wasn't disabled. He hated being sent away to school (secondary teacher G)
- A phenomenon I am seeing at the moment is children being identified as having BESD and being sent to alternative learning provision where schools can "pay" in inverted commas, for respite (lead advisor for vulnerable pupils J)
- [Children with BESD] are not desirable SEN are they? The desirable SEN are sensory and physical impairments (lead advisor for vulnerable pupils J)
- Whole school ethos....."we don't do behaviour difficulties" (lead advisor for vulnerable pupils J)
- If you get a senior leadership team who are very pro including all children and see the school as part of the community then there will be support, the coaching for staff (lead advisor for vulnerable pupils J)
- You pick up on that [ethos] really quickly even just sitting in reception and watching how admin staff talk to the children and staff (lead advisor for vulnerable pupils J)
- I met some teachers who said, "they should be in a special school", but I don't think that's right (primary teacher J)
- One of our strengths is enabling children to succeed here in spite of their behavioural difficulties (primary head teacher J)

- We work really, really hard to make sure that everyone feels the responsibility for all children (primary head teacher J)
- Every day is a new day. Its important not to get stuck in that feeling of anxiety....because its destructive (primary head teacher J)
- In terms of developing a social model of children who will become young people who won't look disdainfully at the guy with Tourette's in the Post Office or who won't walk round the person in the wheel chair (primary head teacher J)
- Unpicking what we do.....making relationships.....stay positive...monitoring (specialist teacher L)
- "We've got a whole school approach to managing behaviour". Whole school means whole school (educational psychologist P)
- It's the culture of the school (educational psychologist P)
- We are a very caring school....we have a very family ethos in it (primary teacher S)
- School was a haven for some of those kids sometimes (deputy head teacher T)
- We are in it together....like Hill Street Blues...take care out there! (deputy head teacher T)
- The atmosphere of the school was different (deputy head teacher T)

### SCHOOL COMMUNITY LEVEL

#### SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR TEACHERS: ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN ADDRESSING TEACHING SKILLS

- Department heads have to make judgement calls because they know that putting somebody that doesn't manage the classroom well will give them twelve months of nightmares (secondary teacher A)
- Charts to try and encourage good behaviour (secondary teacher A)
- Training and support (primary teacher A)
- SCIP (Strategies for Crisis Intervention and Prevention) training (primary teacher A)
- Training helps an awful lot with other children through school (primary teacher A)
- I felt enough training had been put in place, I had enough skills to fall back on (primary teacher E)

- NQT year there was training (primary teacher E)
- In-service training (secondary SENCo H)
- Home grown training (secondary SENCo H)
- Having a mentor in the early years (secondary SENCo H)
- The context of teacher training still does not include a vast amount or significant input in social and emotional development (educational psychologist D)
- Menu of training (educational psychologist D)
- I have strategies you gather over time (secondary deputy head teacher G)
- New teachers need 'tricks of the trade' (secondary head teacher G)
- Watching other colleagues, modelling emotionally literate behaviour....coaching (lead teacher for vulnerable children J)
- I ask my mum [a teacher] (primary teacher J)
- Training gives you a set of skills (primary head teacher J)
- We have training here (specialist teacher L)
- Sharing experience, what has worked before (specialist teacher L)
- We work with teachers to develop skills (specialist teacher L)
- Workshops (educational psychologist P)
- Some of it is intuitive (educational psychologist P)
- Use of TES web-site....speak to friends...courses....INSET (primary teacher S)
- Give them (teachers) strategies...little keys....light at the end of the tunnel stuff too. We talk about a sequence of responses (deputy head teacher T)

### SCHOOL COMMUNITY LEVEL

#### SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR TEACHERS: UNDERSTANDING THE WHOLE CHILD

- I talked to her about him, about the sort of life he leads out of school (secondary teacher A)
- Knowing about troubled or traumatic early lives (educational psychologist D),
- They were weak readers [and therefore unable to access the curriculum], (primary teacher J)
- They had social services support [indicating difficulties wider than school], (primary teacher E)
- The school atmosphere was challenging for them (primary teacher A)
- He had seven years behind him of learnt behaviour (secondary teacher A)

- I met his mother and father and I could see straight away....there was a force field of animosity (deputy headteacher G)
- Having the background of the child's circumstances (educational psychologist D)
- Talking to the ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) (primary teacher A)
- Having learning difficulties, one MLD, one dyslexia type difficulties and one 'not sure' yet (primary teacher J)
- Looking at the date, the patterns of outbursts (primary teacher J)
- Adolescence (SENCo at alternative provision J)
- Adolescent development and an understanding of variations (educational psychologist P)

### SCHOOL COMMUNITY LEVEL

#### SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR PUPILS: REACHING AGREEMENT ON WHO PUPILS ARE

- Confrontational children (secondary teacher A)
- The disruptive ones are the BESD ones (secondary teacher A)
- The letters are not terribly helpful because the B coming at the beginning means that people focus on that one ..... the emotional part and the social are underrepresented in people's thinking because the behaviour dominates (secondary SENCo H)
- There has always been a risk of overlooking some of the more emotionally vulnerable children who are perhaps more withdrawn (educational psychologist D)
- It's a woolly concept (educational psychologist D)
- I carry a clear model in my head about what constitutes a significant BESD needs.....exposure to loss, trauma, bereavement, mal-treatment, abuse, insecure attachments (educational psychologist D)
- ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder), ODD (Oppositional Defiance Disorder) (secondary teacher G)
- It's a huge umbrella term (lead teacher for vulnerable pupils J)
- ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) or foetal alcohol syndrome. Mental health issues (lead teacher for vulnerable pupils J)

- It's a collective [term] isn't it? The way they communicate themselves which I seen poorly within society (primary head teacher J)
- Power seeking behaviours, refusal to work, challenging authority, emotionally vulnerable pupils, anorexia or ME, teenage pregnancy or they might have lost their parents (primary head teacher J)
- Pupils who do not conform whose behaviour you are not able to control, change or manage. If they disrupt the status quo of the class (specialist teacher L)
- It's a socially constructed concept, answering back, interfering with other students so they can't work.....frequency and intensity are defining features (educational psychologist P)
- If you see what a student is doing as being deliberately defiant that's a bit different from if you see what a student is doing as a product of their father dying the previous night (educational psychologist P)
- A child who is abusive to you, verbally and physically (primary teacher S)
- Those students identified as having behaviour or emotional difficulties (secondary head teacher G)
- A pupil who was "running amok" around school-he behaviour was understood to relate to a gang attack outside the school (secondary deputy headteacher T)
- Coming from dysfunctional families (secondary deputy headteacher T)
- It's different for different teachers actually. Some teachers feel very confident dealing with those behaviours surrounded by organisation, I think. So if you have got strong routines then those behaviours that are sometimes disruptive and those students with behavioural difficulties sometimes take advantage, their failings (well not failings but...) or difficulties are exposed when there isn't structure (secondary deputy head teacher T)

### SCHOOL COMMUNITY LEVEL

#### SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR PUPILS: SUPPORTING SENSE OF BELONGING

- They need to feel they are treated fairly....their views matter and need to be respected (secondary teacher A)
- They are supported before school (primary teacher A)
- Being loving and caring. They get smiles, they get warmth (primary teacher A)

- Most of us know the names of most of the children [in the whole school] (primary teacher A)
- Understanding their needs (primary teacher D)
- They need to feel they are part of the class (primary teacher E)
- They can come and talk to somebody (primary teacher E)
- You do everything you can to include them (primary teacher E)
- Pupils with a greater behaviour difficulty actually feel a sense of belonging .....they have a very strong connection (secondary SENCo H)
- Feeling welcoming to pupils (secondary SENCo H)
- Provide lots of opportunities for staff to mix with pupils in an informal way (secondary SENCo H)
- Nurture groups. Primary friendly approaches for YR7 (educational psychologist D)
- Need to feel understood, valued and respected. If we think of Maslow, the physiological and safety needs and then comes love and belonging-even before esteem (educational psychologist D)
- Quality of relationships (educational psychologist D)
- Connecting with their outside world too (educational psychologist D)
- His form looked after him (secondary deputy head teacher G)
- The rapport....the way she knew the children...talking to them respectfully (lead teacher for vulnerable pupils J)
- They know who they can go and talk to. Social times: lunchtime, play times, after school clubs, before school clubs, that they have a peer groups that will accept them and feel that sense of belonging really. Circles of friends. (lead teacher for vulnerable pupils J)
- Parents coming in...the Teddy Bear's picnic, sports day, a parent came in and talked about Tanzania (primary teacher J)
- Meaningful relationships (primary teacher J)
- Need to feel they are liked (primary head teacher J)
- Simple things like, "did you have a nice weekend?" (SENCo at an alternative provision J)
- Trips and things, we do care, a sense of belonging (SENCo at an alternative provision J)

- We've chosen to work with you (SENCo at an alternative provision J)
- Be given jobs. Smiled at and greeted as if it matters they are there. (specialist teacher L)
- Relationships underpin everything (specialist teacher L)
- Dealing with problems properly (educational psychologist P)
- Working with parents (primary teacher S)
- Getting pupils to recognise the issue and then giving them little nuggets, little strategies (secondary deputy head teacher T)
- School was a haven for these kids sometimes...knew stability and structures (secondary head teacher T)

### **3.2 COLLEAGUE LEVEL**

The themes at colleague level was organised into sub-themes as follows:

Supportive relationships  
 Experience shared: trust  
 Problem solving strategies building on existing strengths

In practice, these were too overlapping to be coded effectively. For example, a voluntary meeting for staff who were teaching a specific pupil could be coded as 'problem solving strategies building on existing strengths', but also as supporting relationships between staff. Again, much data meant that it was necessary to specify foci to manage them. 'Supportive relationships' was sub-divided into 'formal' and 'informal' support because a group of formalised support procedures was identified which included staff training programmes and formalised support, such as the Early Entrant Teacher (EET) scheme. Some support was informal such as emotional support (secondary SENCo H) or help from the Head of Department (secondary deputy head teacher G). Yet there was a further level of analysis which emerged which reflected the significance of the *quality* of relationships between staff. Examples included backing each other up (primary teacher D), constant dialogue (primary teacher A), communication with teachers who have a wealth of experience (Primary teacher J) and watching someone good at what they do (primary teacher E). These were coded as 'experience shared: collaborative problem solving' in order to reflect that sometimes sharing experience is enough to support a teacher as well as more

regular activities such as pupils can (secondary SENCo H) where staff discussed specific issues with a view to finding a solution.

It was interesting to hear participants comment upon a colleague’s actions which they felt were less successful, such as some teachers feeling falsely confident (secondary SENCo H) or teacher personality being an issue (secondary teacher A). These were collected together as ‘relationships unsupportive’ although this did not mean that teachers went out of their way to be unsupportive, rather that they articulated what they thought about how they saw other teachers. They provide examples of views that will not support the development of acceptable behaviours and working relationships. This is perhaps best illustrated by an example; secondary teacher A commented that “some people think that all children are BESD” and continued, “that in my opinion comes down to poor classroom management”. The underlying general meaning was that these teachers were unable to manage even the lowest levels of challenging behaviour. The participant felt that the teacher was unable to manage even the slightest disruption in the class without activating referral systems for support. Furthermore the teacher who was responding felt she was a very strong classroom leader and thought that some teachers should take more responsibility for their classroom leadership.

The SENCo code was moved from school community level to colleague level as previously indicated.

**Table 3: A table to show the initial framework sub-themes and how these were developed to reflect the data coded for the colleague level theme**

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Revised framework</b>
Supportive relationships	Support: formal and informal Relationships: supportive and unsupportive
Experienced shared: trust	Experience shared: collaborative problem solving
Problem solving strategies building on existing strengths	

## COLLEAGUE LEVEL

### SUPPORT: FORMAL

- Early Entrant Teacher programme (EET) was a scheme where teachers were able to spend allocated funds on external training or to buy themselves cover for their own classes so that they could observe more experienced teachers (primary teacher E)
- Training days; external providers and in-school such as whole school INSET, forums on the internet (primary teacher J, primary teacher A, educational psychologist D)
- Stress support structures at county level and in school (deputy head teacher T)
- Personnel managers in school as well as at county (deputy head teacher T)
- Confidential occupational health stress lines (deputy head teacher T)
- SEN register or a school list of those with additional needs (secondary teacher A)
- County level procedures after incidents (deputy head teacher T)
- INSET-sharing good practice, teacher observation (secondary teacher A), whole team which work around the inclusion unit (primary teacher A), peer mentoring (primary teacher A), coaching (secondary SENCo H, lead advisor for vulnerable pupils J), Team Teacher training (primary teacher D)
- LSAs/additional staff eg ELSA (primary teacher A)
- Support from SMT (primary teacher A)
- Specific strategies, eg. a work box for a child (primary teacher A), something to 'follow' [as in an IEP or BSP] (secondary SENCo H), 'Parking' children (secondary deputy head teacher G), Referral room [time out] (secondary teacher A)
- Communication systems: head teacher getting overview of school, staff briefing at the beginning of the day (lead advisor for vulnerable pupils J) and de-briefs at the end of the day to talk through what's happened in the day (specialist teacher L), Care Committee (secondary deputy head teacher G)
- Being able to approach EP service (educational psychologist D-behaviour team).

- Early support for children and so supporting behaviour by getting educational needs met (lead advisor for vulnerable pupils J)
- Getting training needs met for teachers (educational psychologist D-behaviour team)
- NQT Induction year (primary teacher S)
- Senior staff in charge, someone there when you need it (primary teacher A)
- Emotional Development Officers (lead advisor for vulnerable pupils J)

## COLLEAGUE LEVEL

### SUPPORT: INFORMAL

- Sometimes its anecdotal, seeing what your colleagues do and thinking it's a good idea (secondary teacher A)
- We talk, we walk into each others' classrooms, share ideas. Can you help me with this? (primary teacher A)
- Opportunity to talk, going into someone else's classroom and being a fly on the wall (primary teacher E)
- Staff discussion groups (educational psychologist D)
- We all support each other. We share with each other. It's important we are honest, not to get stuck in the feeling of anxiety with a child. (primary head teacher J)
- We have conversations. Its about building positive relationships (specialist teacher L)
- I would just go at lunchtime or after school and just ask people more experienced than me (primary teacher S)
- I mimicked everything she did [a brilliant teacher she had as a PGCE student] (primary teacher E)
- Emotional support for teachers because it empowers teachers, gives them confidence (secondary SENCo H)
- Forums, chat rooms, TES (secondary SENCo H)
- SENCo cluster (educational psychologist D)
- Help from your Head of Department (secondary deputy head teacher G), Line manager and friends who they link with (lead teacher for vulnerable pupils J)
- My mum's a teacher, so I learnt quite a bit from her (primary teacher J)

- Team work. knowing there is someone you can talk to (primary head teacher J)
- We worked together, we played together (secondary deputy head teacher T)
- Staff do's (secondary deputy head teacher T)
- Thinking collaboratively, problem solving and the creation of a culture of openness which says it is absolutely normal for teachers to feel challenged by the behaviour of children (educational psychologist D).

## COLLEAGUE LEVEL

### RELATIONSHIPS: SUPPORTIVE

- Sharing ideas; things picked up from colleagues (the behaviour chart on the back of the door (secondary teacher A), sharing information about children to support understanding (primary teacher A).
- Asking for ideas & "help", big network of support [not dependent on one person] (primary teacher A), emotional support, forming human contact [relationships] (secondary teacher A)
- Leaving the door open [metaphorically and literally] (primary teacher A)
- backing each other up (primary teacher D), working as a team, 'parking' difficult kids in other people's lessons (secondary deputy head teacher G), arrangements between staff for a specific child- if they came to a class there is an understanding he had had been sent to be diverted (primary teacher A).
- Being ok to say, "I'm really struggling today." (principal educational psychologist P), not seen as weak-having or off day (primary teacher D)
- Watching someone good at what they do, seeing the management of challenging behaviour in practice (primary teacher E)
- Taking yourself out of a situation for twenty minutes (primary teacher E)
- Work 1-1 with teacher over a period of time (secondary SENCo H), I take the class and he goes to work with the child in order to form a positive relationship (specialist teacher L)
- Going to staff room, getting together informally, motivated teachers, treats in staffroom, staff running sessions eg about meditation, (Secondary SENCo H) E-Bay (secondary deputy head T).

## COLLEAGUE LEVEL

### RELATIONSHIPS: UNSUPPORTIVE

This sub-theme reflects what participants said about colleagues, perhaps to inform their own practice.

- It comes down to personality by and large, and you can't change a person's personality (secondary teacher A)
- Not letting them be teachers in the first place (secondary teacher A)
- Its fairly obvious who can and who can't do it (secondary teacher A)
- You can't come to work here and say "Well, I don't want to deal with children with behavioural difficulties" (primary teacher A)
- For example, if someone runs out of J [names unit] they might pass someone who doesn't tell them to stop running because they don't want to look stupid if the child doesn't stop running (primary teacher D)
- Some teachers are falsely confident (secondary SENCo H)
- Staff are pressurised to attend school when they are probably not well or emotionally vulnerable (secondary SENCo H)
- Some teachers feel that things are getting tricky are made to feel judged (educational psychologist D)
- I am just talking about how it [a specific teacher's attitude] used to impact on me [as a deputy head teacher] and I would have constant battles when I was trying to put my point of view. He would say I was weak for listening to them [pupils]. (secondary deputy head teacher G)
- It boils down to having the right relationship with a child and with the parent and key people and not all teachers think that's important (SENCo at alternative provision)
- Ultimately it moves to capability and capability might move to dismissal and that it far more likely than it ever was (secondary deputy head teacher T)
- "He [talking about an assaulted teacher] had it coming." I was shocked to hear staff say that (secondary deputy head teacher T)

## COLLEAGUE LEVEL

### EXPERIENCE SHARED: COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

- There are always things to be learnt from other people (secondary teacher A)

- One of our senior managers is very keen on sharing good practice so we do have lots of opportunities to discuss (secondary teacher A)
- Constant dialogue between me [teacher] and M [teaching assistant] (primary teacher A)
- Culture which says we don't expect ourselves individually to have all the answers up our sleeves and therefore we are going to have regular opportunities staff to come together and reflect and make sense of these challenges in a very non-judgemental and learning culture type way (educational psychologist D)
- Communication with other teachers who have a wealth of ideas (primary teacher J)
- Establishing trusted colleague relationships important to learning from other people and gaining additional skills (SENCo at the alternative provision)
- INSET and courses (SENCO alternative provision J).
- Staff identify their own training needs and are then grouped together with others with similar interests and needs (secondary deputy head teacher T).
- The primary behaviour specialist supported staff with one-to-one coaching sessions (primary teacher D).
- Regular activities such as SENCo cluster meetings and case conferences (secondary deputy head teacher G)
- Pupil conferences (SENCo secondary school H).

## SENCO

- I don't ask because she [SENCo] is busy. I hear people say all the time "oh she's rushed off her feet. I'll try something different" (secondary SENCo H)
- Including pupils with challenging behaviours is one of the hardest areas for SENCos to lead on because they really have to struggle to win over hearts and minds, especially in secondary (lead teacher for vulnerable pupils J)

### **3.3 INDIVIDUAL TEACHER LEVEL**

The theme of individuals in the initial framework was organised into sub-themes as follows:

- Informed responses
- Confidence
- Professional/personal identity

The theme for informed responses was designed to enable coding for responses by teachers which indicated that they may vary their approaches to individual pupils. This was exemplified by having additional information such as the child being on the SEN register or because the teacher knew a child was having a difficult time outside school (e.g. secondary teacher T). They might have experienced pupils with similar difficulties before, have a good relationship with the child or understand underpinning theories (e.g. primary teacher J who discussed a child with autism). However, having this additional information could mean that the teacher felt ‘informed’ and more confident to support the pupil. Confidence may also grow after taking part in an internet forum, trying something a colleague had suggested, observed a teacher or had been on a training course to support the child’s needs. Coding these twice did not help sort through the data, so confidence was assimilated into informed responses too. Teachers mentioned their professional identity as how they saw themselves and how others saw them. An example from deputy headteacher G who discussed when she reflected on an aggressive incident between a member of staff and a pupil. She expressed the hope that staff would sympathise with her if she was assaulted by a child as she felt she was more respected amongst her colleagues. Elements such as a positive professional identity and feeling valued and successful were seen to help teachers to feel respected. These thoughts were all gathered together in the theme for ‘self-image/self-esteem’.

**Table 4: A table to show the initial framework sub-themes and how these were developed to reflect the data from interviews coded for the individual teacher theme**

<b>Initial framework</b>	<b>Revised framework</b>
Informed responses	Informed responses
Confidence	Self-image/self-esteem
Professional/personal identity	

## INDIVIDUAL TEACHER LEVEL

### INDIVIDUALS: INFORMED RESPONSES

- I think different teachers find different behaviours differently challenging (secondary teacher A)
- In one subject he tends to engage with his teacher (secondary teacher A)
- It [spitting] doesn't really push my buttons. No (primary teacher A)
- Issues at home (primary teacher A)
- If you have a high turnover of staff and you have a huge percentage of short-term contract, overseas staff..... (primary teacher A)
- A lot of the time its children whose behaviour is naughty because that is how they are communicating (primary teacher D)
- Finding a different way to help that child (primary teacher D)
- What do I do that makes situations fail? (primary teacher D)
- I pick my battles (primary teacher D)
- I am straight down the line. You need to realise the boundaries in my class (primary teacher E)
- Somebody with a greater understanding of the various needs....would have formulated some ideas as to how they are going to respond (secondary SENCo H)
- Teachers also have times when they are more or less vulnerable (secondary SENCo H)
- Descriptors have changed over time as well. We have now got BESD or SEBD, but going back we had social maladjustment and behavioural maladjustment.. (educational psychologist D)
- We need to recognise that there is a small cohort of very damaged children who may require something different (educational psychologist D)
- Their families contribute quite a lot to the way they are [discussing a pupil with ODD and ADHD] (secondary deputy head teacher G)
- From reading, what I had read and what I have seen (secondary deputy head teacher G)
- There is a paper that I have read that has just come out. I can't remember the author but there is a new definition of learning difficulties and behaviour doesn't feature in that (lead advisor for vulnerable pupils J)

- An autistic child whose behaviour changed every day; and it was just ways of working round his behaviour and using different strategies to kind of win him round (primary teacher J)
- We learnt about autistic children and their tendencies and that was really interesting but that was all the behaviour I learnt about [during teacher training] (primary teacher J)
- I've naturally kind of tried to pick up stuff as I have done my supply work (primary teacher J)
- Doing something differently (primary head teacher J)
- Often what you get is an angry shouty teacher because actually they are not in core control (primary head teacher J)
- There is so much pressure on other things, like league tables (SENCo alternative provision J)
- Teachers are very good at listening (specialist teacher L)
- Not taking it [abuse] personally (specialist teacher L)
- How we construct it affects how we manage it (educational psychologist P)
- We need to take a workshop approach and build up understanding, knowledge and skill through time (educational psychologist P)
- Professional development (educational psychologist P)
- You always have to change it for each class you get and there's always a child that is different (primary teacher S)
- I used to work in Liverpool.... A teacher would rant about someone not doing their homework and yet at home they would be looking after their siblings and all that sort of stuff. You have got to put it in context (secondary deputy head teacher T)
- That is the place where they knew stability and structure (secondary deputy head teacher T)

### INDIVIDUAL TEACHER LEVEL

#### SELF-IMAGE/SELF-ESTEEM

- I am a strong classroom manager (secondary teacher A)
- I have fewer problems than most (secondary teacher A)

- My pupils know where they stand (secondary teacher A)
- I have a good relationship with them, a laugh and a joke (secondary teacher A)
- I feel well-trained and well supported (primary teacher A)
- People around me and training give confidence (primary teacher A)
- I leave my door open and anyone can come in (primary teacher A)
- I love my job! (primary teacher)
- My kids know where they stand (primary teacher E)
- Some teachers have a natural empathy (secondary SENCo H)
- There is a genuine anxiety regarding what if I deal with things and make things worse? (educational psychologist D)
- You have to earn respect (secondary headteacher G)
- My philosophy is never to lose my temper (secondary headteacher G)
- I reflected on who I respected as a child (secondary headteacher G)
- It's about personality and presence in a room (lead advisor for vulnerable children J)
- I feel confident in dealing with strategies to win them round (primary teacher J)
- I don't think we give ourselves enough credit sometimes (primary teacher J)
- Every day is a new day (primary teacher J)
- Teachers having a sense of pride (primary head teacher J)
- It feels very personal if you get it wrong (specialist teacher L)
- Low level stuff can have a corrosive effect on teachers' confidence (specialist teacher L)
- Sometimes staff get worn out and worn down (educational psychologist P)
- It definitely fills me with confidence when I know I am doing things right and that would be a good way to deal with it (primary teacher S)
- I think if I feel happy and valued then I do a better job (primary teacher S)

### **3.4 GOVERNMENT POLICY: THE ACCOUNTABILITY CULTURE**

This was not included in the initial framework yet the data indicated that this could have an impact on teachers' attitudes so was included. Examples included an increase in pupils considered to have challenging behaviours being placed in mainstream classes, the publishing of league tables which includes public examination results and

the publishing of exclusion rates.

- Some schools had “zero tolerance” to poor behaviour because it could disrupt the learning of other class members (educational psychologist D)
- There are forces that sway schools away from being open armed and embracing children with additional needs in the local areas (educational psychologist D)
- Some children and their parents get demonised by the “playground mafia” (lead advisor for vulnerable pupils J)
- The phenomenon I am seeing at the moment is children being identified as having BESD and being sent to alternative learning provision where schools can pay for respite for these children to go to a PRU. And they can do that with children as young as Year 1 (lead advisor for vulnerable pupils J)
- Local authorities are getting smaller and smaller leading to reduced support for mainstream schools (lead advisor for vulnerable pupils J)
- There are a lot of pressures on head teachers to collude with this view that there should be a better place for this child to go to rather than our school and this can be a product of many things: parental pressure, staff pressure, union involvement (educational psychologist D)
- Keeping exclusions off the record book (secondary deputy head teacher T)
- It is no longer celebrated if you get a G (secondary SENCo H)

In this chapter I have detailed the process of updating the initial framework of themes and listed the results of the initial analysis of the research data. In the following chapter it is interrogated in order to answer the research questions identified in Chapter One.

## **CHAPTER 4: Further analysis with discussion of results and conclusions**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter was an initial analysis of the research data listing coded data and using it to examine and adapt the framework of themes. The following chapter draws together this data and discusses it in context of the literature cited in Chapter One. In the interest of clarity, the aims and research questions are re-stated and then discussed in turn. From the literature review and personal experience, a structure of themes emerged; 'school level', 'colleague level' and 'individual level' which were used to frame the detailed analysis of the data gathered during the research process (Nieto 2010). The additional theme of government policy which was added to the updated framework of themes is also discussed. Although the themes are separated as a way to discuss the data, the concept of my work is the complex inter-relationships between all the constituents of the framework and that different areas may be pertinent for different schools or individual teachers at different times. Each research question will be examined in more depth before the chapter continues with reflections on the strengths and limitations of the research as well as identifying possible areas for further exploration. This is followed by a concluding summary of the main methodological, theoretical and practical implications of the research and its significance and contribution to current knowledge in the field. The chapter finally makes some recommendations for the educational practice of teachers, schools and the field of teacher education.

The overall aim of this research was to explore issues around challenging behaviours in schools within the context that some schools and teachers appear to be more successful at supporting pupils than others. This perception comes anecdotally from my experience as a teacher as well as from research such as Bielby, Sharp, Shuayb, Teeman, Keys and Benefield (2007) who claim that teachers and schools are having increasing difficulties with classroom behaviours. To this end, the research set out to ascertain teachers' attitudes and understanding of their responsibility for teaching pupils with challenging behaviours. Specifically, the research set out to answer the following research questions:

- What whole school factors were seen to impact on teachers' attitudes towards children and young people with additional behavioural support needs?
- How are relationships between colleagues perceived to influence teachers' attitudes towards children and young people with additional behavioural support needs?
- To what extent were school ethos and colleagues' support seen as relevant to teachers' attitude to teaching all pupils including those whose behaviour is challenging in their classes?

The chapter takes each research question and synthesises the literature reviewed in Chapter One with the coded data initially analysed in Chapter Three. The impact of policy on the daily lives of teachers has been an emergent theme in this research and was added to the framework. Following the publication of the new Code of Practice (2014), the category of Behavioural, Social and Emotional Difficulties no longer exists. Replaced by the new category of Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties, behaviour is only recognised as *part* of mental health difficulties. Behaviours may reflect underlying mental health issues or disorders such as AD/HD or attachment disorders (DoE 2014). This was designed to reduce disruptive behaviour being seen as a special educational need, and there is a recognition that behaviours which challenge may occur as a manifestation of other difficulties. This may be an opportunity to develop the way language is used when professionals think about the pupils under discussion, so we may be able to move away from the concept of BESD where “the behaviour bit comes first” as one of my participants (secondary SENCo H) expressed it. It may encourage professionals to ask why the behaviour is occurring and what *they* can do to support improvement. This research was carried out under the old Code (SENCoP 2001), yet there appears to be little evidence to suggest that the new Code (SENCoP 2014) does much more than repeat the inclusive rhetoric without accounting for the complexity of school life that involves pupils whose behaviours challenge mainstream teachers.

As with previous legislation, professionals will need to consider the severity and duration of difficulties rather than simply labelling a child; they may think twice if there is no external agency involvement and reflect upon what the behaviour is communicating and what purposes it serves for the child. A change in definition may also lead us to more supportive approaches and better outcomes for pupils, as how we construct it affects how we manage it (Brofenbrenner 1979, Cooper, Smith and Upton 1994, Visser 2003, Brandau and Pretis 2004, Cooper and Cefari 2013, Orsati and Causton-Theokaris 2013, Broomhead 2013). Alternatively, it may encourage professionals to pursue diagnoses of the nature which labels children and young people. The new Code came into being at the same time as the new National Curriculum (2012) and with it the requirements of 'the right' teaching for those individuals with potential barriers to learning (DoE 2014: 4.4). This ambiguous reference to 'the right' teaching suggests that teachers are expected to know what is right and further implies there is wrong teaching too.

#### **4.1 What whole school factors were seen to impact on teachers' attitudes towards children and young people with additional behavioural support needs?**

School ethos refers to the values and attitudes that underpin the organisation of school and is experienced as tone, social climate and atmosphere (Cooper, Smith and Upton 1994). These qualities can vary greatly between schools which are geographically quite close (Elton 1989, Gruenert and Whitaker 2015). Pupils should feel secure, knowing that they are valued, safe and supported (Ofsted 2005) and there is evidence that many schools achieve good outcomes with children and young people with labels of challenging behaviour (Poulou and Norwich 2002, Norwich 2003, Nind and Wearmouth 2006, Wedell 2008). Two participants in my research thought they could recognise an atmosphere or identify a 'feeling' on entering school reception areas (secondary SENCo H, lead teacher for vulnerable pupils J), and a third mentioned differences in schools' atmosphere (secondary deputy head teacher T). This fits with my own anecdotal experience of visiting other schools as an Advanced Skills Teacher. The development of school ethos comes from leadership, and growth and

maintenance of it depends on the involvements and co-operation of the whole staff (Ofsted 2005).

Participants believed the school community took the lead from head teachers who had a broad view of the school's place within the wider community (secondary deputy head teacher G, secondary deputy head teacher G). Primary head teacher J said that she wished to discourage her pupils "avoiding the guy with Tourette's in the Post-Office queue" and made sure everybody in her school felt a responsibility for *all* the children including those in the on-site inclusion unit. She gave examples of her expectations of her staff such as treating every day as a new day and leading a culture of being honest and sharing with each other when teachers were finding a child difficult. Deputy head teacher G spoke about how hearing a radio interview with David Blunkett talking about how he hated being sent to a school for students with visual impairment, informed her philosophy that there should be room for all sorts of pupils in comprehensive schools. The lead advisor for vulnerable pupils J, noted that a senior leadership team who are very pro including all children and see the school as part of the community, support and coach staff to enable all children from the community to be taught in that school.

These cultural expectations were clearly communicated from senior leaders to teachers; liking children (secondary deputy head teacher G), understanding behaviour and knowing that school is a haven for some (secondary deputy head teacher T), smiling at children (primary teacher A), being a caring school with a family ethos (primary teacher S) and not sending pupils out of lessons (secondary teacher A). Strong leadership and a good sense of community were emphasised by Ofsted (2005) and the Steer Reports (2005) as key to good behaviour, teaching and learning. Primary teachers D and A commented how they thought that it was good that the children from the resourced unit (in the school where they taught), were included in the mainstream classes of the school. General attitude is important with some schools having 'can do' and some 'can't do' approaches (educational psychologist D). This fits with research such as Brusling and Pepin (2003) and Avramidis, Baylis and Burden (2000) who considered positive attitudes to be a pre-requisite for successful inclusion.

Yet a positive school ethos with clear expectations from school leaders was not enough alone. Other whole school factors that were seen to influence teachers' attitudes were the expectations of continually developing teaching skills, knowing children as individuals and building a sense of belonging to the school community (Booth and Ainscow 2000, 2012). The expectation of ongoing training should be supported throughout teachers' careers (House of Commons 2006, Teachers' Standards 2012). An important attitude is understanding that teachers can always develop practice through a "menu" of training (educational psychologist D). Training gives a set of skills (primary head teacher J) and can be in- house (specialist teacher L). Specific examples of up-skilling teachers in this research were sharing techniques such as behaviour charts (secondary teacher A), 'tricks of the trade' (secondary head teacher G), little light at the end of the tunnel strategies (secondary deputy head teacher T), SCIP training (Strategies for Crisis Intervention and Prevention) (primary teacher A) as well as general training and support (primary teachers A and E, secondary SENCo H) and workshops (educational psychologist P). Research demonstrates that teaching which is good for children with special needs is good teaching for all pupils and teachers already possess the necessary skills rather than there existing a specialist pedagogy (Hanko 2003, Peacey 2005, Norwich and Lewis 2007).

There was some contradictory evidence from participants whose experiences were different from all schools welcoming all children. All sorts of pressures can sway schools from embracing children with additional behaviour needs (educational psychologist D). He discussed an example where a head teacher lead a very inclusive school, which had the effect of attracting pupils with challenging behaviours from a wider area than their catchment area. Some parents felt very unhappy about the effects on their own children and were, as such very vocal, culminating at a hearing of the governing body. D explained that with support, the head talked about the Christian ethos of the school and how this should guide their actions. The lead teacher for vulnerable pupils J, suggested that children with challenging behaviours were seen as "less desirable SENs" than visually impaired and hearing impaired children. She was shocked to find that schools were paying for 'respite' by sending pupils to alternative providers as young as year one, so these pupils were being labelled from a very young age as having behavioural difficulties.

There was evidence that teachers had ‘the bigger picture’ of children’s broader circumstances such as troubled early lives (educational psychologist D), social services support (primary teacher E), parental issues (secondary deputy head teacher G) and knew that children with challenging behaviours are not a homogenous group (Hargreaves and Fullan 1998, House of Commons 2010). Furthermore, participants were aware of diagnoses which could indicate behavioural issues which included ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder), ODD (Oppositional Defiance Disorder), ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), foetal alcohol syndrome, teenage pregnancy, ME (myalgic encephalopathy), mental health issues such as exposure to loss, trauma, bereavement, mal-treatment, abuse and insecure attachments. Schools had mechanisms for sharing information (primary teacher A, secondary teacher A, SENCo at alternative provision J) and this knowledge supported the wider understanding of children and young people (SENCo at alternative provision J, educational psychologist P). Knowledge and understanding help teachers to build relationships and ameliorate for behaviours which might challenge (Weamouth, Glynn, Richmond and Berryman 2004).

There was comment around identifying pupils with challenging behaviours with the suggestion that the focus on the behaviour part of the BESD category meant that the emotional and social parts are under-represented in people’s thinking because behaviour dominates (secondary SENCo H, specialist teacher L) and the focus was on behaviour rather than social and emotional aspects. This fits with the findings of Visser (2003) and The Green Paper, Support and Aspiration (2011) which found a lack of clarity in identifying this group of pupils. Educational psychologist D also had a concern that children with social and emotional difficulties were overlooked. The new SEN Code of Practice (2014) may go some way to support a focus on social and emotional needs with the inclusion of the new category of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH). This is supported by the document Mental health in and behaviour in Schools (2014) which suggests approaches for children and young people whose behaviour (whether it is disruptive, withdrawn, anxious, depressed or otherwise) may be related to an unmet mental health need and makes the link between challenging behaviour and underlying explanations for it.

Frequency and intensity of behaviours such as refusal to work, challenging authority, verbally and physically abusive behaviour, deliberate defiance and those who do not conform were identifying features of challenging behaviours. Miller and Black (2001) found that teachers often constructed models of pupils as the problems whereby the problem behaviour came from the child. This was also echoed by the Elton Report (1989) and Runswick-Cole and Hodge (2009). Deliberate defiance was seen as different to behaviours attributed to external circumstances or special educational need: an example of a boy who was wearing a hat in apparent defiance of school rules was cited. He was shouted at, but in fact had permission to wear it because he was having treatment for cancer. Interestingly, Miller, Ferguson and Moore (2002) found that teachers' unfairness is seen by pupils as a prominent cause of misbehaviour.

A number of whole school factors have been cited as being pertinent to this research question and have been discussed above. These can perhaps be summarised as the expectations and understanding that senior leaders have of their staff and emphasise positive attitudes, ongoing training and knowing children as members of the community. The issue of identification may be ameliorated by opening discussions with school staff around the new category of SEMH and encouraging greater understanding of the relationship between these and challenging behaviours.

#### **4.2 How are relationships between colleagues perceived to influence teachers' attitudes towards children and young people with additional behavioural support needs?**

To directly answer the question, a quotation from secondary deputy head teacher T seems to sum up appropriately; as a young teacher in Liverpool during the nineteen eighties he and his colleagues supported each other by quoting a popular television show, "It was like Hill Street Blues.... We used to say; let's be careful out there". So a key aspect appeared to be supportive colleagues with a 'we are all in it together' attitude which reflected trust and a united front. This part of the research looked at different kinds of support discussed by participants.

It was expressed by some participants in advisory roles that senior leaders should start with understanding that it is not a sign of professional weakness to admit a difficulty with managing a class (educational psychologist D, lead teacher for vulnerable pupils J). Alongside this, being able to have honest and constructive discussions about what kind of support is needed and which does not focus on personal judgement or individual teachers was important. The whole staff can contribute to a culture that says it is alright to be challenged from time to time. There is some evidence that working with staff groups can have positive effects on staff culture by shifting perspectives and enabling them to approach problem situation more analytically and less emotionally (Miller 2003). Formal approaches are discussed, yet there is limited research around informal support systems.

Collaborative problem solving is a term used, for how teachers find solutions for challenging behaviours in their classrooms. It exists in a formal sense like Teacher Support Teams (TSTs) (Creese, Norwich and Daniels 2000) as a way to support teachers in a sharing of expertise as opposed to an 'expert' teaching teachers (Hanko 2002). In this research, some participants felt that thinking collaboratively supported problem solving for teachers, yet a school culture of openness was a prerequisite to the success of this approach. Trusted and established colleague relationships were important when requesting or receiving effective collaborative support and effective collaboration could only take place if the school culture was genuinely open (educational psychologists P and D, primary head teacher J). Collaboratively working supports the idea that teachers individually do not have all the answers and regular opportunities for staff to come together in forums such as daily school de-briefs to reflect and to make sense of challenges in a very non-judgemental way, is helpful. It is key to understand that these formal approaches are different to teachers talking generally about how challenging their pupils are. Ground rules are established (Wilson and Newton 2006), there is a formal process to the problem solving (Monsen and Cameron 2002) and there could be limits to numbers of participants (Hanko 1999)

Good relationships between colleagues enabled additional avenues of support for managing challenging behaviours to be accessed. There was a variety of examples of informal support to share perspectives such as asking colleagues with greater experience (primary teachers J and S) and accessing internet forums such as The

Times Educational Supplement (TES) (secondary SENCo H and primary teacher S). Relationships were key to support a staff sense of belonging to the school community, as above, being in 'it' together. Examples included a good induction to the school from day one; did teachers feel welcomed or snarled at, because they happened to sit in old Mary's seat in the staff room (educational psychologist P). SENCo J (also a member of the senior leadership team) at the alternative provision discussed how they tried to think whether or not staff as a whole felt happy and the kind of things that the senior leaders could do to try to help staff. She mentioned that in most school terms, staff go out for a meal. Sometimes there was a bigger celebration like a retirement party or a special birthday celebration. These opportunities created time to be able to talk in a civilised environment as opposed to the busy, challenging, everyday environment that schools are day-to-day.

Informal support developed as a result of talking with colleagues and building relationships so these are now reported. Numerous examples were given: school meetings and social gatherings brought staff together, being in colleagues' classrooms, talking to each other, staff do's, treats in the staff-room, running information sessions about E-bay or meditation and sharing ideas (secondary teacher A, primary teacher A, primary teacher E, educational psychologist D, secondary deputy head teacher G, lead teacher for vulnerable pupils J, primary teacher S, secondary head teacher T, primary head teacher J, specialist teacher L). Organising opportunities for staff go out for a meal, afternoon teas served by the senior leaders or birthday celebrations created time to be able to talk in a civilised environment (secondary SENCo H). Participants also discussed the importance of being good role models for each other. The importance of senior staff leading by persevering with children whose behaviour challenged teachers, everyday being a fresh start and "walking-the-walk" of being able to manage behaviour themselves were thought to be important by participants. Primary teacher E told of the aftermath of an aggressive incident in her class where another teacher stepped in so that she could go to the staff room and calm down. Backing each other up (primary teacher D) and making arrangements between staff for pupils sent to other classes to be diverted (primary teacher A) were other illustrations of this. All participants discussed ideas along these themes and gave examples which indicated the importance to them.

The overriding concept for successful collaborative practices is that all teachers feel able to share the responsibility for children with behaviours which challenge us as a profession and that teachers can achieve a great deal together (Hanko 2002). Extending the idea further into the profession, Taylor (2012) has espoused the value of schools working with alternative education centres (PRUs) to share good practice. In this research a participant (primary teacher A) expressed frustration that his school could not host trainee teachers given that it was judged as 'satisfactory' by the Ofsted inspection system. In order to have trainees on placements, schools have to be judged as 'good' or 'outstanding' yet the teacher felt that trainees could learn a great deal from the excellent practice in the school which took "more than its fair share of pupils with challenging behaviours from the community" (primary head teacher J). Indeed, evidence supports the development of positive teacher attitudes to special educational needs during initial training (Dew–Hughes and Brayton 1997, Robertson 1999, Garner 2000, Pearson 2005).

The SENCo theme was moved to this part of the framework. As was explained earlier, there were only two comments throughout all of the data gathered. There was a recognition that the position was a strategic one, as the lead teacher for vulnerable pupils J, thought that part of the responsibility to support the inclusion of pupils with challenging behaviours was theirs. "Including pupils with challenging behaviours is one of the hardest areas for SENCos to lead on because they really have to struggle to win over hearts and minds, especially in secondary". The SEN Code of Practice (2014) suggests that the role is a strategic one and that is supported by SENCos being senior leaders, although it is clear that SEN is a shared responsibility. In my roles, I have worked very much in a supportive manner, having a very reduced teaching timetable allowing me to work alongside staff to develop their skills as well as carry out the usual duties expected. I anticipated that there would be evidence in this research of similar ways of working, yet the second comment relation to the theme stated that SENCos were not approached as they were always so busy. Clearly, from only one comment, it is not possible to add claim that this is true elsewhere, yet it has led me to consider how the role is perceived.

#### **4.3 To what extent were school ethos and colleagues' support seen as relevant to teachers feeling responsible to accept and teach all pupils including those whose behaviour was challenging in their classes?**

This research question focused on individual teachers and it seems reasonable to expect that attitudes are informed by the wider school context. Teachers do not work in isolation and are “the last stop on the journey to successful inclusion” (Hodkinson 2010:65).

In section 4.1, the moral aspect of schools to educate future generations of society to accept everyone (for example, “the guy with Tourette’s at the Post-Office” primary head teacher J) was discussed. During the individual interviews some alternative viewpoints emerged. Primary teacher D claimed that although the children in the resourced provision in their school were well served, some of the children in the mainstream classes of the same school who had challenging behaviours did not get sufficient additional support. Primary head teacher J (the school with the resourced provision) expressed that her teachers would teach *all* children in the school, yet the existence of the resourced provision where children were taught for some of the school day, suggested there was also a recognition that it was not desirable or possible for them to be in mainstream classes without additional withdrawal support. In addition, they were supported by *specialist* staff in there. Educational psychologist D suggested that the profiles of very young children, even pre-school minus one, indicated they might need an intensity of support that is really different to an average Year R. Another example came from secondary head teacher G whose neighbour’s son was so severely autistic that she thought he could not be educated in a mainstream classroom. So there were caveats to blanket acceptance of the responsibility to teach all children. Research indicates that teachers did not have the same vision of inclusion for children with behavioural difficulties (Hodkinson and Vickerman 2009). The lead advisor for vulnerable children J, commented that children with these difficulties were less desirable to include. Other research indicates that children with this area of need were harder to include in mainstream class groups and this has been noted elsewhere (Croll and Moses 2000, Evans and Lunt 2002 and Shearman 2003).

A teacher's self-image may be informed by a number of things including how 'good' they perceived themselves to be and how well they are perceived by colleagues at their job. Two specific incidents were discussed by three staff as part of this research which illustrates this. In one, primary teacher E commented how supported she felt when a child with autism hurt her and other staff took her class for twenty minutes. Another incident, which had happened a couple of years previously, was mentioned by two participants at the same school which had happened a couple of years previously. A member of staff was hit by a pupil and secondary deputy head teacher T commented that he was surprised to hear staff say that the teacher had had it coming; there was a general feeling that he had been very arrogant with staff and pupils since joining the school. Secondary deputy head teacher G (referring to the same incident) said that given that she felt respected amongst the school staff she hoped she could expect sympathy and support from her colleagues in similar circumstances. So, the assaulted teacher's self-image was a good one, yet it is possible that it was misplaced. Other comments which indicated how teachers perceived themselves included being a strong classroom manager (secondary teacher A), feeling well-trained and confident (primary teacher A, primary teacher J) and getting things right (primary teacher S). Behaviours which challenged teachers culminated in staff feeling out of control and vulnerable and teachers not in "core" control may become angry and shouty (primary head teacher J). These situations increase stress (Hanko 2002) and even low level disruptions can have a corrosive effect on teachers' confidence and it feels personal if they "get it wrong" (specialist teacher L) and sometimes staff get worn out and worn down (educational psychologist P).

There were examples that participants had knowledge and understanding about what affects behaviour despite the fact that descriptors have changed over time (educational psychologist D) and the new SEN CoP (2014) which has removed the BESD category. Even where a diagnosis exists, families are a factor which contributes quite a lot to the way children are. So when discussing a pupil with ODD and ADHD secondary deputy head teacher G, the "field of animosity" around the parents is thought to have impacted on the child's behaviour. Issues outside school can also explain challenging behaviours (primary teacher A, secondary deputy head teacher T). There was repeated evidence that participants were able to use the sorts of information cited above to inform their responses. Examples included not taking

behaviour personally (specialist teacher L), finding different ways of working with an autistic child (primary teacher J) and understanding themselves, for example knowing that teachers found different behaviours challenging (secondary teacher A). One participant knew she was particularly annoyed by spitting (specialist teacher L) whilst another said he was not (primary teacher A). Participants were aware that these triggers were different for colleagues (primary teacher A, secondary teacher H). Participants also understood that school can be the place where children have stability and structure (secondary deputy teacher T), knew there were consistent boundaries and knew where they stood (primary teacher E, secondary teacher A).

Understanding and personal reflection were important and comments such as “finding a different way to help that child (primary teacher D)”, thinking about which teachers they respected when they were a child (secondary head teacher G) and asking “what do I do that makes situations fail?” (primary teacher D) illustrated this. Other comments noted that reflection could lead teachers to formulate some ideas as to how they are going to respond (secondary SENCo H, primary head teacher J) and being flexible enough to adapt to each class you get (primary teacher S). Behaviours which challenged teachers, culminated in staff feeling out of control and vulnerable and increased stress (Hanko 2002) and teachers not in core control may become angry and shouty (primary head teacher J). Low level stuff can have a corrosive effect on teachers’ confidence and it feels personal if they get it wrong (specialist teacher L) and sometimes staff get worn out and worn down (educational psychologist P).

One of the questions on the initial questionnaire asked about when participants’ became aware of challenging behaviours in classrooms. Of those completed, the majority commented that they and many teachers they knew were completely unaware of challenging behaviours until the first day of their Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) year! Initial teacher training was briefly discussed during this research. Participants were unclear about how much training was given (educational psychologist P) and concern was voiced that some schools were complicit in judging student teachers to have met the Teachers’ Standards (2012) because they did not want to fail them, rather than because they were actually able to manage the behaviours of the children in their charge (secondary teacher A). There was a suggestion made by specialist teacher L that teachers were less informed about challenging behaviours than other

SEN and poor behaviour was often understood as a reflection of home background or lack of parental care rather than additional educational need (Elton 1989, Miller 1999). The development of positive attitudes during training and ongoing learning for special educational needs after achieving Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) is well documented (Brownlee and Carrington 2000, Brusling and Pepin 2003, Golder, Norwich and Bayliss 2005, Stephens, Kyriacou and Tonnesson 2005, Harris 2006, Roffey 2011).

There was some evidence that participants understood that behaviours are context bound (Poulou and Norwich 2002) so a pupil may engage more positively with different subject teachers (secondary teacher A). Participants were able to use information to inform their responses to challenging behaviours. Examples included not taking behaviour personally (specialist teacher L), finding different ways to work with an autistic child (primary teacher J) and understanding themselves, for example, knowing that different teachers find different behaviours challenging (secondary teacher A). One participant knew she was particularly annoyed by spitting (specialist teacher L) whilst another said he was not (primary teacher A). Participants were aware that these triggers were different for different colleagues (secondary teacher A, secondary SENCo H). Three participants showed they understood that school can be the place where children have stability and structure (secondary teacher T, knew there were consistent boundaries and knew where they stood (primary teacher E, secondary teacher A).

It was clear to me that participants in my research were highly motivated (although the caveat is that they were a purposive sample) and saw the value of teaching (Nieto 2003). They felt that they were good at it and exemplified this with comments such as leaving their door open (primary teacher A) and having a laugh and a joke (secondary teacher A). This was eloquently summarised as, "I love my job" by primary teacher D. "Teachers themselves need a genuine philanthropic interest in young people and commitment, knowledge, energy, determination, experience and patience to remove barriers to learning" (educational psychologist P). It has already been discussed that teachers need to build successful relationships between themselves and the children they teach and Hanks (2002) emphasised the importance of teachers' abilities to relate well to pupils and each other. This was expressed as 'personal warmth' by Cooper (2011b) who stressed the importance of teachers' personal qualities which are

of great importance to ameliorating or provoking behaviours which can challenge. In this research, Secondary SENCo H commented that some teachers have a natural empathy with these young people, despite their challenging behaviours. Personally, I think it noteworthy that in all the reading I have done around this topic there were rare acknowledgments that although these children are 'professionally' challenging they are also rewarding as individuals (Armstrong 2014), literature tends to lean towards support strategies for improvement. Indeed myself and my colleagues are highly motivated to work with this group of children and young people. Anecdotally, I was surprised to learn from one of my own students that she thought that staff teaching in education centres were excluded from mainstream schools themselves for being poor teachers! Broomhead (2013) looked at 'courtesy' stigma attached to those related to or who worked with children with challenging behaviours, whereby negative judgements were made regarding young people, their wider support networks. Those working at pupil referral units (PRUs) were perceived as "not clever enough to be a proper teacher" (2013:1).

#### **4.4 The impact of government policy on how teachers feel about children and young people with challenging behaviours.**

I have come to the conclusion that not to include this in the first diagram was an oversight, despite including some references to policy in the literature review by way of setting the context for the research. Although added to the framework, it is only mentioned briefly here as I did not set out to discuss policy with any participants, although given that it was brought up by five participants believed that it had an impact in classrooms. Examples such as the context initial teacher training and the pressures on schools and teachers such as targets and budget constraints were brought up by (lead teacher for vulnerable children J, educational psychologist P, secondary deputy head teacher T). Literature reflects that government policy sometimes appears contradictory where school success is judged by outcomes/results and teachers are required to respond to targets (Ball 2003), yet there are also expectations to include a wide range of pupils with additional needs in mainstream schools (Croll 2001, Wedell 2008 and Hodkinson 2010, SEN CoP 2014). Educational psychologist D referred the pressures head teachers face such as league table position, parental pressure, staff

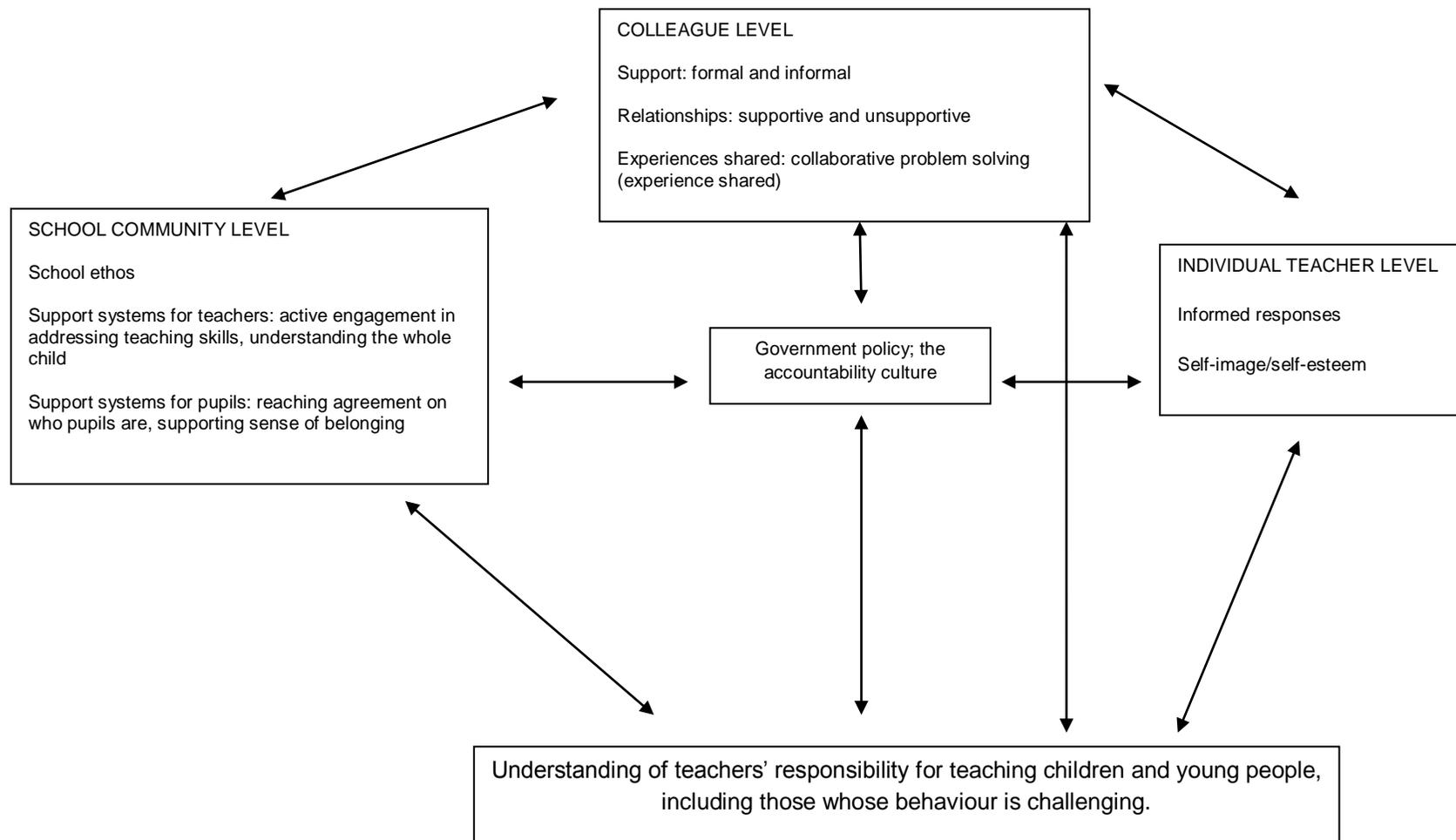
pressure and union involvement and may sometimes collude with a view that there could be a better place for a child to go. Lead advisor for vulnerable pupils J, commented that difficult pupils were pushed towards specialist provision and schools were happy to buy themselves out of the 'problem' of a child's behaviour. Parents can also be a huge pressure on schools and individual teachers. SENCo in an alternative provision J, told of how in a previous mainstream job, parents phoned up frequently if their child's lesson was disrupted by others and insisting something be done about it. She said they were not so understanding as they might be when they judged their own child's learning to have been affected. Furthermore, she mentioned the specific pressure on teachers of marking coursework and having to run revision classes and so they became drained of energy making it even more difficult to include pupils whose behaviour challenged them. Another set of data collated by authorities is the number of days exclusion pupils have. Senior managers are under pressure to "keep exclusions off the record book" (secondary deputy head teacher T) so internal exclusion where schools isolate pupils as a punishment has become more common.

A further challenge is the budgetary restraints which schools operate within. A number of changes have occurred within the county where the research took place which have had a direct impact on schools. The lead teacher for vulnerable pupils J commented that the local authority had got smaller and smaller and there was less support available for schools. In addition, the authority has moved to a business model whereby schools have to pay to access some teacher support services. An educational psychologist pointed out that the support and training previously offered by the educational psychology services was free. The unintended consequence of the business model is that schools that are managing their own budget may only access support reactively rather than proactively.

In exploring these research questions I have moved from a framework of themes based on anecdotal evidence and literature thought to impact on teacher's attitudes to behaviours which challenge them. This chapter has interrogated the data discussed in the initial analysis in Chapter Three and related it to literature from Chapter One. This process has enabled me to check and augment my own understanding in an exploratory manner and the data has been used to adapt the initial framework. The

adapted framework of themes which reflects the data gathered for this research is shown overleaf.

Updated framework of themes to reflect data gathered to test the initial framework



## 4.5 Implications of this research

Whilst research is a worthwhile activity in itself (Newby 2010), the greatest impact of it will be my professional practice at school. The Educational Doctorate is designed for practicing professionals who wish to link research closely with their existing professional practice by providing access to current thinking about key issues (ex.ac.uk accessed 8/10/14). I will now discuss my research in the light of this.

Where schools are less willing to make changes to support children and young people, they may believe that children could be supported to fit into their existing systems (Hodkinson 2012) and this may be especially true of those with behaviour difficulties. There is still restructuring to be done in some schools to accommodate children with challenging behaviours (Croll and Moses 2000, Shearman 2003).

It is my belief that the framework which has evolved as part of this research collects together factors which impact upon teachers' perspectives of teaching children and young people with challenging behaviours. It contributes to knowledge and understanding by identifying what these factors could be and gathering evidence to check that they are valid. This allowed me to explore the relationships between the well-understood theories of attitude with anecdotal evidence and served to provide structure to my own thoughts. Making explicit the links between school ethos and teachers' attitudes towards managing challenging behaviours has highlighted the importance of colleague support. Assembling the themes and demonstrating the relationships between them illuminates some of the complexity of the issues involved.

Initial Teacher Training (ITT) was an area considered within this research because this period is known to be a crucial time for teachers to reflect on personal values and to develop positive attitudes towards inclusive practices (Brusling and Pepin 2003, Golder, Norwich and Bayliss 2005, Richards 2011). A perceived lack of opportunity during initial teacher training to experience challenging behaviour and classroom leadership was discussed; there was evidence that student teachers were not given difficult classes so as not to overwhelm them (secondary teacher A) and frustration expressed that only schools which are judged good or outstanding could be used for trainee placements (primary teacher A). There was a strong feeling in this research

that there were outstanding schools in challenging circumstances which could support student teachers' learning. A worrying number of responses to the initial questionnaire asking when participants had first become aware of challenging behaviours admitted that it was on the first day of their first job! Finally, as has previously been discussed, there are issues around only seeing teachers model classroom leadership in good or outstanding schools because this can prevent trainees seeing a variety of behaviour management strategies in use. To this end, I have begun to run a new module for students which allows them to do self-directed placements in education centres. The underpinning philosophy is that trainee teachers may be able to illuminate their understanding of challenging behaviours by volunteering in education centres. Trainee teachers are supported to explore myths, understand behaviour and discuss their own classroom leadership in terms of positive behaviour strategies and skills.

Other new initiatives such as an induction programme for new staff which share and make explicit the positive school ethos and small chunks of professional learning have been introduced. Building good relationships between staff is a priority and social events are becoming a regular part of this approach. I falsely had assumed that all the staff at the school would be 'experts' themselves, yet was surprised that whilst all the staff are able to build excellent relationships with the pupils there exists a strong desire to understand more about underpinning theory. This has led to the establishment of a centre wide action research programme with allocated directed time. A Behaviour Working Party has been successfully redesigned the school conduct policy, resulting in the creation of a 'mantra' which includes a highly structured rewards and sanctions processes.

Senior leaders may benefit from looking holistically at the context of their staff's feelings towards behaviours which challenge them. My framework could be used to examine school factors which could have an impact on teacher's attitudes. Given that my research suggests that the benefits of collaboration and support between staff (and all that goes into this working successfully), it may be a way to look holistically at improving school ethos and sharing good practice. Using it as a basis for a discussion around what is going well, may enable successful developments to be extended into other areas for improvement. The framework is not specific to an age phase key stage or type of school.

## 4.6 Strengths and limitations of this research

### Strengths

The synthesis of existing data into a framework of themes attempts to sort and order what exists already. Augmented with anecdotal evidence from a number of years teaching, meant that areas were covered in detail. The use of Tomlinson's hierarchy (1989) is a strength of this research as it attempts to answer potential criticism around the use of qualitative data. "Having it both ways" (1989:155) asserts a more convincing case because it supports the maintenance of a tight focus during interviews. Giving very careful thought ahead of interviews, rather than carrying out open-ended interviewing, means researchers may be able to accurately cover important facets of interest. A strength of this approach is the preparation which goes into constructing the hierarchy of questions; in this case it was changed a number of times in response to comments made by more experienced researchers. The presentation of qualitative data provides researchers with opportunities to exercise considerable initiative as the formalities of presentation are less precisely defined, hence the detail given in the methodology in order to assert a convincing platform for the research undertaken (Newby 2010).

An opportunity created by this adaptive methodological approach is the understanding of the subject matter brought to the research by myself and my participants (Leyder 1998). My prior knowledge and experience in the field, augmented with an extensive literature review, enabled me to design a thorough hierarchy of questions. During interviews, I was able to relate to what the participants said, without making any judgement, which was important given the sensitive nature of challenging behaviours. They knew that as a practitioner I would have a working knowledge of busy classrooms alongside the individual differences between pupils. a diverse range of participants was used in order to cross-reference ideas.

Finally, this research method allows the identification and exploration of complex relationships between ideas. It is clear that there are a great number of variables so

tentative suggestions are made rather than broad generalisations, rather they illuminate and make suggestions in the area of research (Charmaz 2006).

### Limitations

Qualitative data does raise the issue of the accuracy of the research, given that it involves people offering a range of views. Attempts have been made to provide a range of evidence from points made, for example, making links between participants' experiences through initial analysis and coding. This was also supported by literature, research, interviews and reflections to provide some coherence to the conclusions drawn, yet they are one person's perspective. The small number of participants means that results are not generalisable, yet they provide a valuable insight into a specific area of education.

A weakness of qualitative data is that it can throw up anomalies. This purposeful sample of participants meant that those included were likely to have felt confident in answering questions around challenging behaviours and their management of them, given that they knew that this was the focus of the research. They may have given answers that they thought I would like to hear. Participants appeared to have positive attitudes towards supporting children and young people with challenging behaviours, yet I cannot claim that this sample was a representative one. My participants were all volunteers, which was thought important as teachers' management of challenging behaviours can be a sensitive topic to discuss, and were approached for the range of their experience, although I did not observe them teaching so was unable to cross-reference their responses to the questionnaire and the hierarchical questions.

There is a balance to be found when interviewing. The conversational and hierarchical structures of my interviews were designed to elicit accurate reflections on teacher attitudes towards challenging behaviours which teachers can sometimes be defensive about discussing. Yet, to frequently stop the flow of an interview to check every nuance and implication would have rendered the conversational element redundant. There were some occasions where it was appropriate to clarify my understanding with interviewees, but for the most part I relied on my professional judgement and knowledge of the individual situation to justify my reflections.

To claim trustworthiness for certain perspectives presented in this research it could be expected that a number of participants discuss similar ideas and practices. School ethos provides an example; there were no questions directly relating to it, yet the bigger picture of the whole school context was frequently discussed during interviews. It could be tentatively concluded then that this is an important factor affecting teachers' attitudes. Using Tomlinson's hierarchy (1989) is a systematic approach to the resolution of validity in semi-structured interviewing. The use of probing questions allows the researcher to clarify a previous response or to reveal more (Newby 2010). However, since this sample of fifteen is a small one, no claims for generalisation can be made. Additionally, what counts as evidence is the data garnered during the interviews, yet this was coded to reflect my own ideas in the framework, which may not reflect those intended by the individual participants. Data has been further analysed by making links to other participants' data and a pitfall could be the danger that these levels of analysis may change the sense of the initial response. The method and care taken to create and structure a useful process has been made explicit in order that the assertions made are believable. By asking probing questions, attempts were made to corroborate and gain further insight into the intentions of the speaker. As the researcher, it was not intended that I made a judgment about what I heard, if participants felt that their position worked for them they are likely to believe it is effective. Nonetheless, by collecting data together from a variety of perspectives as has been done in this research, the weight of evidence is built up.

#### Further research

This research has been an exploration into how teachers feel about behaviours which challenge them. It has produced some valuable insights and also provided me with stimulation and interest in an area which troubles parts of the education system. There are however, some areas of unfinished business. For example, it would be interesting to interview children and young people to ascertain their perspectives; do they feel welcomed and supported in mainstream schools? A fascinating area of research would be to explore the new legislation in this context, given that the category of Behavioural, Emotional and Social difficulties (BESD) has been replaced by the term Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH). Other areas of interest include exploring the development of links between education centres and local schools, and a further

area of interest is trainee teachers; a longitudinal study as they progress through training and early years of their careers may be able to ascertain how their confidence and competence with challenging behaviours develops over time. There could be some work to do with understanding perceptions of the Special Needs Co-Ordinator role too. Finally, it may be interesting to use this framework with schools to develop its depth, accuracy and ascertain its usefulness for problem solving.

## **Summary and conclusions**

At the outset of this research, the overall aim was to explore my interest in understanding the influences on teachers' attitudes towards behaviours which challenge them, and to illuminate my experiences and perspectives through those of others. Motivated to develop some of my colleagues beyond "S/he's one of yours! YOU deal with it," I attempted to scrutinise what may affect teachers' understanding of their responsibility towards the specific special educational need (SEN) of challenging behaviour. In order to set the research in context, I explored understanding of teachers' attitudes and understanding of responsibilities and looked at some historical perspectives which underpin them. Under the SEN CoP (2001), when this research was carried out, a specific area of educational need was Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD). In order to widen my perspectives on supporting these pupils in mainstream classrooms I began by constructing a framework to collect together themes which may inform teacher attitudes to behaviours which challenge them. The themes were then split to sub-themes and the framework attempted to show the relationships between them all. These themes were 'school', 'colleague' and 'individual teacher' levels (Nieto 2010). Using an appropriate method of Tomlinson's hierarchy (1989) of questioning which ensures that probing questions are identified prior to interview, I carried out fifteen semi-structured interviews with a selection of practitioners with an interest in supporting challenging behaviours, either in classrooms or strategically. Their expertise spanned a range of age groups and experience. Initial analysis led me to believe that the updating of the framework of themes was necessary. I sought evidence from these interviews in order to answer my three research questions which were constructed around the themes. These questions initially looked at the bigger picture of the whole school, then at relationships within schools and finally attempted to understand how these may have impacted on

individual teachers' attitudes towards children and young people with additional behavioural support needs.

Despite there being a plethora of research into teaching and learning, school communities, teacher attitudes and challenging behaviours (much of which is cited here), to my knowledge there is nothing which attempts to join these aspects together and to reflect on the complex inter-relationships between them. I believe that the framework of themes explores understanding of the responsibility by gathering a selection of perspectives together and organising them into main themes to move the understanding of support for challenging behaviours in mainstream classrooms. The wider context of behaviour is a complex one, given that schools work with a wide range of expectations and pressures. At the education centre in which I now work, there is a shared responsibility for *all* pupils who attend and the phrase, "S/he's one of yours" would not be heard. Pupils' successes are celebrated as a whole staff and which reflect success for individual pupils. For some this may look like attending school after a long period of absence, for others making good choices and for others good exam results.

The exploration into the understanding of the responsibility for teaching children and young people with challenging behaviours has involved a number of differing perspectives which had widened my own. It has been shown that there is a wide range of factors which could impact on how teachers feel about behaviours which they find challenging. The framework presented is a first attempt at collating them and is not intended to be as conclusive as a model. At the outset of the research I understood there was a level of complexity, yet given the small number of participants and the fact that they all came from one education authority, it would be necessary to widen the scope of future research in order to claim generality to more schools or authorities.

I appreciated the value of educational research and understood that it is done to make a difference. Research should enhance and increase knowledge yet in itself may not be useful as its value lies in the ability to have an effect (Newby 2010). In this case, having set out to improve the understanding of the school experience for a specific group of pupils, it has become clearer to me that there are a number of apparently unconnected things which may influence teachers' attitudes at different times. Making

links between research and school practices is important. As has been shown, a positive school ethos and teachers feeling supported may have links with teachers feeling able to manage behaviours which can be challenging.

So as a result of this work, my practice continues to develop. I will continue to read and explore and develop in a quest to support the young people with whom I work. A growing part of what is expected of education centres is to link with local schools and support whole school as well as individuals to meet the needs of pupils with challenging behaviours. Every individual who is part of this profession can make a difference to a child in their class; every day. There are still many children and young people whose behaviour challenges teachers and the research and a framework will not help this, but it may begin to support understanding of the bigger picture in which we work and guide us to finding better solutions.

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**Appendix 1:**

Ethics form

WINCHESTER

Graduate School of Education

**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, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: [www.bera.ac.uk](#) and view the School's statement on the 'Student Documents' web site.

**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: Jill Corfield

Your student no: 570029853

Return address for this certificate: Bos Cres (Formerly Ingledene), North Darley, Upton Cross, Liskeard, Cornwall PL14 5AS

Degree/Programme of Study: EdD SEN

Project Supervisor(s): Prof Brahm Norwich, Dr Elias Avramidis

Your email address: Jill.Corfield@winchester.ac.uk

Tel: 01962 827604

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my dissertation / thesis (delete whichever is inappropriate) 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:  date: 8/6/10

*NB For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must not be included in your work. It can be kept for your records.*

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
last updated: August 2009

YOUR SCHOOL'S CHAIR OF SCHOOL RESEARCH APPROVAL

Your student no: 570029853

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**Title of your project:**

An investigation into what primary PGCE trainees learn about teaching pupils with special educational needs (SEN) during courses with a planned approach to school practice compared to those that use the "permeation" method.

**Brief description of your research project:**

My study will employ semi-structured interviewing and participant observation as the main methods of data collection. I would aim to create open ended questions leaving ample space for respondents to record their own ideas and would print these on plain paper so as to limit the effects of respondents feeling they have to fill a certain amount of space. Specifically, interviewing will be used in order to ascertain the skills, knowledge and attributes experienced professionals state that NQTs need to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. I will also interview student teachers as well as those in their induction year. Participant observation will be used in order to form a judgement on how trainee teachers make attempts to meet the needs of pupils in their classes.

**Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):**

Participants in Stage one will be experienced colleagues selected by professional contacts; Advanced Skills Teachers, Teacher Advisors for SEN, Educational Psychologists, SENCos and experienced Learning Support Assistants. In Stage two they will be trainee teachers from one of two Higher Education institutions, both offering the Postgraduate Qualification Certificate in Education to graduates who have a degree in a curriculum subject. Stage three will be conducted with NQTs.

**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:**

I need to be open and honest with what my research sets out to do and clear about the dilemmas faced. I also need to be clear about my motives in what I hope to achieve with this research and why I think my participants would want to be part of it. I will be explicit about the value of input concerning ITT and SEN education but I will need to ensure that these are not communicated to participants so that those who do not have explicit input do not feel that they have 'missed' something during their course. I will be mindful that in OfSTED's report (2008) they commented that some students were happy with their training but that the students did not realise that there were gaps in their training concerning SEN.

All interviewees will be assured about the confidentiality of their responses and all interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed using computer software.

I will use semi-structured questionnaires so as to facilitate open-ended answers and will be explicit that my motivations are to gather information rather than make judgements on individuals, there are no trick questions and participants can answer openly, honestly, anonymously and without prejudice. I will provide transcripts of interviews to participants if they request them and copies of the final analyses if requested.

To ensure that I plan comply with research ethics in all aspects I will submit my proposal to the University ethics committee who follow the Bera (2004) Guidelines.

---

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
last updated: August 2009

ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

Stage one

Interviews with eight professionals to compile a list of skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to meet the needs of pupils with SEN. I intend to do this in groups of two or three so that ideas can be exchanged and to stimulate discussion and then get them to complete a record sheet as shown in Appendix two. This will encourage individual answers but have the benefit from the previous stimulation.

Stage two

Eight 1-1 interviews of thirty-fourty minutes asking PGCE students what input they have had during their course. These interviews will be conducted prior to school based practice.

Stage three

I intend to conduct eight 1-1 interviews of thirty to forty minutes.

**Procedures for data analysis**

All interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed. Stage one will provide a list of skills, attributes and knowledge which I will make attempts to divide into three lists. The first few questions try to build a picture of the interviewee, then ascertain what skills, knowledge and attributes the interviewees see as important. I will then look at transcripts of the interviews conducted with the trainee and recently qualified teachers. I will look for similar vocabulary that indicates a shared understanding of what the needs are and try to identify whether the trainees and NQTs identify them as met. I have included a very open question at the end to allow any points not included to be included. As these questions are guidelines I perceive the "interviews" to run like conversations and, therefore may include some good quality data that I will not have predicted.

**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.):**

None

**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):**

None

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*This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page 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.*

*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:

until:

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature):

*D. Elias Arzamidis*

date:

*26-08-2010*

*N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occurs a further form is completed.*

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Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
last updated: August 2009

## **Appendix 2:**

Interview schedules/questions

Hierarchical questions for interviewees with prompt comments in purple (shown overleaf)

1) As you see it, what does the concept of "BESD" involve for you: what do you see as its key features?

What aspects of these behaviours do teachers feel confident in dealing with? *And >confident?*

What informs their responses to these behaviours? *Where get ideas about what is challenging?*

What are the key features of successful responses? *And less successful?*

2) Do you think that teachers are committed to teaching to teaching ALL children in their classes (incl BESD)?

What professional input do teachers need/get to respond to challenging behaviours?

Where does this come from?

How is the rich diversity of experience of colleagues utilised in schools?

What emotional input do teachers need/get to respond to behaviours?

Where does this come from? *In what form could this best be provided?*

What happens if there is inadequate support?

How do teachers manage?

What do others see? (colleagues, other pupils)

3) What 'in' school systems exist to enable teachers to support the inclusion of pupils with challenging behaviours?

Are these formal?

How do they evolve?

What needs do they fulfil?

Are these informal?

How do they evolve?

What needs do they fulfil?

How flexible are these systems?

4) What do pupils need to feel that they belong and are welcomed into school communities?

If they do not feel welcomed (included) what should the school do?

Are there limits to what schools can be expected to do?

## **Appendix 3:**

### Pre-interview questions

#### **Pre-interview questionnaire**

1. What was the training route that you followed to join the teaching profession?
2. Do you have any further professional qualifications such as diplomas or Masters?
3. What teaching experiences did you have before coming to your present role?
4. In your professional capacity in what sort of roles have you worked with in the following groups (examples might be as a mentor, class teacher, visiting expert as a trainer for the whole school);
5. Do you think teachers at different stages of their careers need different support/training? What might this look like?
6. At which point during your training or professional career did you become aware of issues regarding challenging behaviours and can you remember the context?
7. And what is your professional remit with regard to behaviour difficulties now?
8. What support can you offer to teachers, either directly or indirectly, who are including children with BESD (with or without a statement) in their mainstream classes?
9. Are there any limiting factors to the support you offer?
10. What are the factors which enable you to offer the support that you do?
11. What further support would you feel would be useful for classroom teachers if you were not restricted in any way?
12. In your personal opinion, how do you think the inclusion agenda has supported the inclusion of pupils with BESD? Is inclusion the best way forward for these pupils or not? Why? Why not? What makes you think this?

#### **Appendix 4:**

##### Sample from Educational psychologist D

Int: So my first question is what are the concepts of BESD, as opposed to the definitions?

D: Well I think originally it was intended to define a group, a cohort, of children who had significant needs in a defined area. Urm ... the breadth of that area....there's been a debate around that...so the extent to which it covers children that have both emotional and behavioural difficulties or just acting out difficulties. There has always been a risk, I think of overlooking some of the more emotionally vulnerable children who are perhaps more withdrawn, who act in and perhaps a gender dimension to that as well. There are particularly some girls who may have been overlooked. Urm... so the concept, I think, is a woolly one and where do you draw the line between what constitutes a significant BESD behaviour that is likely to be long term and quite deep rooted and something that is going to be presenting for a shorter time period and is then going to fade into the background? I think increasingly we can identify children in the early group who have been exposed to traumatic and troubled early family histories who we know are at the highest risk and they are the ones who we try to catch early and ensure they have access to relevant support structures and interventions to ensure that they don't go into that highly concerning NEET category later on. Errrr ....descriptors have changed over time as well. We have now got BESD or SEBD, I never know which way round it is, but you know, going back we had social maladjustment and behavioural adjustment and all those sorts of .....

Int: What I started teaching it was EBD and I worked in an EBD school and so yes, you are right, it has changed. So do you think that there are key features to BESD or...

D: Yeah, I mean I think I probably carry quite a clear model in my mind about what constitutes a significant BESD need. Urm... and that is rooted in the psychological understanding and understanding the child's developmental history both through the family and exposure to loss, trauma, bereavement, mal-treatment, abuse... Lots of issues. there are lots of children, particularly those who have developed insecure attachments who are some of the most concerning and those that we need to target early. I think there is one school of thought which rows away really from trying to offer those highly vulnerable young children something that is qualitatively different to a mainstream experience because in their minds it doesn't feel right to actually expose them to something completely different that early. You know, I mean, we need to give them a chance really to have them alongside; positive role models for example in mainstream. I agree with elements of that, but equally, I think sometimes we need to bite the bullet and say, look, sometimes these are ... looking at the profiles of these very young children, even pre-school minus one, these are children that might need an intensity of support that is really different to an average YRR class. And I think there have been positive developments over time to sort of look towards different models of provision for those vulnerable children at that young age and I am thinking primarily about nurture groups which have been set up in \*\*\* in recent years and I think they are doing tremendous work but it does raise the question; should there be more of those? And I think it would be wrong to assume that anyone has the capability to operate successfully within those nurture groups. You know, it takes a highly skilled and dedicated person with a particular set of attitudes to make that work .

Int: We will come back to that. I am just thinking about nurture groups which are primarily primary and yet do you think there is a role for something like that in secondary?

D: Absolutely, yes.

Int: And what might that look like?

D: Well there are examples of it, locally in the north of the county where secondary schools have begun to put in place what they call primary friendly approaches for YR7. So you have got a standard base for children deemed 'at risk' with 1 teacher or a very small number of teachers who teach a variety of lessons in that same

base urm and within the programme for that group there is lots of PSHE, social and emotional development activities scheduled. You know, using nurture group type principles and it's a way of easing them into the demands of the secondary curriculum. And those have been successful. Where they have been operating they have been retained and other local secondaries are looking at moving in that direction.

#### Sample from Lead advisor for vulnerable children J

Int: as you see it, what does the concept of BESD involve for you and what do you see as its key features?

J: Right, urm in my professional role this is a whole category of need in terms of the statements that we issue for children, but it is a huge umbrella term. 20% of children of our statements are for BESD in the City, but I actually believe its more complex than that so its one of the hardest areas, I think, for SENCOs to lead on including in the settings where they work because they really have to struggle to win over hearts and minds; particularly I would say in secondary schools where leaderships teams are not sympathetic towards their attempts to include those children. So what I am seeing at the moment, the phenomenon I am seeing at the moment are children being identified as having BESD and being urm sent to alternative learning provision where schools can "pay" for respite (in inverted commas) for these children to go to a PRU and they can do that with children as young as YR1. We had one a panel this week and we were horrified to find that the school had not involved the EP, looking at what was going on with the child in their context and had paid to ship them out to the PRU because of the behaviour needs or perceived behaviour needs. Urm but working alongside the EP team in the City, the behaviour support teachers and specialist settings for behaviour what we are seeing is that a lot of it is around ....probably inclusion actually and differentiation strategies for inclusion. So the child is getting labelled as having behavioural issues whereas it's the context that is causing a lot of those difficulties for the child. Although on the continuum there are obviously children perhaps who have a diagnosed condition such as ADHD or foetal alcohol syndrome, that sort of thing, again schools are trying, on the whole, particularly primaries, to include, to put strategies in place, taking EPs' advice, but I think given the D of Es drive to end the bias towards inclusion that we are going to see more of these children haemorrhaged at our schools actually to put it crudely. And I don't know where they are going to go because the specialist provisions are full.

#### Sample of transcript from Secondary SENCo H

Int: The courses we used to do about behaviour, don't run at all any more.

H: No. So.... and they were relatively expensive compared to one or two of the days I did up in London in the years prior to NQT. So I think people- it's been much more about home grown training, which can be particularly useful. I remember once doing training on dyslexia but it was specifically about a pupil. And then having worked in depth with a very bright pupil who was happy to be part of that and his parents who were happy for his photograph to be used and his background to be used and we were able to go out from that to look at the wider picture of dyslexia. Now I think that was really useful and was something that would adapt to behaviour difficulties as well. But even with that, the limitations- you probably only get about 1 day a year to be able to do that and by the time you've worked through all the needs, you're back around again, staff have changed and people miss it all the time. There still just isn't enough basic training. What seemed to work best for me was when I was able to take one of those negative examples of somebody who'd got very cross with a child at the time, but also felt very irritated by having to have that child in a main stream class. But when I was able to, when they'd calmed down and the child had calmed down to work with them on a programme. One of the best examples of that would be the Head of Art we had, who's now moved on and she found it extremely irritating. She always had her classes working in silence, for example. So obviously somebody who tapped or

clicked a pen or anything like that, she found hugely irritating. And obviously some of the children were incapable of being quiet, vocally as well. So she found that really hard. She also, going alongside that with the ASD pupils we had, had a very stimulating art room, which had been knocked into 2 rooms, no, 2 rooms which had been knocked into one so it was a very lively space and potentially there could be a Year 7 class and a Year 11 class in the same space which was meant to generate ideas and they would flow between them. But she was quite surprised that that didn't work out in the way she'd anticipated and there'd been behaviour of certain children which became much worse when they were in that. But I was able to work with her and by, for example, the pottery room which was painted white and was very sterile really, some of the ASD pupils loved working in there. And there was an art, sort of passage down there so they could see into the art room and vice versa but they weren't part of that. But she's now working in a University and where she talks about that all the time with her students. When I've done some work with her there, that's something that she always says is that the best training is when we worked together over very specific pupils. But that's very time consuming.

Int: Yes, it is in man hours, isn't it? What...? Do you think that there are behaviours which teachers do feel confident in dealing with? Managing?

H: I think that there are two sides to that. They are quite confident in managing certain pupils where there is a programme in place and it's very clear to them and that might be something that's come as a result of Educational Psychology input or something from a specialist teacher advisor. I think if they've got something in place that they can follow, they feel more confident they're doing the right thing, particularly if that right thing is not what they would naturally do. So I think they're more inclined to look for positives and allow a pupil maybe to do the task in a different way in order to achieve. Whereas.... And it's the programme that supports them or the advice they've been given that supports them to do that. Whereas otherwise they might just perceive that pupil as 'difficult' and not be very sympathetic. But I think too, some teachers are falsely confident that they're dealing with pupils of a certain type-

Int: What do you mean?

H: I think some teachers think they're very good at handling behaviour and that's something they do. And that maybe is because they have maybe a loud voice, or physical stature that initially at least makes them look quite intimidating to pupils and they use those to maintain order in the classroom. Almost, if you like, a military sort of style or approach. And children will- some children will follow that and it will mean they are always quiet and they do always sit when they're told and all those basic things. But I think that breaks down sometimes with children with real behaviour needs because although initially they see everybody else regimented and sort of .. and they go along with that, when they are having a crisis day, maybe, you know, because there's no leeway in the behaviour management in that room, it all goes wrong. And then that teacher, because they thought they had very sound behaviour management skills, doesn't have a tool kit to fall back on, possibly because they've not particularly listened when we've investigated when somebody's been trying to give them some more general advice through training or something.