

The impact of Nurture Group principles and practice on the whole primary school

Submitted by Anna Papamichael to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of the Doctorate in Educational, Child & Community Psychology in June 2011.

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(Signature).....

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the participants for their contribution. I have furthermore to thank my supervisors Andrew Richards and Tim Maxwell for their support and guidance.

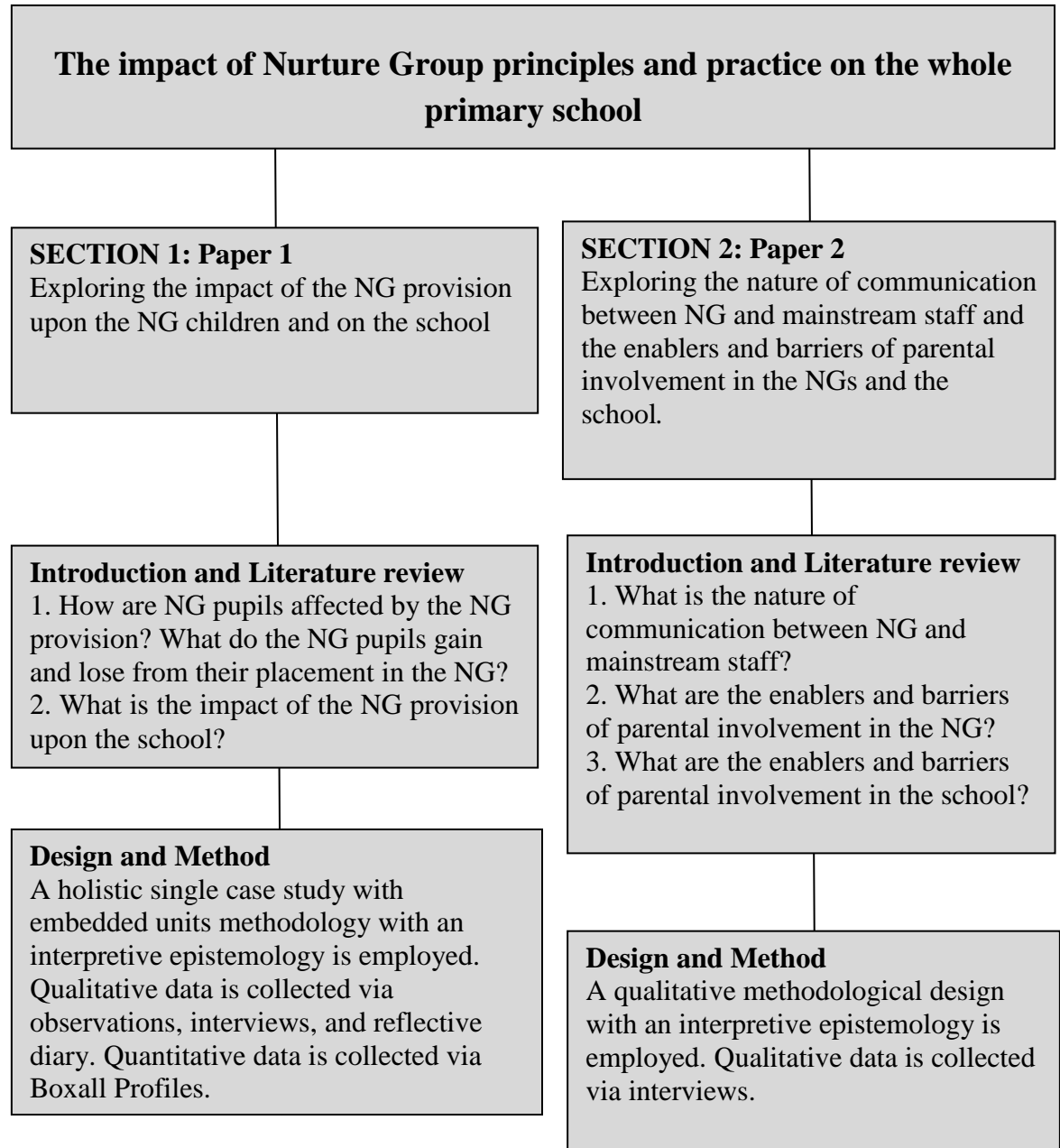
I would also like to thank Terri-Anne for her kind and dedicated assistance.

Especially, I would like to thank my family - Christos, Androula, Maria and Constantinos Papamichael for their consideration and unwavering support throughout this journey.

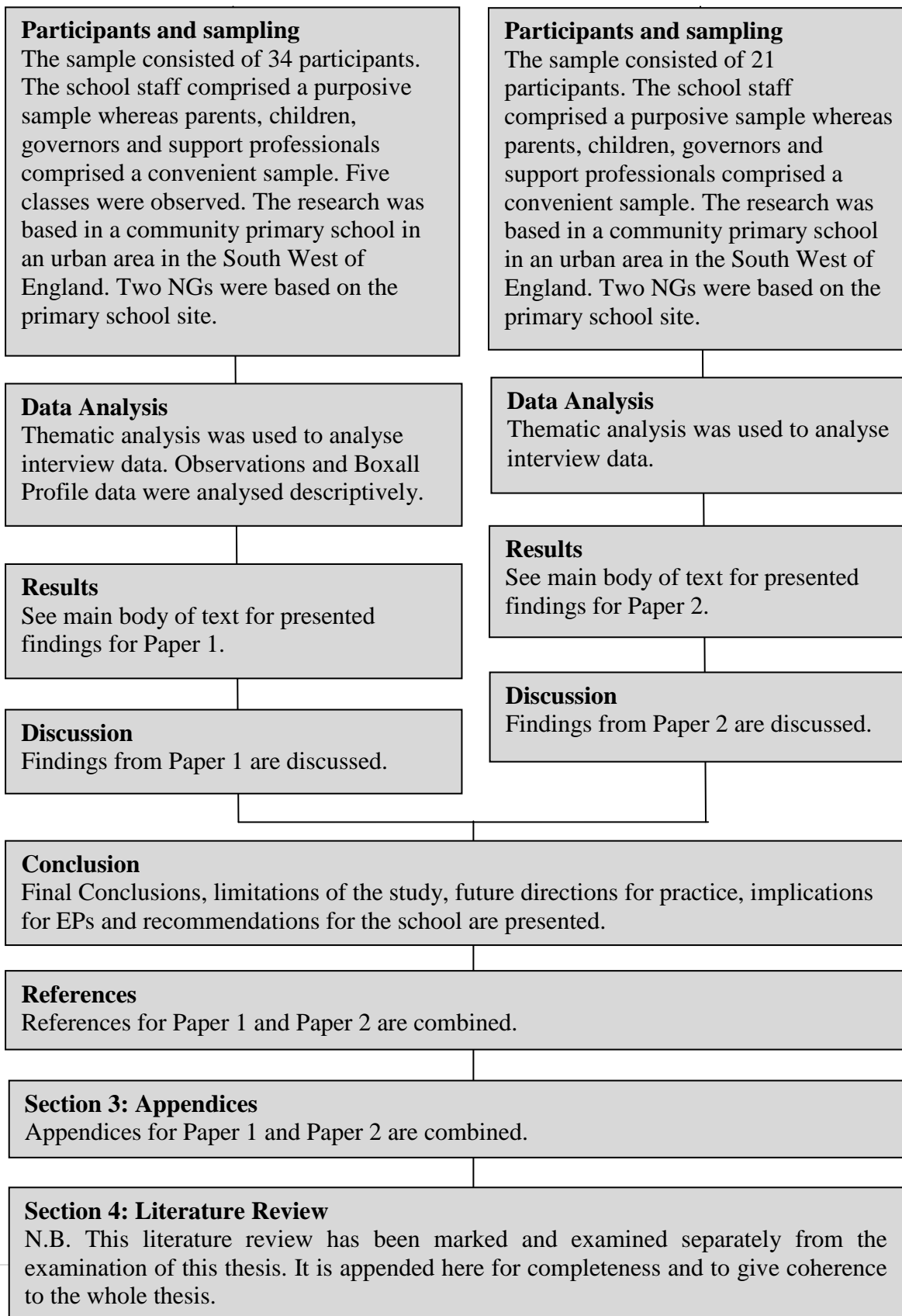
Thank you Tina Dialektaki, Joanna Anastasiou and Theo Tom for being there when I needed you.

A very special thank you to Angelos Menelaou. You have been my everything in every way.

Overview of thesis



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Abbreviations and Definitions

EBD	Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
Emergent Theme	Themes that emerged in the qualitative data analysis
EP	Educational Psychologist
Impact Scores	Difference between pre- and post-Boxall measures
KS1	Key Stage 1
KS2	Key Stage 2
Las	Local Authorities
MC1	Mainstream Child 1
MC2	Mainstream Child 2
MC3	Mainstream Child 3
MC4	Mainstream Child 4
MC5	Mainstream Child 5
MP1	Parent 1 whose child is in the mainstream classes
MP2	Parent 2 whose child is in the mainstream classes
MP3	Parent 3 whose child is in the mainstream classes
MP4	Parent 4 whose child is in the mainstream classes
MP5	Parent 5 whose child is in the mainstream classes
MT1	Mainstream Teacher 1
MT2	Mainstream Teacher 2
MT3	Mainstream Teacher 3

MTA1	Mainstream Teaching Assistant 1
MTA2	Mainstream Teaching Assistant 2
NG	Nurture Group
NGC1	Nurture Group Child 1
NGC2	Nurture Group Child 2
NGC3	Nurture Group Child 3
NGC4	Nurture Group Child 4
NGN	Nurture Group Network
NGP1	Parent 1 whose child is in the NG
NGP2	Parent 2 whose child is in the NG
NGP3	Parent 3 whose child is in the NG
NGT1	Nurture Group Teacher 1
NGT2	Nurture Group Teacher 2
NGTA1	Nurture Group Teaching Assistant 1
NGTA2	Nurture Group Teaching Assistant 2
NGTA3	Nurture Group Teaching Assistant 3
SCM1	School Community Member 1
SCM2	School Community Member 2
SCM3	School Community Member 3
SCP1	Support Professional 1
SCP2	Support Professional 2
SM1	Senior Management 1
SM2	Senior Management 2

SEB	Social, emotional and behavioural
SEBD	Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties
SSI	Semi-structured interview
SDQ	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
Subtheme	Term used to describe a cluster of related themes within a subordinate theme
Sub-ordinate	Term used to describe a cluster of related secondary themes
Super-ordinate theme	Term used to describe a cluster of related emergent themes
TA	Teaching Assistant

Section 1: Paper 1

Abstract

The provision of Nurture Groups (NGs) has been recognised as an effective early intervention for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). ‘The high expectations of teachers in Nurture Groups can bring about amazing change’ in the lives of young emotionally disturbed children (Lucas, 1999, p.14). When the principles of NG are effectively applied by all staff in all areas of the school and when nurturing attitudes and practices develop throughout the school, teaching and learning become effective for all children (Lucas, 1999). This study aims to extend the understanding of the gains and costs that may be associated with the placement of children in NGs. The NG intervention’s contribution to the wider school system is also documented. However, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding on the impact of NG provision on the mainstream school it serves from the viewpoints of the different groups of participants involved and to look whether the ethos and approaches used in the nurture group are promoted in the wider school environment.

A case study methodology with interpretive approaches was employed in a community primary school in an urban area in the South West of England. Quantitative (Boxall Profiles) and qualitative (interviews and observations) measures revealed that overall there have been improvements in NG children’s social, emotional and behavioural (SEB) functioning and academic development. However, findings also revealed a number of opportunity costs attached to children’s placement in the NG. Qualitative measures also showed that, while NG provision contributed to positive developments within the school, the NGs did not help the school in fully integrating their work in the wider approach to meeting all children’s needs. A number of disadvantages were also reported with regards to the impact of the NG upon the school.

Chapter 1

Introduction, Theory and Practice of NGs and Literature review

1.1 Introduction

This is the first of the two papers which together explore the processes involved in developing a nurturing school ethos. This paper aims to explore the opportunity gains and costs of NG provision upon the children and the impact of the NG provision on the wider school system.

This section intends to provide an overview of the literature. For the full literature review please refer to Section 4, p. 188.

1.2 Literature review

Information for the literature review was gained through access to EBSCO and PsycINFO databases, Google scholar online searches and relevant books. Some of the key words/phrases for searches included: social and emotional difficulties in schools, attachment theory, challenges in schools, effectiveness of NGs and success of NGs. Articles and journals that were relevant from the search were also used for references for further searches of primary sources.

1.2.1 Theory Underpinning NGs

The main theoretical model illuminating the underlying purpose of NGs is attachment theory. There are different stances on attachment theory. The first and most well-known stance on attachment theory is that of John Bowlby. Bowlby (1969) proposed that infants have an innate tendency to seek closeness to particular individuals, usually their mother

or other caregivers who are genetically related to the child and interact with them on a regular basis (Hrdy, 1999; Pringle, 1975). According to Bowlby, this attachment is innate as the infant is biologically predisposed to use the caregiver as a haven of safety or a secure base while exploring the environment (Benoit, 2004). Uncertainty often follows the infant's exploration as the infant confronts new situations, objects or experiences during the exploration of the environment (Holmes, 1993). The caregiver's protection, reassurance and sensitivity to the infant's needs helps the infant to contain the emotions (i.e. anxiety) aroused by this shape normal and healthy uncertainty (Geddes, 2006). The caregiver may either help resolve the difficulty or encourage the infant to resolve the difficulty. The success that is experienced by the infant produces excitement and increased agency (Holmes, 1993). The caregiver's response to the child's exploration helps shape a strong affectional bond between the two that develops over the first year of life. (Geddes, 2006). This developing relationship between infant and caregiver helps the infant to begin to predict the caregiver's response to bids for comfort (Bowlby, 1984).

Mary Ainsworth, a research psychologist, further extended and tested Bowlby's ideas by suggesting that a number of attachment styles exist. She set up a Strange Situation laboratory, a separation and reunion procedure, in order to study the quality of parent-infant attachment (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). The study involved observing infants responding to a situation in which they were briefly left alone with a strange woman (the researcher) and then reunited with their mother. The stresses inherent in such a situation activate infants' attachment behaviour and, according to Ainsworth, help to understand the nature of early attachments with the mother and the ways in which infants differ in the type of attachment they have formed with the mother. These differences have been classified in terms of three basic attachment patterns: secure attachment, avoidant attachment and anxious attachment. (For more information about the attachment patterns in infants see Ainsworth et al. (1978)).

While attachment theory has been influential in psychology, there have been a number of criticisms. Harris (1998) argued that peers have more influence on children's personality or character than parents. He reasons that if a child grows up in an area of high levels of

crime and socialises with delinquents he will be more susceptible in committing the same kinds of crimes, despite the best efforts of his parents. Field (1996) also argued that a limitation of Bowlby-Ainsworth's attachment theory is that the "model attachment is based on behaviours that occur during momentary separations (stressful situations) rather than during nonstressful situations. A broader understanding of attachment requires observation of how the mother and infant interact and what they provide for each other during natural, nonstressful situations" (p. 543). It was also commented that Bowlby and Ainsworth place too much emphasis on the attachment between the infant and the mother as they view the mother as the primary attachment figure and they tend to ignore that a father or sibling can have the same type of attachment with the infant at the same time (Belsky & Isabella, 1988). A further criticism of attachment theory involves the concept of the internal working model that is the foundation for understanding how attachment processes operate throughout the life course. According to Dunn (1988, 1993) the idea of the internal working model is vaguely conceived, as there are many unanswered questions about the nature and structure of working models. Thompson and Raikes (2003) argue that the defining features, development and sequelae of internal working models are not well defined by Bowlby-Ainsworth's attachment theory and Dunn (1988, 1993) expressed reservations about the ability of an infant to represent internally both sides of a discrepant relationship. Also the role played by the child's temperament, which is based in part on inherited physiology, is not acknowledged by Bowlby-Ainsworth's attachment theory. Although there is limited evidence regarding the connections between temperamental characteristics and attachment security, research suggests that a temperamental dimension reflecting negative emotionality may be linked with insecure attachment (Kagan, 1994; Thompson, 1998). Another limitation is the lack of acknowledgement by Bowlby and Ainsworth that attachment occurs occur during adolescence, adulthood and later life (Field, 1996; Shaver, Hazan & Bradshaw, 1988; Hazar & Shaver, 1987, 1994). For example in their paper about adult attachment, Hazar and Shaver (1994) reason that even if parents are never completely relinquished as attachment figures, attachment is transferred from parents to adult peers (close friends or romantic partners). Their justification for such an assertion is that adult peers can satisfy the same needs for emotional support and security for which parents were primarily

responsible. They argue that all attachment functions (proximity maintenance, safe haven and secure base) are gradually transferred one by one from one attachment figure (a parent) to another (adult peer).

Despite the above-mentioned criticisms, the work of Bowlby and Ainsworth marked the importance of developing secure attachments and the consequences of poor and insecure attachments. As mentioned before, the quality of interaction between caregivers and the child in early years can influence their development and behaviour later in life. Through these interactions children develop internal working models, which consist of the internalised attitudes, thoughts and behaviour of the primary caregiver towards them and the child's view of their own interactions with others (Holmes, 1993). Also the internal working model is said to not only be the child's representational model of the caregiver but also the child's sense of self (Holmes, 1993). If the child's internal working model has developed a representation of the caregiver as being warm, available, reliable and responsive to their needs, Bowlby suggested that the child's sense of self would be one of being of value and worthy of love (Bowlby, 1969). In addition responsive care helps the child get armed with confidence to tackle new challenges and manage the uncertainty and frustration that is part of exploration and to acquire age-appropriate behaviour displaying a concomitant regard of others' needs and feelings, decreasing egocentrism and enabling a sense conducive to healthy social and emotional development. Inadequate nurturing, on the other hand, results in an internal model of others being unavailable and perceiving oneself as unworthy and incompetent. Such feelings make it difficult for these children to achieve a sense of security and safety and according to Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs theory, these difficulties 'hamper their access to the higher needs of affiliation, self-esteem, and self-actualization' (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001, p. 160).

NGs try to help children re-experience early nurturing care and develop trusting relationships with adults in a secure, stable environment. The focus is on modelling the interactive process between the child and primary caregivers in a structure commensurate with the developmental age of the child. According to Boxall (2002), the acceptance, the

warmth and understanding offered by the NG staff seems to enable the personal and social and emotional skills that are needed for successful learning.

1.2.2 NGs in Practice

A classic NG is a discrete class in a primary or infant school where a teacher and a teaching assistant cater for up to 12 children (usually 5-7 years of age) who find it difficult to learn and cope in a mainstream class. The children typically have a stressful and disrupted background and they most commonly exhibit disruptive and/or withdrawn behaviour. They are usually perceived to be at risk of exclusion or needing significant levels of support. The warm and overtly co-operative relationship between the NG staff provides an important social experience for children to observe and imitate. Also, the provision of predictable structure and routine helps children develop trust and self-esteem (Sanders, 2007).

According to Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001) there are four distinct variations in the NG theme. The characteristics of each variant are described in Section 4, p. 188.

The NG room is designed to have a nurturing and homely atmosphere. The meal times and break times are deemed to be particularly important because these are times that social and emotional learning takes place. Meal times and other periods of social contact between NG staff and pupils provide opportunities for pupils to talk to each other, exchange ideas and help pupils to build a sense of being valued and cared for (Cooper & Lovey, 1999).

There are also explicit regular work routines to ensure children follow the National Curriculum. Key subjects like reading, writing and mathematics are introduced at a level appropriate to each individual and are usually taught at a slower-than-usual pace. As the children may be at different developmental and intellectual levels, formal work and the materials the NG staff use are differentiated. Other subjects like music and PE are also

seen as integral in the children's learning experience. NG staff try to make learning and social interaction rewarding and affirming by showing warmth towards them and willingness to listen to them. This results in helping the pupils to feel acknowledged and therefore encouraged to freely express their personal views and concerns in relation to the formal curriculum and in terms of their personal, social and emotional functioning. This shows that by being sensitive, contingently responsive and warm, the NG staff help the children experience the secure or 'safe base' through their relationship with them; two fundamental elements of attachment theory.

Part of the daily NG routine is also the early play opportunities. Through play, children learn how to personalise the toys and use them to express their feelings and how to co-operatively play with other children. These activities also help them to understand the importance of creating and obeying rules and in developing thinking and social communications skills.

Rules of conduct are developed in discussion with children and behavioural problems are dealt with by having therapeutic rather than non-therapeutic strategies. Therapeutic discipline (i.e. discussion about the situations that provoke trouble and feelings) provides children with a more fulfilling educational experience where they learn the meaning of their behaviour and others' behaviour, become aware of the consequences of their behaviour in relation to others and the self and develop and carry through a constructive course of action to alter their behaviour (i.e. by developing self-control).

1.2.3 Effectiveness of NGs upon children

The effectiveness of NGs is reflected in a number of research studies and is recognised in the 1997 Green Paper from the DfEE, Excellence for All Children: meeting special educational needs, which recommends NGs as effective early intervention for children with EBD (DfEE, 1997).

The majority of research has measured NG effectiveness by using the Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1999) (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005).

In 1992, Iszatt and Wasilewska (1997) conducted an evaluation in the London Borough of Enfield. This study found that out of 308 children attending six NGs between 1984 and 1998, a successful reintegration rate was achieved after an average placement of less than a year. A follow-up in 1995 showed that 87% of the original cohort not only remained in mainstream classrooms but they also required no additional SEN help. Only 4% required stage 3 (DfEE 1994 SEN Code of Practice) support. In addition, 13% of NG pupils were approved for statements of SENs and 11% of the original cohort was referred for special schooling. A comparison between this group and a second non-matched group that consisted of 20 mainstream pupils with EBD, not receiving the support of a NG as placement was not available, showed that 35% were placed within special school provision (three times more compared with those placed in NG). Only 55% were able to remain and cope within mainstream education without additional support. This study could be subjected to criticism as the groups and measures were not adequately matched and therefore the significance of differences in outcomes of the two groups are difficult to interpret. The positive performance of the majority of the NG cohort was highlighted because this finding was evident in other studies that assessed staff perceptions regarding the effects of NGs. Other studies showed that staff perceived NGs as effective because they could see improvements in children's self-management behaviours, social skills, self-esteem and confidence and their approach to learning (Cooper & Lovey, 1999; Doyle, 2001; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007).

Another well-known study is the one by O' Connor and Colwell (2002). O' Connor and Colwell (2002) conducted a study to validate the rationale of the NG approach of keeping children within the mainstream setting. This was a longitudinal study that examined the diagnostic and developmental profiles of children upon entry, exit, and two years after attending a NG. The researchers found that children made marked improvements with

regards to their emotional and behavioural difficulties upon their exit, therefore enabling their return to mainstream classrooms. The gains were maintained over two years but the interpretation of the results must be exercised with caution because the sample size was small (only 12 of the 68 children were followed up after the 2 years).

Cooper and Whitebread's (2007) large-scale study charted pupil progress in 34 schools with NGs across 11 Local Authorities. In this study 359 NG children were compared with 184 children from 4 control groups. Again improvements in social, emotional and behavioural functioning were found using the Boxall Profile and SDQs, with gains being greater for the children in NGs than it was for children who were not attending NG and with gains continuing across four school terms. Similar findings were noted in Sanders' (2007) pilot study. Findings from Boxall Profiles showed significantly greater gains for children in the NGs compared with the children in the comparison group. Similar findings were also noted in Cooper, Arnold and Boyd's (2001) quantitative study. In addition, using a wide range of other measures (provision questionnaires, pupil assessment forms, staff questionnaires, naturalistic observations, teacher data on social, emotional and academic gains and interviews with NG children, staff and parents), Sanders (2007) reported significant gains for NG children's social, emotional and behavioural functioning and academic attainment. However, in this study staff rated children's academic gains using a pupil assessment form which was devised specifically for this research and the reliability of this tool is not discussed. This poses threat to the validity of the findings.

While these quasi-experimental studies suggest positive progress in key areas of development, the results should be viewed cautiously. The studies can be criticised for not using adequate matching measures or for not identifying the exact variables with which the participants were matched. Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001) matched comparison group 1 in terms of age, gender, educational attainment and level of SEBD in mainstream classrooms. Cooper and Whitebread (2007) matched some participants in terms of age, gender and perceived academic attainment and Sanders (2007) used one comparison school with which it was comparable in terms of its size, levels of social and

economic deprivation and levels of educational needs. Sanders (2007) does not specify what the variables were that the 9 children from the comparison school were matched to the children who attended the NG. Failure to identify the matching variables is also evident in Iszatt and Wasilewska's (1997) study. It may have been important to consider matching variables such as the types of behaviours associated with SEBDs, the period of time participants were experiencing SEBDs, their attendance at school, their home life and school ethos as these variables could arguably have influenced individual outcomes.

The above-mentioned studies can also be criticised in terms of the heavy reliance on Boxall Profile and SDQ for measuring changes in children's behaviour (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005). Both tools are based on subjective teacher assessments and therefore subject to the teacher's own values and feelings towards the child (Connor & Colwell, 2002). They are also dependent on the teacher's understanding of the child's functioning and their ability to accurately interpret the tools' descriptive items.

Results from qualitative studies also show gains for NG children. Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) explored the experiences of children in NGs in 3 schools. Similarly to other studies, they found that school staff and NG children conceptualised pupil progress holistically in terms of behaviour, self-esteem, confidence, engagement in learning and literacy. These interviews derived from semi-structured interviews with staff as well as 40 hours of non-participant observation. Whilst the researchers used different methods in their study, it is not clear how their observations inform their research. In addition, the researchers do not discuss analytic frameworks and do not explain how themes and categories are generated from data. This lack of elaboration makes it difficult to critically determine how the researchers' insights and reflections map onto data and validate claims. This was evident in other qualitative studies as well (Bishop & Swain, 2000a; Cooper & Lovey, 1999; Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001). Also, Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) only gather the views of school staff and NG children and disregard other stakeholders' viewpoints (i.e. parents of NG children) who may be able to offer valuable insights. However, data triangulation was demonstrated in other studies (Bishop & Swain, 2000a; Sanders, 2007) as they collected information from different participants.

1.2.4 Opportunity Cost

What is the opportunity cost to the NG children? What do they lose when they are separated from the peer groups in the mainstream setting? Howes, Emanuel, and Farrell (2003) argued, after exploring three case studies which describe something of the context of the NG, that when there are no particular links between the NG staff and pupils with the rest of the school then it is more likely that the NG children will feel isolated and be labelled by their peers and by the mainstream class staff as the ‘naughty’ children. This view concurs with Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) as through their study it was implied that inadequate relationships between NG and mainstream staff led to mainstream staff perceiving NGs as being for ‘lower ability’ children. Therefore, one can argue that only when a NG is properly connected into the school; (if there is an ongoing communication between the school staff and if there is a general positive attitude across the whole school), can the opportunity gains outweigh the costs. Other findings reported by Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) related with the separation of NG children from the mainstream classrooms were the tendency of some children to trigger each other for disruptive behaviour, the problem of the restricted range of children and the difficulties related with the reintegration of children back to their mainstream classrooms. Despite their study being illuminative in terms of the barriers of NGs facilitating inclusive practice, Cooper and Tiknaz highlight the need of more case studies as these will not only help to produce different issues but will also warn the schools of the dangers of this educational provision on children attending NGs.

1.2.5 Effectiveness of NGs upon the school

Research has shown that NGs can have a positive impact on the whole school community (Binnie & Allen 2008; Cooper & Lovey, 1999; Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005; Doyle, 2003; Sanders, 2007). For example, Doyle (2003) showed that nurturing approaches can be embraced by all staff in challenging school contexts to create a ‘Nurturing School’. In her study, she outlines how social development curriculum informed by earlier work

reintegrating pupils from the NG into mainstream classrooms using the Reintegration Readiness Scale (Doyle, 2001) was implemented in an infant school. Doyle (2003) explains that it resulted in a significant positive change to the school environment and ethos. However, despite the effectiveness of the scale in helping the school (Doyle, 2003), there are some limitations attached to it. Firstly, it has only been used in one setting and only two examples of its use with children are presented. Secondly, it has been designed to be used with infant children and in doing so restricting its suitability for use with older children. Binnie and Allen (2008) showed that the NG provision helped in the creation of links with other schools, in the involvement of parents, in benefiting the rest of the children in the class and in the understanding and support of children with certain behaviours. The latter is assumed to stem from the communication between NG and mainstream staff and will be discussed later in Paper 2. Participants' views were gathered through questionnaires which were devised specifically for this study. As these were not shared with the reader the questionnaires' validity and reliability is questionable. Likewise, Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) reported that NG provision led to whole school improvements such as the creation of calmer classroom, the introduction of nurturing practices and the better understanding of children with difficult behaviour. Again, through this study the importance of communication between NG and mainstream staff is highlighted; something that will be explicitly explored in Paper 2. Similarly, Cooper and Lovey (1999) showed that the NG provision contributed to the overall ethos of the school, in the contribution of nurturing principles to whole-school policies, in the ability of school staff to deal with difficult situations in a constructive manner and in improving the relationships between school staff and parents. These findings were evident in Sanders' (2007) study as well. Sanders (2007) also reported that the NG provision resulted in staff absenteeism being greatly reduced, in concerns about children being shared between NG and mainstream teachers, in mainstream teachers feeling secure leaving the school to access training or join meetings and in head teachers having calmer assemblies as well as fewer incidents throughout the day to which they had to act in response.

Even if the positive impact of NG provision upon the school is documented in the NG literature the findings should be interpreted with caution as many studies (i.e. Cooper & Lovey, 1999; Cooper, Arnold, & Boyd, 2001) used solely interviews to elicit participants' views regarding the impact of the NG upon school. Exclusive reliance on interviews may have biased the researchers' picture or the reality of what was being investigated. In addition some studies (i.e. Cooper, Arnold, & Boyd, 2001; Sanders, 2007) did not clarify the type of the interviews used. Such lack of clarification makes the researcher assume that structured interviews were used. If this is the case, then it could be argued that interviewees' responses might have been coloured and affected by the interviewer's structured questions. Leading questions might have spoiled the outcome as the structure and close focus of a structured interview may well have directed the interviewees to make certain responses which, they might not have made in a more open structure.

1.3 Summary and Research Aims

NGs have a long history of providing successful early intervention for children whose social, emotional and behavioural needs are difficult to be met in the mainstream classroom (Cooper, 2004). As outlined above, research has shown that NG provision can lead to improvements in children's self-management behaviours, social skills, self-esteem and confidence and their approach to learning. Notwithstanding the general consensus from quantitative and qualitative NG research that NGs are effective in meeting the needs of children with SEBDs as well as the needs of the wider school community, there are a number of opportunity costs attached to the children's placement in the NGs such as the likelihood of NG children feeling isolated and being subject to labelling for inappropriate behaviour by the rest of the school. Additionally there is the tendency of some NG children to trigger each other for disruptive behaviour, the problem of the restricted range of children and the difficulties related with the reintegration of children back to their mainstream classrooms.

Despite several studies reporting positive findings in regards to the effects of NGs on children in promoting the nurturing principles throughout the school, research is subject to methodological criticism. Some methodological weaknesses included shortcomings in research design and failure to demonstrate the validity of data through a clear explanation of methods and data analysis frameworks. This imprecision makes it difficult for the reader to validate research aims. There has also been limited exploration with regard the opportunity cost of the NG intervention on the children. Only Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) attempted to answer Howes, Emanuel and Farrell's (2003) question and explore what NG pupils lose when they are separated from their peer groups in the mainstream setting but this study did not gain the views of parents of the NG children.

Therefore, for Phase 1 the aim of this study is to add to the literature of the NGs by addressing the following two questions using a case study methodology:

- How are NG pupils affected by the NG provision? What do the NG pupils gain and lose from their placement in the NG?
- How is the school affected by the NG provision?

Chapter 2

Design and method

2.1 Epistemological and methodological perspectives

As the research sought to gain an insider's perspective on participants' views, experiences and beliefs, an interpretivist approach was viewed as the most appropriate conceptual approach. An interpretivist approach allows the meaning behind the participants' experiences to be obtained. Interpretive epistemology claims that 'the social world can be understood only from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated' (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p.19). It rejects the viewpoint of the detached, objective observer and it argues that individuals' behaviour can only be understood by the researcher sharing their frame of reference; by entering the social world of persons and groups being studied in an attempt to understand their perspectives. It is their meanings and their interpretations that matter. The central endeavour of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience and to approach the issues without assumptions about the situation.

It could also be argued that the research design overlaps with social constructivism. Social constructivist approaches build upon the premise of social construction of reality and they hold that people make their own sense of social realities (Mutch, 2005).

Case study is a methodology that facilitates exploration of a case or a phenomenon within some real-life context using a variety of data sources (Yin, 1994). This ensures that the issue is explored through a range of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood. What differentiates case study from other research strategies is the type of questions asked and the context for the research (i.e. the setting and the researcher's level of control). When the focus of the study is to answer "how" or "why" questions, the researcher has little control over behavioural events and

when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon, then case study is the preferred method (Yin, 2009).

Yin (1994, 2003) identifies three types of case study; exploratory (as a pilot study), descriptive (providing narrative accounts) and explanatory (explaining casual links in real-life interventions). In the current paper, a holistic single-case study with embedded units methodology as an explanatory approach is employed to create subjective and interpretative understanding and to explain casual links in real life programmes whose complexity cannot be captured by other qualitative research strategies (i.e. surveys). The holistic single-case study with embedded units methodology enabled the researcher to explore the impact of the NG provision upon the NG children and the rest of the school (Paper 1) while considering the influence of the communication between NG staff, NG and mainstream staff, respectively (Paper 2).

A case study was chosen because the case was the impact of NG provision, but the case could not be considered without the context, the school itself, and more specifically the NG and mainstream settings. It is primarily in these settings that the nurturing takes place. Also the case study methodology was preferred as the researcher was interested in examining a contemporary phenomenon in its real context. A case study is favoured over other similar qualitative methodologies such as ethnographic research because ethnographic research requires prolonged engagement and deep immersion in the field. The limited time available to the researcher and the labour intensive nature of ethnographic research effectively precluded ethnography as a research methodology. The case study provides a framework for exploration and analysis of the impact of the NG provision.

As Yin (2009) proposes, based on the literature found on the topic of NGs, three theoretical propositions guide this study:

- NG children's SEB functioning and academic development will be improved.
- NG children can feel isolated within the school.

- NG provision benefits school in various ways; in promoting nurturing principles throughout the school, in the better understanding and support of children with certain behaviours, in the creation of calmer classrooms and in improving relationships between school staff and parents.

Following the recommendations of Yin (2009), the case was bound by the setting, the geographic area, the time period covered by the case study and the type of evidence to be collected. The case was bound by two settings; the 2 NGs and 3 mainstream classrooms, in a community primary school in an urban area in the South West of England. Based on the time frame available, a pilot study was carried out over two months (May-July 2009) and the formal study was carried out over 9 months (September 2009 - June 2010). For triangulation purposes, information was gathered from multiple sources; interviews, observations and Boxall Profiles.

When doing case studies, construct validity is increased by using multiple sources or methods for consistency across sources of data; a strategy known as triangulation (Yin, 2009). As mentioned before, in this study multiple methods such as interviews, observation and Boxall Profiles were used and as such information was gathered from multiple sources. The most important advantage presented in the process of triangulation where multiple sources of evidence are used is the development of converging lines of inquiry. Yin (2009) defines converging lines of inquiry as the use of multiple sources of information, following a corroborate mode to ensure that a finding or conclusion is accurate. One way that reliability can be achieved in case studies is if researchers document procedures through what Yin (2009) calls the 'case study protocol'. A case study protocol outlines the procedures and the research instruments that are used to collect data during the research project. Documenting the research procedures and the data collection instruments helps a subsequent researcher replicate the study and find the same results. Even if the researcher of this study did not construct a case study protocol it is believed that this thesis is clear about the protocol for data collection as steps were made explicit. Also reliability was enhanced by using 'low reference descriptors' such as

verbatim accounts of what participants said and extracts from filed notes (Silverman, 2005).

2.2 Procedure

A small-scale research project took place in a community primary school in an urban area in the South West of England. A pilot study was carried out for two months (May-July 2009). The researcher volunteered to support the NG staff once a week for the two months in their everyday activities. This helped the children and staff feel that they were not 'researched' by an unfamiliar adult. It also helped the researcher to:

- a. Learn more about the daily life of the nurture group
- b. Try different approaches such as interviews and observations on a trial basis
- c. Refine the data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed
- d. Collect data from Boxall Profiles prior to commencing the formal study
- e. Establish a feeling of trust and rapport with the school staff, children and parents whose children are in the nurture group. This in turn improved the researcher's chances of being admitted to the nurture group's /school's culture and reality

The formal study was from September 2009 and lasted until June 2010. During the formal study the researcher made weekly visits to the school to observe the NGs and school community in action. Some questions emerged from the exploratory phase (pilot study from May until June 2009) and more interview questions were developed during the time (during the formal study) that the researcher was making the observations. Those participants who expressed interest in the study subsequently met with the researcher at a location convenient for them, usually the school.

2.3 Methods

The methods were chosen because they were believed to be appropriate and relevant in terms of providing vivid data important in understanding the school as a living organism. These methods were not only informative but also helped the researcher built a richer picture and deeper understanding of the participants' beliefs, perceptions and practices. The methods that have been used in this study helped the researcher answer the research questions in different ways and from different perspectives. Observations and interviews were chosen as the qualitative methods of data gathering 'that best capture the kind of information sought' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 179) and the Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998) was chosen as the quantitative method.

2.3.1 Observations

Participant observation was employed in order to get an 'inside' view of the nurture group environment. The researcher did not adopt a 'complete participant role' (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007) within the group as this would make it difficult to participate and collect data simultaneously as well as recording thoughts, feelings and ideas about what was happening. The researcher chose to take part occasionally in selected activities (i.e. assist a TA with a group of children and to join circle time activities) while observing the daily life of the nurture group. This type of observation in the NG life not only permitted an easy entrance into the social situation by reducing the resistance of the group members but also decreased the extent to which the researcher disturbed the 'natural' situation (Hargreaves, 1967). The participant observation helped the researcher to experience the NG's dynamics, interactions, attitudes, quality of learning, and any pressures. Structured observations using a forty-minute-event sampling observation were also carried out in order to assess SEB development and academic functioning for the children in the NG. These were conducted at the beginning of the research and repeated on a fortnight basis. See Appendix 1, p. 123 for a completed observation schedule alongside accompanying notes. Structured observations were carried out in order to discover behaviours that children may not feel comfortable discussing in the scheduled interviews (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007) and because it was felt that children are

more likely to display a behaviour, rather than discuss it. Naturalistic observations were also carried out to explore if and how nurturing practices were promoted throughout the school; in mainstream classrooms, during playtimes, and assemblies. Field notes were used in order to document observations, impressions and reflections.

2.3.2 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews (SSIs) were carried out in order to find out participants' perspectives on certain issues. The first part of the interviews sought to generate information around knowledge and understanding of NGs and benefits and constraints of the provision upon the children and the rest of the school. The interview questions were adopted to suit the different participants but concentrated on similar themes (See Appendix 2, p. 126 for an example of the first part of the mainstream teachers' interviews). SSIs were chosen because although they consist of predetermined questions, there is a considerable freedom in the sequence, in the exact wording of the questions and in the amount of time and attention given to the topic. Children's perceptions were also accessed using SSIs. Time was spent developing trust and rapport with children, using numerous open-ended questions to get to know the children and help them become ready to share their thoughts about their placement in the NG and their thoughts about their NG/mainstream peers (See Appendix 3, p. 129 and Appendix 4, p. 131) Interview questions were adapted and presented in different ways for individual children depending on their competencies. Mainstream children's perceptions were accessed as their perceptions toward NG children may become contributing factors that help deter or promote negative behaviour. As Baumrind (1972) argues, a child's social behaviour is largely governed by the experience of social interactions with peers and the way he/she is perceived by their peers. Also understanding children with difficulties (particularly behaviour difficulties) can serve as a function of peer acceptance (Boivin & Begin, 1989). NG children's perceptions of their placement in the NG were explored as 'it is important to understand the world of children through their own eyes...' (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p.374). Structured interviews were also conducted with the NG teachers to obtain information regarding the structure of the NGs. Sometimes the

researcher's understanding may not have totally represented the participants' views and intentions, mainly because the researcher brings different experiences and perspectives to the same issues. Follow up SSIs and unstructured interviews (informal discussions) were necessary to clarify those understandings and make theoretical connections (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004; Woods, 1986). The aim of the researcher was to create a non-threatening and enjoyable environment where the participants felt confident and comfortable about answering the questions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Field notes were used in order to record what the interviewees said, the researcher's impressions of the interviewee's dispositions and their attitudes towards the research and to the researcher in general. The researcher also used a digital audio recorder in order to capture the fullness and faithfulness of words and idiom and to allow concentration on the interviewees' answers (Woods, 1986).

2.3.3 Boxall Profile

Despite other assessment measures such as the SDQ often being used alongside the Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998; Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007), in the current study children were assessed by the NG teachers using solely the Boxall Profile. The Boxall Profile is a thorough normative diagnostic instrument which is used by the teachers to measure a child's level of emotional and behavioural functioning, including behaviour associated with academic engagement and adjust targets. This instrument represents part of the NG programme which is designed to support children with EBD (Bar-on, Maree & Elias, 2007). Bennathan and Boxall (2007) explain that the Profile was standardised on 3-8-year-olds and they argue that the Profile works well with children up to 11 years of age. However, caution must be exercised when using the Boxall Profile with children outside the age range for which it was standardised as the reliability and validity of the instrument for use with children over 8 years of age has not been evaluated yet. To enhance the reliability and validity of the instrument for use with children over 8 years of age specific modifications are required (Colley, 2012).

The Boxall Profile is divided into two sections: the Diagnostic Profile (34 items), which describes 'behaviours that inhibit or interfere with the child's satisfactory involvement in

schools' (Bennathan & Boxall, 2000, p.7), and the Developmental Strands (34 items) which describes 'different aspects of the developmental process of the earliest years' (Bennathan & Boxall, 2000, p.7). For the developmental strands an increase in scores denotes progress and for the diagnostic strand a decrease in scores denotes progress. The Profile enables staff to work on specific target areas in addition to measuring children's progress and development.

Boxall profiles relating to children's performance in the NG setting were completed by the NG teachers whenever it was felt needed; usually during Autumn and Summer terms. Data from the Boxall Profiles of a sample of six children (two from KS1NG and four from KS2NG) was collected by the researcher prior to commencing the study in May 2009 and at the end of the study in June 2010 for KS1NG children and in May 2010 for KS2NG children. Boxall Profile data was collected only for six children as only six children's profiles were given to the researcher prior to commencing the study and at the end of the study; some children's profiles were difficult for the teachers to find and other children's profiles were completed by the teachers at different times during the academic year. The Profiles were not used as it was felt that the length of time between pre and post intervention measures should be sufficient for measurable progress to be observed.

2.3.4 Reflective Journal

Throughout the project the researcher kept a reflective journal. This included information on feelings and concerns (see Appendix 23, p. 177 for extracts).

2.4 Participants and sampling

The sample consisted of 34 participants. They were: the head teacher; deputy head teacher; two NG teachers; three mainstream teachers; three NG TAs; two mainstream TAs; three parents whose children attended the NGs (two from KS1 NG and one from KS2 NG); five parents whose children attended mainstream classes; four NG children (two from KS1 NG and two from KS2 NG); five mainstream children; one mealtime assistant; two support professionals (Senior advisory teacher and Parent support adviser) and two governors.

School staff comprised a purposive sample as these participants were considered best able to express informed opinions about the NG and its impact upon the school (Silverman, 2000) whereas parents, children, governors and support professionals comprised a convenient sample as these participants were available and accessible at the time of the study. Only those children who agreed themselves and whose parents consented for their participation in the study were interviewed. The fact that participants did not comprise a random sample may affect the power of the results.

The school was selected because it was the only one of four schools that had a NG unit within the locality that gave the permission and support to conduct the study. Another factor that was instrumental in the decision to select the school was the need to conduct the study within the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) locality as the research was part of the EPS development plan. The EPS wanted to review NG provision within the wider Stepping Stones (a three to five year transformational programme for support and services for children with additional needs) continuum in order to ensure that provision meets the needs of children with SEBD and therefore the funding provided by the Local Authority (LA) is justifiable. However, the limited time available to the researcher, the labour intensive nature of reviewing all four schools with NG provision and, as mentioned before, the fact that it was the only school within the locality that gave permission to the researcher to conduct the study, effectively precluded the other three schools.

At the time of the research five classes were observed; the two NGs and three mainstream classes (Y2, Y6, and Forest School class). Boxall Profiles data was gathered from six children (two from KS1 NG and four from KS2 NG).

2.4.1 Information about the school and the NGs

The research was based in a community primary school in an urban area in the South West of England. Most children attending the school were of White British heritage.

More than half of the total number of children at the school were eligible for free school meals.

The two NGs are based on the primary school site and they cater only for the children based in the school. The KS1 NG caters for 5 boys from Year 1 and 2 (age 5-7). It is staffed by the NG teacher and 7 part time TAs with different TAs working different days. The KS2 NG caters for 12 children from Year 5 and Year 6 (10 boys, 2 girls, age 9-11). It is staffed by 2 part time NG teachers and 3 TAs. The KS1 NG has been in existence for two years and the KS2 NG has been in existence for three years.

The NGs were established in response to increasing levels of concern about children's behaviour. There were a number of children whose behaviour the staff found challenging and difficult to cope with. Both units run on NG principles but differ with regard to the organisation of the group. The NGs run on a full time basis. Children attend the NGs for 2-6 terms depending on their progress and ability to integrate back into their mainstream class. Children remain on the roll of their mainstream class and links are maintained with the rest of the school by joining the mainstream for selected activities e.g. midday lunch, playtimes, assemblies and trips. Due to lack of physical space in the mainstream classes, children have their registration in the NG units.

2.5 Data analysis: Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was chosen as it offers a flexible approach to analysing qualitative data and has been specifically designed for use within psychological research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke's six phase process was used to guide the analysis of the interviews. A condensed summary of the process is provided in Appendix 5, p. 132.

2.5.1 Thematic analysis process

A semantic approach (the identification of surface meaning of data) was used to analyse the interview data in contrast to a latent approach (the identification of underlying ideas, assumptions and understanding) and the coding procedure incorporated an inductive

approach where the codes relating to the data were applied, emerging directly from the participants' responses.

All transcripts were coded manually, line-by-line and also in 'chunks' of meaningful text. All transcripts were transferred into a two-column table, with the main body of text on the left column and the identification of codes on the right column (see Appendix 6, p. 133). After the completion of the initial codes, all data extracts were collated together within each code (see Appendix 7, p. 134).

The component elements of each code were then carefully examined for consistency or overlap with other codes. This provided the opportunity to begin defining and labelling the codes and linking these into hierarchical groups. At this point some codes were discarded due to having little relevance to the research questions and due to significant overlap with others. An example of the initial thematic map of 'impact upon NG children' super-ordinate theme is presented in Appendix 8, p. 135. Re-reading through the data allowed for a re-organisation of codes and sub themes and the development of the final thematic map (see Appendix 9, p. 137). All codes and themes used in the final thematic map are defined in Appendix 10, p. 139. All codes and themes used in the final thematic map were then transferred on a table across the four groups of participants (see Appendix 16, p. 163 for information about groups of participants) in order to show the similarities and differences identified between the responses of different groups of participants (see Appendix 11, p. 144 and Appendix 12, p. 147 alongside accompanying notes).

The analysis was a recursive process where the researcher was moving backwards and forwards between transcripts, coded extracts of data that were analysed, and the analysis of the data that was produced.

2.6 Ethics

The issue of ethics plays a fundamental part in educational research. Wellington argues that 'the main criterion for an educational research is that it should be ethical' (Wellington, 2000, p. 54). A number of actions have been taken in order to provide the

frame of the ethical conduct of this particular study. Special care was taken especially when interviewing NG children regarding their thoughts and feelings associated with their placement in the NG as well as when interviewing mainstream children regarding their thoughts about NG children. As reflecting about their placement in NGs and talking about relationships are considered to be sensitive matters (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007), children were given the choice of being involved in an interview alone or whether they preferred to have someone else present (i.e. their teacher). All children chose to be interviewed alone. As Noble-Carr (2007) argues, providing children with appropriate choices for participation helps the researcher to gain their support and trust. Participants' physical, psychological and emotional states were respected at all times. For example, the interview was interrupted when some children showed signs of distress. Consideration was also given when one mainstream child expressed discomfort about sharing his thoughts regarding his NG peers and about his responses being recorded; the recorder was turned off and the interview was ceased immediately.

Permission to conduct the study was sought from the university ethics committees (see Appendix 13, p. 151) and the school. A letter was initially sent to the head of school with details of the objectives of the proposed research and a request for permission to conduct the study (see Appendix 14, p. 159). In conjunction with the head teacher, the consent of the participating teachers was obtained and a letter was sent out to those parents whom the teachers felt would be more willing to participate. This explained the proposed study, obtaining consent for the participation of their children in the research and requesting their involvement in the research. Verbal consent was also obtained from the children as the researcher aimed to include the children as active participants in the study and listen to their voices (Farrell, 2007). The researcher, together with the teacher, explained the process to the children, the nature of the study as well as the role of the researcher. The researcher ascertained that participants understood the questions and participants were ensured confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time. The names of the participants involved in the study were included as pseudonyms.

Chapter 3

Results

The data analysis produced two super-ordinate themes which address the aspects of the research questions outlined in section 1.3, p. 28. The first super-ordinate theme, 'impact upon NG children' is composed of four sub-ordinate themes; two that show the positive impact of the NG upon NG children and two that show the negative impact of the NG upon NG children. Within the second super-ordinate theme, 'impact upon school', five sub-ordinate themes consisting of two sub-ordinate themes that show the positive impact of the NG upon school, and three sub-ordinate themes that show the negative impact of the NG upon school and a number of subthemes were identified. These are presented with the sections in which they are organised in a table in order to help the reader navigate through the findings (see Appendix 15, p. 162).

To ensure the anonymity of participants, each participant was assigned a number. Participants were divided into small groups and a prefix has been added before the numeral to identify the different participants (see Appendix 16, p. 163).

A number of quotations have been included in the results section but the majority of quotations which illuminate the factors in more detail are in Appendix 17, p. 164. Referral to these quotations will provide examples and a richer perspective of the issues.

3.1 Impact upon NG children - Positive

This theme concerns the participants' perceptions about the impact of the NG upon the NG children. The first sub-ordinate theme is derived from the interviews, observations and NG children's Boxall profiles (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998). The second sub-ordinate theme is derived from the interviews and observations.

3.1.1 Social, emotional and behavioural gains

Staff's views

All school staff involved in this study felt that positive progress had been made by individual children in their (SEB) functioning. Children were identified as being better in articulating their feelings, as being more able to self-manage their frustration and being better in becoming calmer;

“Children started making more appropriate requests to other children if they need something and they started using the language with us to say how they feel
“(NGT1)

SM1 also reported that children show more understanding of other children's emotional states compared to how they were before they join the NG;

“One of the children had a really kick off ... and the first thing two other children from the NG came up and said is ‘Are you all right?’... They showed an understanding because they know that that’s happened ... and they don’t actually say ‘you are horrible’, they say ‘that is not very nice what you did but you are all right’. They wouldn’t react like that year ago.” **(Quotation #1)**

SM2 said that “Previously, a year before they were at risk of permanent exclusion. We track them in terms of levels of white slips, levels of attendance and exclusion and there are significant gains in all of these”. [A white slip was issued if a child’s behaviour continued to be inappropriate after a number of other steps were taken].

Despite staff’s recognition of children’s SEB improvements, it was commented that there is still a need for an additional adult (a TA) when some children have lessons in mainstream class as children have not improved sufficiently to be able to function without support.

“Even if there is a behaviour improvement, he is still very needy. it takes a long time for him to calm him down or discipline him with no other adult in the room”. (MT1) **(Quotation #2)**

Parents' views

The perceptions of parents whose children were in the NG were highly positive in terms of their impact on their child's SEB functioning.

One mother described how her son was "more able to talk about problems when he has them, if he does slip up he is much quicker to calm down and apologise. He is also more empathetic compared to how he used to be. He has always been outgoing and sociable but he now understands how to play with other children better than he did so he is sort of much less bossy and more accommodating" (NGP2)

Another parent, who was initially resistant of the idea of NGs, commented that her child "has learnt to make the right choices and turn it (the behaviour) around within 10 minutes". (NGP3)

It was generally felt by all parents of NG children that progress would have not been made in the mainstream setting;

"He has learnt a lot in nurture. I don't think he would have progressed if he was in a mainstream class. I think he would go off the rails...." (NGP1)

(Quotation #3)

Mainstream parents' perceptions about the impact of NGs upon children varied. Three out of five parents reported that based on what their children have told them there has been progress with some children's behaviour. However, one mother reported that she has not seen any improvement with the NG children's behaviour.

Children's views

All NG children had made positive comments about the NGs and the impact of them upon their behaviour. Comments included the following:

"I am not very naughty." (NGC1)

"I listen to my teachers more and I am not getting very angry" (NGC2)

“I don’t cry very often now” (NGC3)

“What I found difficult was staying calm in class when I was getting frustrated and not getting on well with the other children in the class. I would probably get quite a lot of white slips if I was in the other class. In the class I am now I only have one white slip.” (NGC4)

“I used to walk out of the classroom without permission and storm off and throw things around. I learned not to do it anymore because there is a consequence of doing it.” (NGC4)

Mainstream children’s perceptions were also positive but not unanimous. Four out of five mainstream children perceived NG children as calmer, whereas one child reported that there has been no progress in NG children’s behaviour when they join the mainstream class for certain lessons.

Others’ views

Reports from support professionals and people who were not directly part of the teaching staff referred to a shared perception that the NGs had a positive impact on the children, in terms of helping them to calm down, and perceive themselves positively.

3.1.1.1 Observation Records

This is an overview of the researcher’s observational records. Refer to Appendix 18 (p. 170), Appendix 19 (p. 171) and Appendix 20 (p. 172) to get a more complete picture of the observation records.

Observations completed over three terms – Autumn, Spring and Summer in the NGs suggest that the children’s behaviour had improved. However, despite improvements being positive, these were not dramatic but evident. Even if all children’s behaviour has improved from term 1 to term 3, only KS1C1 had a high behaviour change (over 0.8). Three out of six children had a medium behaviour progress (between 0.5-0.6) and two out

of six children had a somewhat low behaviour progress (less than 0.5) (see Appendix 19, p.171)

3.1.1.2 Boxall Profile Data

Overall, there have been improvements in all children's social, emotional and behavioural functioning post 1 year NG intervention. Each child's social and emotional outcomes measured by Boxall Profile are as follows:

KS1 C1 had a positive impact score of 28 (developmental score of 8, diagnostic profile score of 20). He showed an improved score in 6 out of 10 developmental sub-strands (a, b, g, h, i, j) and 7 out of 10 diagnostic profile sub-strands (r, t, v, w, x, y, z). He also improved in 13 stands, remained the same in 1 strand and declined in 6 strands.

KS1 C2 had a high positive impact score of 57 (developmental score of 30, diagnostic profile score of 27). He showed an improved score in 10 out of 10 developmental sub-strands (a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, I, j) and 8 out of 10 diagnostic profile sub-strands (q, s, t, u, v, w, x, y). He also improved in 16 stands, remained the same in 2 strands and declined in 2 strands.

KS2 C1 had a positive impact score of 26 (developmental score of 22, diagnostic profile score of 4). He showed an improved score in 9 out of 10 developmental sub-strands (a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i) and 6 out of 10 diagnostic profile sub-strands (q, t, v, w, y, z). He also improved in 13 stands, remained the same in 2 strands and declined in 5 strands.

KS2 C2 had a positive impact score of 10 (developmental score of 12, diagnostic profile score of -2). He showed an improved score in 7 out of 10 developmental sub-strands (a, c, d, e, f, i, j) and 5 out of 10 diagnostic profile sub-strands (q, s, u, x, z). He also improved in 10 stands, remained the same in 2 strands and declined in 8 strands.

KS2 C3 had a positive impact score of 10 (developmental score of 12, diagnostic profile score of -2). He showed an improved score in 9 out of 10 developmental sub-strands (a, b, c, d, f, g, h, I, j) and 2 out of 10 diagnostic profile sub-strands (s, t, x, y, z). He also improved in 12 stands, remained the same in 2 strands and declined in 6 strands.

KS2 C4 had a positive impact score of 2 (developmental score of 18, diagnostic profile score 16). He showed an improved score in 8 out of 10 developmental sub-strands (a, b, c, d, f, g, h, i) and 2 out of 10 diagnostic profile sub-strands (s, t). He also improved in 8 strands, remained the same in 2 strands and declined in 10 strands.

See Appendix 21, p. 173 and Appendix 22, p. 175 for details of children's Boxall Profiles.

3.1.2 Academic gains

Staff's views

In terms of academic gains, it was reported that children made greater SEB gains, rather than academic gains. The majority of teachers and TAs (4 out of 7) felt that although some children made improvements in numeracy and literacy and that their learning behaviours had improved - the ability to engage in some lessons, the ability to work on some tasks independently and the motivation to learn and complete tasks, the rate of progress was very slow.

“Some are more confident and comfortable in speaking in class, and they are more engaged in lessons but they haven't made a significant improvement in their reading or writing” (MTA2).

Parents' views

The perceptions of all three parents whose children were in the NG were positive with regards to their child's academic achievement as well. Examples of parents' views included:

“When he was in mainstream he couldn't even write his name. Now he can write his name and he is doing some reading he seems to be more motivated.” (NGP1) **(Quotation #4)**

“Suddenly out of nowhere he can read well and enjoys it ... he gets less frustrated with things because he doesn’t need to be shown how to do things; he can read instructions.” (NGP2) (**Quotation #5**)

“He came along with his work, his maths and literacy as he is on 2B now.”(NGP3)

None of the five parents of the mainstream children perceived that the NGs had a positive impact on NG children’s academic achievement.

Children’s views

Whilst many of the comments gathered from the NG children tended towards the positive impact of the NG upon their behaviour, three out of four children acknowledged some benefits on their learning as well. Comments included the following:

“I write more things down.” (NGC1)

“I am better in Maths.” (NGC3)

“I am more concentrated on my work now. I normally do what the teachers say. If I need any help I ask them to help me. Before I come here I used to get out of the classroom when I found tasks difficult.” (NGC4)

Mainstream children did not perceive improvements in NG children’s academic performance.

Others’ views

School community members and support professionals assumed that the NGs helped the NG children access the learning and improve their literacy and numeracy levels.

Impact upon NG children - Negative

3.1.3 Isolation

3.1.3.1 Perceptions, attitudes and feelings of NG children

Staff's views

All mainstream staff, although positive towards the general philosophy of NGs, they tended to have negative perceptions of NG children as during the interviews they ascribed negative characteristics to NG children who were described as 'naughty', 'out of control', 'violent' and 'vicious'.

It seemed to be a general concern when NG children were joining the mainstream classes for some lessons;

“They worry about them coming back into their classes. They don't like it” (MT2)

Mainstream teachers' negative attitudes to NG children's reintegration might reflect lack of confidence in their own management skills. Their attitudes can also be linked to the nature of communication and/or co-operation between themselves and NG staff. The communication between NG and mainstream staff has been characterised as “inadequate” by NGTA2 when asked to comment on the communication with mainstream staff. This will not be discussed in this section, but one could assume that when there is poor communication between staff then it's easier for the NG children to feel isolated and be labelled as the 'naughty' children.

NG children seen as being NG staff's responsibility were also perceived as a potential factor for children's isolation;

“If you think of someone like NGC4 who has four sessions a week, it's like a lot of his timetable so the teachers need to take some responsibility for them.”(NGT2)

Mainstream teachers' feelings toward NG children were also perceived as a cause of NG children's isolation. Teachers' feelings towards NG children were described by SM1 in the context of thinking to ask NG teachers to swap with some mainstream teachers.

“We are looking at ways of getting children back ... There is a fear element and frustration when having these children in your classroom and children may feel that. They may feel that they do not belong in that classroom and this may contribute in them feeling kind of isolated.” (Quotation #6)

3.1.3.2 Reintegration

Staff's views

Some staff perceived NG children's slow reintegration in the mainstream class as another possible factor that contributed in children feeling isolated. Though children's reintegration in their mainstream class was repeatedly affirmed as the NG's aim SM2 noted that “not a great deal of reintegration was happening”. This was attributed to children's severe behaviour difficulties. Referring to the previous year's KS2 NG cohort, NGT2 commented:

“Last summer 10 out of 12 children didn't have any contact with their year group for all sorts of reasons ... It was difficult to start the reintegration early as most children had big needs.” (Quotation #7)

This quotation implies that there were no particular links between the NG children and the 'whole' school and this could make them feel isolated from their mainstream peers.

3.1.3.3 Practical Reasons: Lack of space

Staff's views

Lack of space in the mainstream classrooms was recognised as having a negative effect upon the NG children's social inclusion and consequently on children's sense of belonging. Due to lack of space, children were not registering with their year group;

“We wanted them (the NG children) to have an identity in their own classes ... The class sizes would have been horrendous we decided in the end that you can’t expect a teacher to have a class of 30 and suddenly be given another 6 of difficult children. It was just unrealistic. So in the end, although it was the opposite of what we wanted, and although we were aware that that would impact on their sense of belonging, we decided we would have to keep them as a unit at class group” (MT2) (**Quotation #8**)

Furthermore, an influx of new children in the school due to new housing resulted in the interruption of KS2 NG children’s reintegration due to lack of space and NGT2 commented that “this creates a climate of social isolation for the children”

3.1.4 Reintegration Concerns

3.1.4.1 Difficulties Handling Change

Staff’s views

One member of KS1 NG staff expressed concern regarding some NG children’s difficulties accepting a change of adults. Referring to the NG children’s reintegration, NGT1 commented on children’s apprehension when they realised that someone less familiar to them was in charge;

“They find it difficult getting to know the adult in the class. They are going from listening to me all the time ...you know almost that safety net to ‘Ok someone else is in charge’ and it is almost like when you are handed over to a room.” (**Quotation #9**)

This quotation suggests that long periods in the NG make adapting back to mainstream classroom more difficult.

Parents’ views

NGP2 commented that her child “had some difficulties accepting a change in his routine and accepting other staff.”

Another parent had concerns regarding her child accepting practical changes in his routine;

“When he goes back to the mainstream I know that he is going to look for his breakfast and I don’t think he will cope well not having his breakfast.” (NGP1)

3.1.4.2 Other children’s perceptions of NG children

Parents’ views

Concerns about mainstream children’s perceptions about NG children were also expressed. Two parents of NG children commented:

“I do worry other children perceiving him different as he would have two classes” (NGP1)

“I do worry that other children will regard him as different because he is in the NG.” (NGP2)

Summary

The detailed results from the researcher’s analyses indicate that overall the NG provision has a positive impact upon the children. It is extremely likely that these children would have been excluded from the school altogether so although there are a number of opportunity costs attached to the children’s placement in NG such as separation from their peers, the opportunity gains outweigh the opportunity costs.

3.2 Impact upon school - Positive

This theme is derived from interviews.

3.2.1 Influence on other classrooms

3.2.1.1 Influence on mainstream teachers

Staff’s views

All staff perceived the NG as a valuable resource for the school. It was generally mentioned that the removal of the NG children from their classrooms had a positive impact on the mainstream teachers. For example one teacher reported the following:

“The main positive impact is that those needy children are not taking all of the teachers’ time. I can get on and teach my average levels...” (MT1)
(Quotation #10)

This quotation suggests that the removal of the NG children from the class not only helped the mainstream teachers feel less under stress but also created an opportunity for them to focus energy on the rest of the children.

The same mainstream teacher noted that the NGs had a positive impact in terms of enhancing her relationship with some NG children;

“When they come back they are calmer so the relationship that I’ve got is better”
(MT1)

Parents’ views

All parents assumed that the placement of difficult children in the NGs had a positive impact in terms of creating a calmer atmosphere in the mainstream classrooms and in helping the mainstream teachers get on with their teaching.

3.2.1.2 Influence on mainstream children

Staff’s views

The removal of the NG children from their classrooms had a positive impact on the mainstream children as well;

“When they were in our classroom the behaviour was much more wobbly... The fact that they are not in there all of the time ... has a positive impact so that the rest of the children don’t see those negative tantrums...” (MT1) **(Quotation #11)**

This suggests that the removal of the NG children from the class has a positive impact on the rest of the children as there was less interruption in the class as well as less exposure to bad behaviour.

It was also mentioned that the removal of the NG children could create an opportunity for the rest of the children to get to know them in a positive light;

“If that child is not badly behaved but let’s say has a special need ... you don’t want the children in that class to resent them in any way or be frightened of them and if they go back and they are introduced in situations that they can cope with, then the rest of the class are going to get to know them positively” (NGT1)
(Quotation #12)

This applies only for those children who joined the NG directly after completing their year in reception or who came from another primary school.

Parents’ views

All parents whose children are in the mainstream classrooms shared staff’s views regarding the positive impact of the removal of the NG children on the mainstream children;

“...it’s beneficial for the other children who want to carry on their work without being disturbed” (MP1)

3.2.2 Influence on school’s culture and practices

3.2.2.1 Understanding children’s behaviour

Staff’s views

Some staff reported a number of ways in which the NGs positively affected the school’s practices and culture. Referring to the interactions between NG and mainstream staff it was believed by one member of the senior management team that the NG provision led to insights being shared about different ways of understanding children’s behaviour;

“.. it’s made people contextualise and understand why children are “kicking off...” (SM2) (**Quotation #13**)

This view was shared by KS1 NG staff as it was commented that the presence of NGs helped not only the mainstream staff understand children’s behaviour but also access support;

“If they feel they need support in understanding NG children’s behaviour tendencies ... I go and have a meeting with them and help them understand how I address it” (NGT1) (**Quotation #14**)

These views were not entirely shared by all staff. NGTA3 reported that “there is no change in the way teachers approach children showing difficult behaviour”. Similarly, NGT2 commented that mainstream teachers would have a better understanding of children’s behaviour if the level of collaboration with the NG staff was sufficient. This issue will be discussed more explicitly in Paper 2.

3.2.2.2 Identification of needs

Staff’s views

The NG intervention positively affected the mainstream teachers’ practices as the use of Boxall profiles helped in identifying those children that were considered as “vulnerable” and needed extra support but not suitable for the NGs.

“Ever since we had the NGs we used the Boxall Profiles as a tool to identify children who believed had to be improved in some areas. Children whose scores were not extreme enough to go in the NG but children who were lacking a sense of belonging or were withdrawn and thought that would be benefited from extra SEAL work” (MT2)

3.2.2.3 Spreading good practice

Staff's views

Another positive development of NGs is the knowledge and expertise that teachers that have temporarily acted as NG teachers developed. SM1 noted that “Two teachers worked part time in the NG to cover KS2 NG teacher’s maternity leave. When that teacher comes back we will have four teachers that have taught in the NGs...”(**Quotation #15**)

This quotation suggests that this arrangement will help in better spreading the NG practice in the mainstream classes.

Despite the positive developments, the NG intervention was perceived by some staff as being complementary to the existing school ethos;

“NGs gave us a more focused strategy but I think in this school we would do the same if we didn’t have the NGs. Nurturing is not confined in these NGs. It’s in everything we do. SEAL is central to the school” (SM1)

Others' views

SP1 reported that “the adoption of the NG’s principles by mainstream teachers can positively affect the rest of the children that are not in the NG”. This was the second respondent who emphasized that NGs can create opportunities for a more ‘nurturing’ environment in the school.

Impact upon school - Negative

3.2.3 Cost

3.2.3.1 Cost of NG provision

Staff's views

While a small number of people could only see the NG intervention as having only a positive impact on the school, many cited the NG intervention as having a negative impact on the school as well. One of the perceived disadvantages was the cost of the two

NGs to the school, recognising that the cost of employing NG staff is high. Linked to this is also a perceived uncertainty about future funding “For next September I can’t guarantee that I will have any NG here because the funding might go” and the difficulties associated with this uncertainty “This awful uncertainty and temporary nature of all this makes it difficult to make long-term stuff that we should be doing”. (SM1)

Parents’ views

Similarly to staff, NGP2 referred to the financial burden and the uncertainty for the existence of NGs and added that “...if there was more investment in the KS1 NG the investment needed for the KS2 wouldn’t be so intense ... It would have been more positive because the ground work would have been done in an early enough age to avoid some of the most challenging behaviours.” **(Quotation #16)**

3.2.4 Perceptions

3.2.4.1 External perceptions of school

Staff’s views

Another disadvantage of the NG provision upon the school involves the external perception of the school. According to the SM1 “...if you look at the school from the outside, it definitely skews people’s perception of the school. They perceive that we have a lot of naughty children here because we have lot of children with behavioural issues. ...the long-term effects of that is people don’t want to send children here.” **(Quotation #17)**

These views highlight the ‘two sides of the same coin’. On the positive side the school appears to be inclusive as it accepts difficult and needy children. On the flip side it highlights the concern of SM1 and perhaps the rest of the staff of having to accept difficult children and fewer well behaved children. These views may also imply that the NGs reinforce the perception of the school as having difficult and needy children and some parents preferring to send their children to a school where there are more well-behaved children.

Parents' views

Similarly one parent whose child was in the NG commented on other parents' perceptions about the NGs and their concerns about the impact of the NG intervention on their children;

“The other potential disadvantage is if other parents perceive ... that the school is disadvantaging their children because they are pandering to these badly behaved ones because they don't really understand what the issue and needs are.” (NP1)

(Quotation #18)

3.2.4.2 Internal staff perceptions of NG

Although mainstream staff showed enthusiasm for the work being done by the NGs in terms of the impact it had on some children, their perceptions of the NGs were somewhat inaccurate with regards to the NG's functions. The main function of NGs was perceived to be the containment “of very difficult children” and the understanding attached to that was that “if they haven't gone in the NG they would have been excluded”. The NG provision was perceived as a ‘*sin bin*’ for children to be “removed to”. These perceptions had not only an implication on NG children as they seemed to “have a badge of being naughty” but also it had a negative impact on the school as it created tension between NG and mainstream staff in terms of their communication. NG and mainstream staff' tension will be discussed in more detail in Paper 2.

These perceptions emerged when they established the NGs led by the previous head teacher;

“... initially they were done on a reactive basis in other words there were a lot of behavioural problems in the school and many children were at risk of exclusion”

(SM1)

The negative impact of the mainstream staff' perceptions about the NG units were acknowledged by the senior staff and attempts have been made to change people's perceptions of the NG classes.

“We rebranded that in September. They used to be called Hedgehogs and Tigers but now they are called the same as all the other classes” (SM1) [Hedgehogs and Tigers are pseudonyms]

Attempts have been made to educate the mainstream staff about the role of NGs as it was felt that they did not have a clear understanding of NG principles and practice, they were avoiding taking responsibility for NG children, they had a negative perception of the NGs and because the quality of communication and collaboration between NG and mainstream staff was lacking in quality. The latter appeared to be of particular significance but it will be discussed more explicitly in Paper 2.

All these perceptions contributed to the NGs being “isolated and standalone classes”.

3.2.5 Influence on mainstream children

3.2.5.1 Unfairness

Others' views

Two school community members commented on the negative impact of the NG upon mainstream children. Referring to the NG children's behaviour they reported that some mainstream children feel that are treated unfairly compared to NG children when it comes to behaviour management.

“They think that bad behaviour should be dealt with by exclusions and certainly not dealt with by reward. I guess if you are six or seven and you make all the right choices during the day and you see a child that doesn't really make the right choices.... get a sticker or they get to go to a trip I think for mainstream average children that aren't excelling you might hear them saying ‘Why can't I go to a trip? ...’ (SCM1) (**Quotation #19**)

This extract suggests that some mainstream children don't understand the reasons for employing ‘different’ behaviour management techniques with NG children.

SCM2 raised the issue of breakfast in the NGs and its impact on mainstream children;

“It’s important for any child to have breakfast but there are a number of children that don’t have breakfast at home. The impact of that is that the NG children are in a better place to learn, enjoy and join in but then again it seems to be ‘Why can’t we have breakfast in our class?’”

3.2.6 Observation records and extracts from reflective journal

Nurturing in the wider school environment was promoted in a number of ways (see Appendix 23, p. 177). The researcher’s interpretation is that whilst there are many examples of good practice and some of the NG’s principles and practices have been adopted by mainstream staff, the work of the NGs was not fully integrated into the school’s wider approach in meeting children’s needs.

Summary

The detailed results from the researcher’s analyses indicate that whilst the NG intervention helped the school to expand its capacity to cater for the needs of children with SEBD, there have not been many changes to the current practices of the school. In addition, the NG provision was perceived as presenting a number of constraints upon the school.

Chapter 4

Discussion

This section interprets Paper 1's findings. It is organised according to the research questions for clarity. Conclusion, limitations and future directions for this paper are amalgamated with Paper 2.

4.1 How are NG pupils affected by the NG provision? What do the NG pupils gain and lose from their placement in the NG?

The current study revealed that the NG provision benefited the children. The extent of gains was perceived differently by different groups of participants. School staff reported improvements with regards to children's SEB functioning. Staff noted that NG children were better in articulating their feelings, in self-managing their frustration, in becoming calmer and in understanding other children's emotional states. Also it was noted by one member of senior staff that numbers of white slips and exclusions had decreased.

These improvements, although noticeable by all staff were not dramatic. It was highlighted by the mainstream teachers that children still exhibit great SEB needs and there was a need for a TA. The school staff reported that gains in children's SEB functioning were greater than the academic gains. If there were improvements in children's numeracy and literacy the rate of progress was reported to be slow.

Parents whose children attended the NGs perceived great improvements with regards to both their children's SEB functioning and academic development. The perceived gains were reported to be similar to those reported by staff. However, these perceptions were not entirely shared by parents of mainstream children. While mainstream parents' perceptions varied from negative to positive with regards to children's behavioural functioning, they observed no impact with regards to children's academic development.

All NG children made positive references with regards to the impact on their progress. Mainstream children, however, perceived no progress with NG children's academic performance and the majority perceived some progress with NG children's behaviour. This might be because behavioural changes can be more recognisable compared to changes with academic competence as children spend time together not only in classrooms but also during playtimes.

School community members and support professionals perceived a positive impact on the children's SEB progress and academic development.

These findings echo earlier evaluation findings reported by Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001) regarding the positive impact of the NG upon NG children based on the perceptions of mainstream teachers, parents and NG children. However, although all participants in Cooper, Arnold and Boyd's (2001) study reported benefits of the NG intervention upon NG children, the study did not consider any variation in different participants' perceptions about the extent of gains made by the NG children.

What are the possible explanations for the variation in perceptions of mainstream teachers and parents of NG children about the extent of gains made? A possible explanation is that teachers are responsible for a large number of children in the class and therefore it can be difficult to monitor children's behaviour closely. Parents whose children attended the NG on the other hand, 'hungry' to see a change with their child's behaviour might be more able to monitor their child's behaviour closely and observe small changes and therefore be more positive about their child's progress. Also parents of NG children and mainstream teachers might have different expectations regarding children's progress and this might result in a downward or upward appreciation of children's progress. Another possible explanation might lie in the communication with the NG staff. All three parents of NG children were reported to have ongoing communication with NG staff and therefore better access to daily information regarding their children whereas the communication between NG and mainstream staff has been described as 'inadequate'. More emphasis is placed on the mismatch of teacher-parent

perceptions as these adults are believed to be better placed to monitor and assess children's progress. It's important to consider variations because a successful school will have a consistent and shared view about what it is and what it does (Wong, 2010). However, for more definite answers about the variations of different participants, further research is needed.

Boxall profiles and observations of children also indicated that children made SEB and academic improvements. These improvements have not been dramatic but evident. Similar to the key variables identified by Cooper and Whitebread (2007), the researcher believes that these changes were not dramatic because of the factors which are appended in Appendix 24, p. 186.

Even if the general perception of NGs was positive regarding the impact of the NG upon children there were a number of opportunity costs attached to children's placement in the NG. Isolation was perceived as a strong theme. The factors being; mainstream teachers' perceptions and feelings of NG children and attitudes towards NG children, NG children's slow reintegration in the mainstream classes and the lack of space in the mainstream classes to accommodate NG children at times such as registration.

According to the rationale of NGs, the majority of children lack adequate experience of being nurtured and attended to and have a need to be nurtured, accepted as individuals and belong to the school community. Even if NG children themselves did not report any negative feelings regarding their placement in the NG, being separated from the mainstream school community can be as Jeremy (1987) argued 'devastating'. This highlights, therefore, the need for mainstream staff to eliminate the factors contributing to the development of isolation and create a conducive environment to help NG children build healthy relationships with their mainstream teachers and peers.

Other negative factors were reported by a member of the NG staff and by parents of NG children were: the difficulties of children handling change upon their return to mainstream classes, as well as mainstream children's perceptions of NG children.

The above issues are echoed in the study of Howes, Emanuel, and Farrell (2003) where the question was raised ‘What do NG pupils lose when they are separated from their peers’.

4.2 How is the school affected by the NG provision?

A number of benefits and disadvantages were reported with regards to the impact of the NG upon the whole school.

Reports from staff and parents of NG children referred to a shared perception that NGs have a positive impact on the school in terms of creating a calmer atmosphere in the mainstream classrooms and in helping the mainstream teachers get on with their teaching and children get on with their learning. Also it was noted by some staff that the NGs had a positive impact in terms of enhancing the mainstream teachers and children’s relationship with NG children. Positive impact was also reported by some staff in terms of helping mainstream staff understand children’s behaviour and identify ‘vulnerable’ children’s needs using the Boxall Profile. Another positive development was reported by one member of senior staff to be the knowledge and expertise that teachers that have temporarily acted as NG teachers have developed as this arrangement will help in spreading NG practice into the mainstream classes. Despite the positive developments, the NG intervention was perceived by one member of senior staff as being complementary to the existing ethos. These findings are in line with previous studies (e.g. Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005; Binnie & Allen, 2008) which report gains of the NG provision across the school.

Even if the NGs were seen by the majority of staff as a cause of positive change, only one participant (a support professional) considered the NG provision as providing the school with opportunities to facilitate a more nurturing environment. This finding is somewhat inconsistent with previous studies (Binnie & Allen, 2008; Cooper, Arnold & Boyd 2001) where the majority of staff reported the NGs as leading to a more ‘nurturing school’. A number of explanations could account for this. First, the NGs were perceived by mainstream staff to be for children with extreme behavioural difficulties. Although this

can be argued to be an inappropriate perception, the composition of the NGs may have contributed in mainstream staff perceiving the NGs like this. Second, NGs were perceived by mainstream staff as '*sin bins*'. These perceptions might have contributed to the NGs being regarded as instruments of enabling the school in expanding its capacity to cater for the needs of children with SEBD but have not helped the school in fully integrating the work of the NGs into their wider approach to meeting all children's needs.

Participants also reported a number of disadvantages with regard to the impact of the NG upon the whole school. Specifically, some staff and parents of NG children cited the NG intervention as having a negative impact upon the school in terms of the cost of the provision to the school and the uncertainty about future funding. Another constraint reported by staff was the external perception of the school as the NGs may reinforce the perception of the school as having difficult and needy children. Similarly one parent of a NG child commented on the possibility of parents of mainstream children perceiving the NGs as bringing the school down. A further constraint reported by school community members was the negative impact of the NGs upon the mainstream children as they see the NG children being treated more favourably compared with them.

School observations suggested that nurturing in the wider school environment was promoted in a number of ways; through the adoption of a number of programmes and strategies that help to teach children social and emotional skills and foster positive behaviour and through positive behaviour management techniques even if these were not always adopted by all staff all the time. Nurturing principles were also demonstrated through opportunities for children to make a number of decisions in school, in the way playtimes were organised and through celebration assemblies. These findings are similar to those reported by Doyle (2003).

Despite the fact that there are many examples of good practice in the school that suggest that the school is nurturing, the researcher did not feel completely accepted and nurtured by all school staff.

Chapter 5

Bridging Phase 1 of research to Phase 2

Whilst Paper 1 supports the strong evidence that NGs are an effective early intervention strategy for supporting children with SEBD and for enabling the schools to expand their capacity to cater for the needs of children with SEBD, a particular area of concern is the issue of communication between NG and mainstream staff and the mainstream teachers' perceptions of NGs and NG children. NG children depend heavily on the quality of communication between NG and mainstream staff to make the most of the all-important continuity of the educational experience they receive as they move between NG and mainstream provision (Cefai & Cooper, 2009).

The researcher therefore believes that there is a logical connection between these two concerns; inadequate communication between staff can lead to mainstream staff perceiving NG children in a negative light and having inappropriate perceptions of NGs. As highlighted in interviews with staff this, in turn, had an impact on mainstream teachers' attitudes to NG children's reintegration back to the mainstream classroom.

It is therefore deemed important to address the nature of NG-mainstream teacher communication as this can help the identification of barriers and enablers to communication and consequently, help schools to address potential problems associated with poor communication and/or draw on examples of effective communication.

Also, despite no reference being made to the involvement of parents to the school, the researcher aims to explore whether the school is instrumental in involving parents in the school. Specifically, Paper 2 aims to address the possible enablers and barriers of parental involvement in the NG and how their work with parents is extended in the rest of the school. As Bishop and Swain (2000b) argue, the NG staff should extend their expertise in the wider school in order to have more holistic effects in relation to their approach to working with parents.

**The impact of Nurture Group principles and practice
on the whole primary school**

Section 2: Paper 2

Abstract

The provision of Nurture Groups has been recognised as an effective early intervention for children with SEBD. ‘The high expectations of teachers in Nurture Groups can bring about amazing change’ in the lives of young emotionally disturbed children (Lucas, 1999, p.14). When the principles of NG are effectively applied by all staff in all areas of the school and when nurturing attitudes and practices develop throughout the school, teaching and learning become effective for all children (Lucas, 1999). Communication between NG and mainstream staff is considered to be important for the effective running of the NGs and for developing a nurturing school ethos. Lack of collaborative partnership work can create tensions between NG and mainstream staff. Parental involvement is also recognised important in the NG. Research reveals that partnership relationships with parents contribute to positive social and emotional outcomes for children and to positive effects for parents in terms of their capacity to understand their children and apply NG practices outside of the NG. Despite the inherent power imbalance between NG staff and parents, there can be a positive outcome if the NG approaches are extended holistically to all school staff.

The aim of this paper is to explore the quality of communication between NG and mainstream staff and the enablers and barriers of parental involvement in the NGs and the school.

This qualitative study was conducted in a community primary school in an urban area in the South West of England and included 34 participants - 13 school staff, 8 parents, 9 children, and 4 professionals and governors. Semi-structured interview data revealed that while some communication existed between NG and mainstream staff there were subtle difficulties involved in creating a collaborative partnership work with regards to sharing information with each other. Despite developing a collaborative relationship and effective communication being seen as the most important enabler for parental involvement in the NGs and the rest of the school, there was a more structured communication and a more supportive support between the NGs and parents of the NG children than the rest of the school and parents.

Chapter 6

Introduction and Literature Review

6.1 Introduction

This is the second of the two papers, which together explore the processes involved in developing a nurturing school ethos. This paper focuses on the nature of communication between NG and mainstream staff and on the enablers and barriers to parental involvement between the NGs and the school.

The literature review in Paper 1 outlines the recognition of NGs as an effective early intervention for children with EBD and argues that the ultimate success of NGs is dependent on whether they are an important part of the wide school community and on whether the schools are instrumental in promoting their success. Communication between NG and mainstream staff and parental involvement are considered essential components; however few studies have explored these two components in relation to the nurturing school. To enhance the understanding of this topic and to define the research aims, a literature review was completed. An overview of the literature is provided below. For the full literature review please refer to Section 4, p. 188.

6.2 Literature review

Information for the literature review was gained through access to EBSCO and PsycINFO databases, Google scholar online searches and personal books. Some of the key words/phrases for searches included: partnership with parents, parent partnerships in NGs, communication in schools, collaboration in schools and enablers and barriers of parental involvement. Articles and journals that were relevant from the search were also used for references for further searches of primary sources.

In building strong school communities it is vital that there are effective communication systems in schools and strong teacher networks (Grodsky & Gamoran, 2003). The rise of

interest in interpersonal relationships between teachers is mirrored by an increased focus on the relationships among educators as for many years practitioners have bemoaned the isolation of teachers in their classrooms. (Lortie, 1992)

Isolation seems to be caused by physical arrangements in schools, lack of communication and collaboration structures and to be a cause of limited innovation, high burnout, and insufficient learning (Boyd, 1992; DelliCarpini, 2009, Farber, 1991). “Separated by their isolated classrooms and tightly packed daily schedules, [teachers] seem resigned to the fact that they rarely work with colleagues on matters related to teaching and learning. This traditional structure and culture of teacher isolation stands in sharp contrast to the collective inquiry, reflective dialogue, and collaborative culture of the professional learning community” (DuFour, 1999, p. 61).

As a result there was an urge to capitalise on teacher relationships and to create communities of practice with time allotted for communication among teachers that allowed information, knowledge and expertise to be shared (Frank, Zhao & Borman, 2004) and joint planning to be facilitated (Uzzi, 1997).

The positive outcomes of teachers’ professional communities have been well documented. For example, Bryk and Schneider (2002) demonstrated how a variety of interactions and communication in schools can shape an environment of trust. DelliCarpini (2009) also illustrated how interdisciplinary collaboration and communication helped mainstream and ESL teachers develop skills making it possible to meet the needs of language learners in a way that enhanced instruction for all learners.

6.2.1 Communication between NG and mainstream staff

All the studies cited above highlight the importance of communication between educators for the purposes of sharing information and ideas, establishing professional norms and building trust. As identified above, research has concentrated mainly on the impact of NGs upon the school where the aspect of communication was looked at indirectly.

Sanders (2007) illustrated how the NGs impacted positively upon the school in terms of enhancing the communication between NG and mainstream teachers; mainstream teachers were more able to provide the children with a higher teaching and learning experience, they were less stressed when leaving the school and they had an increased sense of empowerment when they were using positive behaviour management strategies. Similarly, Binnie and Allen (2008) demonstrated that communication between NG and mainstream staff contributed to mainstream teachers improving their teaching.

The findings of both studies should be interpreted with caution as there is no clarification as to whether school staff were divided into different focus groups. The research implies that there was only one focus group so it is possible that interviewees responded in a desirable way that would not match what is actually occurring or believed. For example, the responses of the mainstream staff regarding the positive impact of NGs upon themselves may have not been entirely truthful if the NG staff were present. A group setting can place constraints on individual responses and interviewees may distort information through selective perceptions and desire to please the interviewer or the other members of the group.

These studies show that effective communication facilitates the development and adoption of a more nurturing approach in the mainstream setting. However, despite the importance of communication, the literature does not appear to address specifically the nature of NG-mainstream teacher communication. A focus on the nature (what is communicated, how it is communicated) of communication between NG and mainstream staff could help the identification of barriers and enablers to communication and consequently help schools to address potential problems associated with poor communication and/or draw on examples of effective communication.

What happens when there is a lack of collaborative partnership work between NG and mainstream staff? Research evidence indicates that tensions can be created when there is poor communication between NG and mainstream staff. Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) indicated that poor communication resulted in staff being unclear about each other's roles and objectives. Bailey (2007) implied that the lack of constructive communication

between NG and mainstream staff led to mainstream staff perceiving the NG as a *sin bin*, where children were sent when they did not fit the demands of the mainstream class. Communication was therefore recognised as an important factor for the effective running of the NGs and for developing a nurturing school ethos.

5.2.2 Communication with Parents

Effective communication and partnership with parents are also vital in developing a nurturing school ethos. As stated in the Code of Practice (DfEE, 1994):

‘Children’s progress will be diminished if their parents are not seen as partners in the educational process with unique knowledge to impact. Professional help can seldom be effective unless it builds on parents’ capacity to be involved and unless parents consider that professionals take account of what they say and treat their views and anxieties as intrinsically important’ (p. 12)

The importance of parents in children’s education has been recognised not only in the 1994 Code of Practice but also in research literature and in more recent government initiatives. Different sources highlight the positive effect family involvement can have on students’ academic achievement, attendance, behaviour and social skills as well on less traditional measures such as students’ self-efficacy about education (see for example, Barton, 2007; DfEE, 1994; DfEE, 1997; Ferguson, 2008).

Developing a working partnership with parents of NG children is vital to the success of the NG provision as parents can provide NG staff with important information about their child upon entry in the NG and also they can support the NG with their own resources (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007). However, despite the importance of nurturing parental involvement with the families of children placed in the NG, ‘the notion of parental involvement seems to be hazy in practice’ (Rautenbach, 2010 p. 206). Reviewing three papers (Binnie & Allen, 2008; Cooper and Lovey, 1999; and Gerrand, 2006) Rautenbach (2010) questioned whether fostering parental involvement is a key issue for NGs.

Considering the existing research, Rautenbach (2010) explored how NG staff foster partnership relationships with parents and what the impact is of such a partnership on parents. Her case study revealed that different forms of communication systems and NG staff's positive attitudes allowed positive relationships between NG staff and parents of NG children to flourish. As a consequence, parents felt respected, understood and confident in seeking support, more able to apply NG practices at home and better able to understand their child's strengths and difficulties.

According to Bishop and Swain (2000b), another factor that, may impact on the difficulty of NG staff working in partnership with parents of NG children is related to the problematic and loosely defined meaning of 'partnership'. In their study, Bishop and Swain (2000b) showed how teachers were perceived as the 'experts' who own the knowledge and skills and the parents as the untapped resource for helping in the teaching of the child. This shows that the influence is largely in one direction, from school to home- something that is perceived as problematic.

Armstrong (1995) states that partnership implies some sort of cooperation, mutual respect, sharing of information and knowledge and influence. As mentioned above the call for partnership is set out in current policy guidance. Despite the importance of partnership with parents it seems that NGs find it difficult to incorporate the values espoused by Armstrong (1995) in their practice. Cunningham and Davis (1985) identify three models of professionals working in partnership in different ways. First, the 'expert model' is a model where professionals exercise control over intervention and parents are the passive recipients of advice and remain dependent on professionals. Second, is the 'transplant model' where the skills and expertise of professionals are transplanted to the parents. Third, is the 'consumer model' which allows for a more equal partnership as it acknowledges parents for the unique knowledge of their child's needs.

According to Rautenbach (2010), NGs operate largely on the transplant model. This model has been criticized by Cunningham and Davis (1985). They argue that, as the professionals retain control, this cannot be regarded as full partnership. Another criticism is that, within the transplant model, there is a tendency to regard all parents as a

homogeneous group without taking into account that parents differ with respect to resources, culture, priorities, support network and values (Dale, 1996; Peshawaria et al., 1998). It is also possible, that by adopting this model, there is a risk of parents feeling pressurised to conform to professionals' expectations.

These criticisms draw attention to the need for NG staff to perceive parents as equal partners in their children's education. Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2008) argue 'those professionals who engage with parents as guides, experts on their children who can identify the skills as well as the deficits, are trusted and well received (p. 645). However, parents need to have effective communication and partnership not only with the NG staff but with all of the school staff who work with their children. Lucas (1999) argues, 'There should be some form of home-school contact which includes support for the school ethos and rules and its organisation and curricular requirements such as attendance, punctuality and homework'' (p. 18). There should be arrangements for ongoing contact not just when problems and/or concerns arise. However, while the NG literature underlines the value of parental communication and collaboration, it does not address specifically the possible enablers and barriers of parental involvement in the NG and how their work with parents is extended to the rest of the school.

Partnership between certain schools and parents may be difficult; especially in schools in areas of poverty and deprivation (Yanghee, 2009). Lack of communication and partnership between schools and parents may be due to language barriers (Daniel-White, 2002), parents' low self-esteem (Davies, 1993), parents' low level of education (Stevenson & Baker, 1987) and differences of opinion on child rearing between teachers and parents (Schneider & Lee, 1990). When schools value supportive parents, try to engage uninvolved parents and create a welcoming environment that transcends context, culture and language, then parents may feel more encouraged to get engaged with their children's education and have collaborative relationships with teachers (Caspé & Lopez, 2006; Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

6.3 Summary and Research Questions

The review shows that communication in schools is important in building strong school communities. Although research within NG literature points out that communication between NG and mainstream staff is an important factor for the effectiveness of NGs and for developing nurturing school ethos, the literature does not appear to address specifically the nature of NG-mainstream teacher communication. A focus on the nature (what is communicated, how it is communicated) of communication between NG and mainstream staff could help the identification of barriers and enablers to communication and consequently help schools to address potential problems associated with poor communication and/or draw on examples of effective communication.

Research also indicates that the idea of the ‘expert model’ permeates in education (Davis & Meltzer, 2007). However, NGs as agents for change (Lukas, 1999) can play a critical role in the way the wider school involves parents. Bishop and Swain (2000b) argue that the NG staff should extend their expertise to the wider school in order to have more holistic effects, in relation to their approach to working with parents. Despite this being acknowledged, this area remained unaddressed. Therefore, for Phase 2 the aim of this study is to add to the literature of the NGs by addressing the following three questions:

- What is the nature of communication between NG and mainstream staff?
- What are the enablers and barriers of parental involvement in the NG?
- What are the enablers and barriers of parental involvement in the school?

Chapter 7

Design and method

There are a number of similarities in terms of reporting the epistemological and methodological stances for the two papers. To avoid repetition details are provided only in those places where there are differences. Otherwise the reader is referred to the appropriate page of Paper 1.

7.1 Epistemological and methodological perspectives

Paper 2 employed a qualitative methodological design with an interpretive epistemology. In order to explore outcomes holistically, some data from interviews from Paper 1 was incorporated. For a detailed description of the epistemological perspective, refer to Section 2.1, p. 30.

7.2 Procedure

For a detailed description of procedure, refer to Section 2.2, p. 33.

7.3 Methods

7.3.1 Semi-structured Interviews

While the first part of the SSIs sought to generate information around knowledge and understanding of NGs, benefits and constraints of the NG provision upon the children and the rest of the school, the second part of the interview focused on the relationship between staff and parents, successful elements and particular difficulties. See Appendix 2, p. 126 for an example of the second part of the mainstream teachers' interviews. For a detailed description of this method, refer to Section 2.3.2, p. 35.

7.4 Participants and sampling

The sample consisted of 21 participants. They were: the head teacher; deputy head teacher; two NG teachers; three mainstream teachers; three NG TAs; two mainstream

TAs; three parents whose children attended the NGs (two from KS1 NG and one from KS2 NG); five parents whose children attended the mainstream classes and one mealtime assistant. For a detailed description of participants and sampling, refer to Section 2.4, p. 37.

7.4.1 Information about the school and the NGs

For Information about the school and the NGs, refer to Section 2.4.1, p. 38.

7.5 Data analysis: Thematic analysis

For a description of the data analysis, refer to Sections 2.5 and 2.5.1, p. 39.

7.6 Ethics

Information on ethics is provided in Section 2.6, p. 40.

Chapter 8

Results

Paper 1 explored a number of issues arising from the establishment of two NGs within this school. In Paper 2 interviews been used with key staff and parents to explore some of those themes in greater detail and to answer the research questions outlined in Section 6.3, p. 75. The data analysis produced five super-ordinate themes. These are presented with their sub-ordinate and subthemes in the table in Appendix 25, p 187. Details of the participants were given in Appendix 16, p. 163.

A number of quotations have been included in the results section but the majority of quotations which illuminate the factors in more detail are in Appendix 17, p. 164. Referral to these quotations will provide examples and richer perspective of the issues.

8.1 Quality of Communication

This theme concerns school staff's perceptions about the nature of communication between NG and mainstream teachers.

8.1.1 Communication

8.1.1.1 Sharing Information

Staff's views

Many references were made with regards to the nature of communication between NG and mainstream teachers. Specifically, NG teachers commented on the kind of information they share with mainstream teachers.

Information sharing involved discussions regarding children's initial Boxall Profile findings;

“They share information with us regarding the initial Boxall Profiles of children selected for the NG provision” (NGT1)

However, further assessments using the Boxall profiles were not shared with the mainstream staff;

“We redo them (Boxall Profiles) but we don’t share the findings with the other teachers” (NGT2)

This quotation suggests a lack of communication between NG and mainstream teachers with regards to updated information regarding children’s progress.

Communication also involved discussions around a child’s reintegration in the mainstream class;

“We have discussions with them (mainstream teachers) before a child goes back to their class and we talk about what would fit in for them, what would be the challenges, what would be the positives” (NGT2)

Children’s IEP targets were also shared with the mainstream teachers;

“I inform the mainstream teachers as to what their (NG children’s) IEPs are. Especially, my Year 1s have the same IEP targets on the wall in the mainstream class and they put stickers on it when they are working towards them” (NGT1)

This quotation suggests that the sharing of children’s IEP targets not only helps children in being aware of what they are working towards and in evaluating their progress but also helps the mainstream teachers in monitoring the children’s progress towards their IEP targets.

Information regarding NG children’s IEP targets was shared between KS1 NG staff and mainstream teachers but not between KS2 NG teachers and mainstream teachers. This was because the majority of children from the KS2 NG had only one session in the mainstream classes and it was thought that it was unnecessary at that point to share this kind of information. However, it was noted by NGT2 that “as the time goes up they will have to know about the IEP targets”.

This suggests that there was not an effective exchange of information between KS2 NG and mainstream teachers.

Information sharing also existed when mainstream teachers feed back to the NG teachers regarding children's progress in the mainstream class and in discussions about how they can best support the children;

“If my children are coming back here after an afternoon session I would go to the mainstream class and I would ask the teacher in front of the child how things have gone that afternoon so that they get a chance to see we are communicating. If there is anything that they want to discuss then we would discuss it privately”
(NGT1) (**Quotation #20**)

“I would see for example MT1 and she would say to me “this went very well but this was a real problem” and we talk about why and what we can do about it”
(NGT2)

However, discussions on how children were progressing in the mainstream class were not frequent, especially between KS2 NG staff and mainstream staff;

“However, the feedback is not frequent. I expect the teachers to give some sort of feedback after the end of every lesson as to how it is going. I regard them as part of the team” (NGT2)

This quotation implies that there are some points of dissatisfaction regarding information sharing.

Dissatisfaction was also expressed with regards to the overall communication;

“I am not throwing anybody's fault (sic) but the communication is inadequate”
(NGT2)

8.1.1.2 Sharing practices

Staff's views

Practices employed by NG staff in the nurture class were also shared with mainstream teachers. NG teachers commented on how they assisted the mainstream teachers in relation to behaviour management in the mainstream class.

“We get together with the class teacher. It tends to be the first couple of times they (NG children) go back (mainstream class); I go with them and sort of show the behaviour management I use with that child so that the class teacher is got a chance to see how I respond to certain behaviours. We ... have a meeting and I would go through certain behaviour tendencies that they might not be used to and how I address it.”(NGT1) (**Quotation #21**)

“Before a child goes back, we meet and we talk about what the children need and how they can support them especially when it comes in managing their behaviour” (NGT2)

8.1.1.3 Reasons for poor communication

Staff's views

Opportunities for the teachers to meet and discuss individual children and to engage in joint planning were not regular. This was because they were not formal structures in place;

“...there is not a formalised system between NG and mainstream staff” (NGT2)

Another reason for the small amount of communication and joint planning was perceived to be the lack of time;

“There’s not a huge amount of communication or planning because you’re so busy in school. I’d say we communicate as much as you would with another class in the school.” (MT3)

As mentioned in Paper 1 other reasons for the poor communication were mainstream teachers' negative perceptions of the NGs and vague understanding of the NG principles and practice.

8.1.1.4 Impact of the poor communication and poor understandings on NG staff

Staff's views

The reasons above contributed to NG staff feeling isolated within the school and is reflected in the following comments:

“...because of the way some teachers perceive these units it can be isolating”
(NGT1)

“...it is secluded on its own. Other teachers don't come in, because they don't have time but again...They think that this is a class just for naughty children. It's a bit isolating.” (NGTA1)

These reasons created tensions between NG and mainstream staff;

“They (mainstream staff) have a different perspective of it (NG). They (mainstream staff) think that the NGs are for naughty children. There is some communication but not much. Unfortunately, there is tension between teachers”
(SM1)

Tensions associated with the feelings of mainstream teachers regarding the children's placement in NGs were also expressed;

“...there is a feeling that “oh does that have to happen to those children” rather than what I would hope is “oh that's a good chance for those children to go in the NG” (NGT2)

However, as mentioned in Paper 1, attempts have been made to change staff's perceptions of NGs and therefore improve the communication between NG and mainstream staff.

8.2 NG enablers

8.2.1 Communication

8.2.1.1 Impact on parents of NG children

Staff's views

Many references were made to the benefits of the open communication between parents and NG staff upon parents. Specifically, it was commented that having an open communication helped parents to feel acknowledged and also relieved that they have someone who can support them.

“The teacher (NGT1) speaks to parents in depth everyday. They might have a cup of tea and they talk how they are at home. They feel listened to” (NGTA2)

It was also commented that ongoing communication between KS1 NG staff and parents improved their relationship and helped parents in becoming confident in expressing concerns to KS1 NG staff;

“One parent came the other day and told me that she finds things hard at home and that she doesn't think that herself and her partner have been consistent with the child. They know that they can speak to us if something is concerning them and they do. Next step is to sit down altogether and go over a plan with the child as well” (NGT1)

Similarly, NGT2 reported that some parents are appreciative of the informal time devoted to them when they drop off or collect their child and that this ‘arrangement’ helps them “in discussing their concerns, updating us (the staff) about any challenges they had dealing with their child at home or about any family matter that impacted negatively on their child and feeling that they are acknowledged”

However, the above-mentioned benefits were not experienced by all parents whose children were in the KS2 NG;

“Parents of older children are less available and therefore is more difficult to have ongoing communication with all of them” (NGT2)

In addition to face-to-face communication, KS1 NG staff used a system of home-school books to communicate with parents. The books were used to record children’s activities in school, celebrate progress and success for each child and share any concerns or problems with the parents. Likewise parents could write back to share any concerns or ask any questions. This system was noted to be helpful for some parents;

“Due to limited time, some parents find it difficult to discuss with us (KS1 NG staff) about their children on a daily basis. The home-school books help us to exchange information and the parents to share the messages we send them with their children” (NGT1)

Senior management and mainstream staff generally commented that the small size of the NGs allowed for a more supportive relationship to flourish between NG staff and parents.

Parents’ views

All parents whose children were in the NGs expressed their appreciation of the communication they had with the NG staff - they appreciated that they could have an open dialogue with NG staff. They appreciated that there was someone who was able to understand them, listen to them, and reassure them that they are doing the best for their child.

For example, a parent worried about her child starting having some lessons in the mainstream class stated

“the teacher knows that I am a bit anxious but we had a discussion about NC1 reintegration and she reassured me that they will support him in the best way possible. I feel supported” (NGP1)

The same parent also noted that KS1 NG staff helped her in developing a better understanding of the child's true strengths and weaknesses;

“NG staff helped us to find out what his triggers are. There is a high level of staff in there so it's easier for them to see what his strengths and his difficulties are and then talk to us about them” (NGP1)

Daily communication/contact with KS2 NG staff also helped a parent feel less worried;

“I see them everyday. If NGC3 had a bad day I tell them so that they know how to handle him and what to do. I feel less worried because I know that they know what to do” (NGP3) (**Quotation #22**)

8.2.1.2 Share of strategies

Parents' views

One out of three parents also appreciated that there was someone to help them understand how they can support their child at home.

One parent commented that

“Spending time in the KS1 NG one morning and observing how staff supported my child helped me become more knowledgeable about how I can support with my husband NGC1 at home.” (NGP2)

Another parent noted that discussing with NG staff about the strategies used at home helped her feel

“...reassured that some of the things we are doing at home are appropriate”

8.2.1.3 Understanding and support developed good perceptions of NG staff

Parents' views

The parents' perceptions of NG staff are also reflected in the following comments:

“And this is where I personally feel that nurture is absolutely fantastic, but it almost is like a five star hotel compared to normality – the norm. The teacher is fantastic” (NGP1)

‘I have got lots of respect for them and having worked in the past with some very challenging pupils I know how draining and tiring it can be but also how rewarding. And what I really like is that they just seem to genuinely like and care about the kids in their group as individuals. They are really understanding and supportive not only for the children but for the families as well’ (NGP2)

“...they don’t look the individual children and families as statistics. They look at us as we are. And I am thankful for that. I certainly found it very supportive” (NGP2)

“The support is amazing. The TA who is working with NGC3 is amazing, absolutely amazing” (NGP3)

8.3 NG barriers

8.3.1 Challenges to involvement in the NGs

8.3.1.1 Stigma attached

Staff’s views

In addition to the enablers of parental involvement in the NG the staff identified a number of barriers to parental involvement in the NG. One barrier was perceived to be the stigma attached to being considered an inadequate parent;

“...there is stigma to be removed. Some parents have concerns of being perceived as inadequate parents. I think there are sometimes some disadvantages in putting all the children who have difficulties in together” (NGT2)

Similarly, MTA1 commented that “some parents may feel quite stigmatised due to the behaviour of their youngsters”.

Parents' views

Parents' apprehension of being blamed about their child's misbehaviour was also noted by one parent;

“...some of the papers and the research I've read around has not been very good because they tend to focus on the children who are in the NGs haven't had love and support at home and you sort of think “Oh no, this is terrible. This is what they are going to think about us. This might put off some parents from getting involved.” (NGP2)

This quotation suggests that other people's perceptions constitute a barrier to parents of NG children involvement in NGs.

8.4 School enablers

8.4.1 Forms of communication

8.4.1.1 Informal meetings

Staff's views

Different forms of communication were used to communicate with parents and share information about their child.

The principal form of communication was perceived to be informal discussions with the parents when dropping off or collecting their children from school;

“I open my doors 8:45 and let all children in with their parents.... If I need to ask any questions I generally do then and parents can ask me questions or share information with me so that's generally the time to ask. When I let them (children) out in the afternoon that is also another time to ask.” (MT3)
(Quotation #23)

This quotation portrays the opportunity provided for parents to have continuous communication on a daily basis with mainstream staff.

The majority of parents of upper class children (KS2) did not access this opportunity;

“Being an older class parents generally don’t come in, in the morning. The children come to school on their own they go home on their own.” (MT1)

Situations were also created in the morning to encourage parents to talk to senior staff as it was recognised that only by trying to build a relationship and trust can the school ‘win’ some parents;

“My door is always open and there is a reason for that and I am outside in the morning if parents want to catch me and tell me something. It’s very difficult for parents to phone up and make an appointment to see....It’s all about keeping talking. We can only engage them (parents) if we manage to build a relationship with them (parents). It’s all about trust. If we haven’t got that they (parents) would not come to family learning because we target them (parents). There is a step before that.” (SM1) (**Quotation #24**)

Opportunities for the parents to share their children’s education were also provided through class and school assemblies and school productions.

Parents’ views

All parents felt welcomed to the school;

“They’re just openThey have got an open policy where if you’ve got a problem you can just come in any time really.” (MP2) (**Quotation #25**)

8.4.1.2 Formal meetings

Staff’s views

Upper class teachers saw the principal form of communication to be parents’ evenings;

“When we get to year 6 we don’t see the parents very much. We see them at parents’ evenings” (MT1)

Parents' evenings were perceived by mainstream staff as a way to share information with the parents about their children and strategies that can use to support their children;

“...we've all got parents targets for parents' evening.... We do a little sheet telling the parents what we are doing and what the target is. For example, when you are in the car, count with your child from 70 to 101 so they know what we are doing and are able to discuss that. We also have a learning agreement that they see on the first parents evening.... I talk through the different forms of support for them, so there'll be the teacher, the class, the family within that and talk through their role, encouraging their children, supporting them with their homework, praising the things they've done well, ensuring they are happy. ... then the learning agreement is then reviewed at the end of the year...” (MT3)

(Quotation #26)

Parents' views

Formal meetings were regarded important as they provided the opportunity to parents to meet with teachers and find out the children's progress.

8.4.1.3 Reports

Staff's views

Annual reports as a means of communicating children's academic progress as well as child's involvement in other school activities were also provided to parents at the end of the year;

“We do it once a year and it gives the children's levels... Then we say if they are achieving their Y2 expectation or above or below and at the end we write a general comment about the child and what type of child they are, what they've taken part in, what they've done really well in.” (MT3) **(Quotation #27)**

Parents' views

While these reports were generally regarded by parents as containing vital information, one parent expressed the desire to have more frequent feedback about her child's progress;

“It's helpful to have these reports but I think as parents we could just benefit from a weekly written report, like have a home book or something, where the teacher could write in “Had a good week” or “Been a bit wobbly” or just there's a little bit more written communication between parents and teachers” (MP2)

8.4.1.4 Newsletters

Staff's views

Information about past and forthcoming events and activities that occur at the school was provided to parents every term through newsletters.

This form of communication was perceived by MT2 as a way for parents to “find out what is happening in school and hopefully become encouraged in participating in the different new activities offered by school”.

Parents' views

Whilst the majority of parents found the newsletters informative, one parent considered newsletters not to be a good enabler of parental involvement in school;

“...newsletters do not provide pressing information and I think none of them (parents) read them. I don't have the time to read them either” (MP3)

8.4.1.5 Phone calls

Staff's views

This form of communication was used by teachers to arrange a meeting with parents or notify them of any immediate issues or problems concerning their child;

“When I need to arrange a meeting I call them. I speak to the ones I need to about positive and negative things. Some parents want to be informed as soon as something happens in school” (MT1)

Parents’ views

All parents found phone calls an effective way of communicating but the majority commented that, given a choice they would prefer to see the teacher in person rather than ringing up.

8.4.2 Positive attitude

Staff’s views

Many references were made about mainstream staff’s attitudes towards parents. A teacher commented on the importance of displaying a positive attitude irrespective of the parent’s emotional state;

“Years ago a parent came to school shouting “I fed up this school” and I said “Clearly you are upset. Not with me but you are upset. Have a bit of calm time and we will sort this out.” and they immediately calm down.” (MT2)

This quotation highlights the importance of being conscious of ‘ways of talking’ to parents.

However, the same teacher went on to mention other staff’s difficulty in handling parents professionally;

“...I think that many teachers and TAs don’t understand enough about how people react to things. They themselves are professional people and it would be unprofessional to yell.”

This quotation suggests that it would be useful for the school to provide training to staff regarding how to talk to ‘difficult’ parents.

A positive attitude towards parents was also seen by making arrangements for crisis communication;

“I set aside a regular time to meet with a parent to discuss about her child. Her child is not terribly settled and she initiated that and wanted to talk about what is going on.” (MT1)

Parents’ views

Understanding personal circumstances and supporting parents was perceived as another way of displaying positive attitude towards parents;

“It is a supportive place and especially in my case – I’m a single parent and I work during the time when MC1 is at school, the teacher’s always agreed to keep him in the school and I collect him when I’m ready as they’ll find him little jobs to do.” (MP1) (**Quotation #28**)

8.4.3 Decision making

8.4.3.1 Participation in formal bodies

Staff’s views

Opportunities for parents to participate in formal activities such as the school governing body were also provided. This not only was noted to be enabling some ‘high committed’ parents to give voice to their opinions and participate in school decisions but also it was commented by SCM2 it allows other less willing parents to commit themselves to these formal activities to “express their concerns” to parent governors. One can assume that the availability of parent governors for concerns about different aspects of school life can improve communications between parents and school, reduce any anxieties that parents might have with regards to expressing their concerns to school staff and enable them to become more involved in the school.

Parents’ views

Other formal activities provided for parents included the school PTA. Through the PTA, parents had the opportunity to meet with some teachers and decide how they can best support the school and make a difference for the children. The PTA had a number of roles;

“...we help out on Sports day, do a bit of fundraising, we sort things out you know for the Christmas day and we are selling sweets and biscuits.” (MP1)

Also the PTA was seen by some parents as a way to discuss their needs and concerns;

“Sometimes parents if it’s something they’re not happy with or something they don’t want to talk to a Head Teacher about or their child’s class teacher.... they talk to someone from the PTA and filter it through to the teacher” (MP1)

(Quotation #29)

This quotation suggests that some parents see the PTA meetings as an opportunity to discuss and pass their concerns to the appropriate person.

8.4.3.2 Engagement in informal school decisions

Staff’s views

Opportunities for parents to participate in informal school decisions such as school lunches were also provided;

“...over the last term we have invited in the parents in to come and sample the school dinner with their children and we gave a questionnaire to all the parents that came...” (SM1)

8.4.4 Community-school relations

8.4.4.1 Out-of-school opportunities

Staff’s views

Many parents have been described as uninvolved because of socio-cultural barriers. These are discussed under the socio-cultural barriers in Section 8.5.2, p.93. However, these barriers have been acknowledged by the school and attempts have been made to use creative ways of establishing ties with the community members;

“I chair the community association and I have a lot of dealings with families and I work amongst the agencies. The plan of the community association is to get things going to try and help people so we’ve got things structured. At the moment we’re going to be using the Children’s Centre, so we will have a music group running one night a week. We are planning to have an art group going as well. You know, so it’s all about trying to promote the community together – get them together and helping each other.....”(SCM3) (**Quotation #30**)

8.4.4.2 Volunteering

Staff’s views

Parental involvement was also fostered in school through opportunities to volunteer and make contributions to the environment and functions of the school;

“A small number of willing helpers help children to read, help with forest school...” (SM1)

Some parents help with sports day - they join in and help on the stalls you know selling cakes and raffles and things like that. And some help with the school disco every term” (MTA2)

Parents’ views

All parents perceived the school as open for parents to volunteer and help out.

8.4.4.3 Learning opportunities

Staff’s views

The provision of adult learning opportunities was perceived as another enabler of parental involvement in school;

“Every Wednesday we have a programme for family learning which is a programme which we run for literacy and numeracy for parents. And currently running in the Family Centre we have an Incredible Years parenting class. So we have two ongoing learning programmes that support parents. We also have an NVQ programme that some parents make access of so they can begin to develop skills for family learning which takes them to level 2 NVQ.... So for some parents it’s quite a big thing.” (SM2) (**Quotation #31**)

Parents’ views

Whilst all parents were aware of the range of learning opportunities provided by the school, only one parent commented on the effectiveness of some of these opportunities on parents;

“I do literacy and numeracy. It’s a 10 week course. It’s good. It gives you an understanding of how to help the children at home” (NGP3)

8.5 School Barriers

8.5.1 Attitudinal barriers

Staff’s views

Parents’ attitudes were considered to be the principal barrier of parental involvement in the school. The main reason was considered to be the attitude that their children’s education and behaviour is the teachers’ obligation;

“...they (parents) think it’s the school who will sort it “It’s got nothing to do with me, it’s just the way they (children) are”. I think they (parents) just think that’s it’s the teacher’s obligation to sort them out.” (MT2)

Parents’ views

Similarly to staff’s views, one parent commented;

“They (parents) think it’s the school’s responsibility to teach them (children) rules and right and wrong and to educate them (children).” (MP2)

Another reason linked with this attitude was considered to be parents’ bad experience of school;

“Very often it is because sometimes I hear people talk with each other outside “I’m glad to be out of school!” you know “I hated the place” their own school experience wasn’t very good.” (MP1) (**Quotation #32**)

Some parents’ preoccupation with their social life and therefore laziness to get involved in schooling was also considered as a barrier;

“Laziness. Because like my sister in law she’s never worked ... and she’s been married to my brother for 21 years. Neither of them work and she’s never had anything to do with the school. So seeing it from people I know, I think a lot of it is laziness - that they just don’t want to. They only care about their own social life.” (MP3) (**Quotation #33**)

8.5.2 Socio-cultural barriers

Staff’s views

A number of socio-cultural factors were identified as barriers of parental involvement as the following quote illustrates;

“The norm in their (parents’) households is different and there are lots of social issues, lots of deprivation factors that many of these households are affecting and the quality of relationships, experiences, financial issues, family make up, extended families, young carers. It’s a complex social area for many of these families and I think that starts to mitigate against how much parents can get involved or want to get involved” (SM2).

This quotation implies that families in the area are less likely to be involved in school activities and/or children’s education because of the social problems and levels of deprivation they suffer.

Parents' views

Parents' lack of adequate education was also regarded as a barrier to involvement in school;

“... some parents aren't as educated as they could be and that prevents them getting involved in their children's schooling” (MP2)

8.5.3 Resource Barriers

Staff's views

Lack of time was also named as an explanation for parents' lack of involvement in school during the school hours/day;

“...there are many sessions that take place during the day but most parents work and they find it difficult to attend” (NGT1)

Parents' views

Similarly parents commented:

“Because I work I've never had the time to get involved with the school during the day” (MP3)

“...most parents they don't like to make any long-term commitment so they wouldn't join any groups in the school because they say “Oh well if I come once I have to come every week and I can't do that. I don't have the time” (MP1)

8.5.4 Communication Barriers

Staff's views

The data revealed that there is room for improving the communication between parents and teachers as it was recognised that the size of the classes affects the teachers' ability to communicate effectively with the parents. For example, referring to the differences between NG and mainstream classes with regards to their size, SM2 reported the following:

“The size of the classroom is an issue. You couldn’t do what you do in a NG of 12 in a class of 31. The NG teachers know all parents whose children are in the NG but that personal relationship is impossible in the mainstream class.”

Communication breakdown between parents and teachers was also perceived in terms of the children not passing on the information to their parents;

“... part of our communication breakdown is when the piece of paper we sent with the child doesn’t reach at home. And parents don’t know about various trips, cancellations of any clubs, notification that we are sending newsletters at home and other things” (SM1)

However, the school is hoping to combat this problem by enforcing a messaging system in order to improve and regulate communication between the parents and the school;

“We are hoping to get one of these texts systems so that all the day to day messages can be done over texts from the office” (SM1)

Some parents' lack of English language proficiency was regarded as an additional problem to parent-teacher communication;

“We’ve got some parents who don’t speak English - it’s quite difficult for them to communicate with the school.” (MTA2)

Chapter 9

Discussion

This section interprets Paper 2's findings. It is organised according to the research questions for clarity.

9.1 What is the nature of communication between teaching staff?

It was evident from the analysis of the interviews that while some communication existed between NG and mainstream staff there were subtle difficulties involved in creating a collaborative partnership work with regards to sharing information with each other. According to staff reports, communication existed between NG and mainstream staff in the form of sharing initial Boxall Profile findings, discussing around a child's reintegration in the mainstream class, sharing children's IEP targets, feeding back children's progress in the mainstream class and discussing about how they can best support the children in the mainstream class as well as sharing strategies in relation to behaviour management. The latter finding contrasts Cooper and Tiknaz's (2005) study which reported mainstream staff perceiving the communication with the NG staff to be mainly in the form of reporting what has happened in the mainstream class and how the NG child coped in the class. It is noticeable that the majority of the quotations regarding the nature of communication between NG and mainstream staff came from the NG staff. A tentative interpretation is that, although mainstream staff made some comments, they did not say very much and this may well indicate a lack of involvement and engagement with the NG and the children within the NG – a case of out of sight, out of mind.

The exchange of information seemed to be lacking in quality as further assessments of Boxall Profiles were not shared and joint planning was not regular. Also children's IEP targets were solely shared between KS1 NG and mainstream staff and the communication between KS2NG and mainstream staff regarding children's' progress in the mainstream class was infrequent. This highlights that the communication was better between KS1NG and mainstream staff compared with KS2 NG and mainstream staff. A tentative explanation for the variation in the communication between the two NGs with the

mainstream staff is that upper level mainstream teachers may have progressed to other positions with more responsibility within the school and this may have made communication between them and NG staff more difficult in terms of devoting time for discussions with the NG staff.

The lack of effective communication amongst the other reasons mentioned in Paper 1 created tension between NG and mainstream staff and contributed to NG staff feeling isolated within the school. The latter concurs with Sanders (2007) finding who reported that one of the challenges of the intervention was the isolation of the NG staff within the school. This shows that the NG provision was not a valued resource in the whole school (Bennathan, 1997). Even if attempts have been made to educate the mainstream staff about the role of NG provision, this study draws attention to the need of schools to give better consideration to the challenges experienced by NG staff before embarking on this approach.

9.2 What are the enablers and barriers of parental involvement in the NG?

The principal enabler of parental involvement in the NG was reported to be the open communication between NG staff and parents. It was revealed from the analysis of interviews that the communication between parents and NGs' staff was intense as it was reported that there was an open, supportive and frequent dialogue between them. This conforms to Rautenbach's (2010) finding. Similar to Rautenbach's study, the parents who participated in the present study volunteered therefore the researcher cannot infer that the overall communication between all parents and NG staff was good.

Communication between NG staff and parents was facilitated through a variety of channels; verbal, written and visual. The different channels of communication were exploited at different times for different purposes. The use of multiple and different communication techniques coincides with Russell and Granville's (2005) study which argued that providing different forms of communication enables parents to choose which is the most effective for them and therefore increase their involvement in their children's schooling. Parents felt listened to, understood and reassured by the NG staff. The results

also revealed that this kind of communication strengthened the parents' understanding of their children's strengths and weaknesses and helped them understand how they can support their child at home. Other enablers of parental involvement have been identified. These will be discussed in the next research question.

Does this close relationship between NG staff and parents of NG children exist because of the size of the group or in the way both groups (NG staff and parents of NG children) are 'forced' to work closely together? NG staff feel peripheral to the main work of the school and parents of NG children feel that mainstream staff perceives them negatively because of the behaviour of their child. If the latter assumption is true then is this making parents of NG children more susceptible to NG staff's influence? The relationship of NG staff with parents resembles the 'transplant model' proposed by Cunningham and Davis (1985). Parents are seen as the 'aide' for providing information regarding their child's behaviour at home and about other complementary elements in the home environment and for helping in the teaching of the child at home whereas staff are seen as the experts responsible for passing their skills and expertise onto parents. To a degree, it also corresponds to Bazyk's (1989) parent participation model which sees professionals as having a prescriptive role with regards to the programmes parents use with their children at home.

9.3 What are the enablers and barriers of parental involvement in the school?

Many factors were indicated by participants as constituting enablers to parental involvement in the school; different forms of communication, community-school relations, involvement of parents in the school's decisions and staff's positive attitudes towards parents. The same communication techniques used by the NG staff, apart from the home-school books and permission of the parents to observe a lesson in the mainstream class, were used between mainstream staff and parents. Some parents suggested that the effectiveness of the communication would be greater on parents if the school could add more forms of communication. This shows that there is a need for improvement of parent-school/teacher communication.

Staff's positive attitudes demonstrate their commitment in fostering family-school relationships. This conforms to Shick's (1997) view who argued that teachers' attitudes towards parents are likely to build partnerships with parents. Staff's positive attitudes towards parents are demonstrated through the way they talk to distraught parents, through the communication with parents during the initial phases of a developing crisis, and through their understanding and support of parents that experience difficult personal circumstances.

The involvement of some parents in the school's decisions shows that the school gives a sense of ownership to parents. It also shows that parents are seen as an important component within the school system. This suggests that the school adopts elements of Cunningham and Davis's (1995) consumer model and Bazyk's (1989) parent-professional collaboration model, whereby parents assume a partnership role with the professionals and are involved in decision making.

It is evident that the school is trying to connect with the neighborhood community by undertaking many activities; by offering out-of-school opportunities, by involving parents as volunteers in school and by providing learning opportunities. By providing these opportunities not only it can help parents to change their attitudes toward education and their understanding of schools and therefore improve their involvement in school (Bauch, 2000) but also it can have an impact on pupil's academic achievement. (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999)

A variety of factors were identified as limiting parents' ability in getting involved in different aspects of their children's education. Most of the factors mentioned lie within parents' attitudes regarding their active involvement in activities in support of their children's education in school; parents' socio-cultural situations such as poverty and lack of adequate education as well as parents' lack of time to involve themselves in school.

With regards to communication, the only school-based factor identified to have a negative impact on the effectiveness of communication between parents and teachers was the size of the mainstream classes. This needs to be addressed as it is partially the responsibility of the school. These findings are somewhat inconsistent with previous

studies that have reported on a number of school-based factors such as teachers' attitudes (i.e. Maïke, 1996; Russell and Granville, 2005). However, while these findings suggest that generally parents are satisfied with the school and what the school provides for them, it's important to remember that the parents participated in the study volunteered and are those who have been nominated by the teachers as "actively involved" in school. The findings should therefore be treated with caution as the perceived barriers might have been different if 'uninvolved' parents were interviewed.

Chapter 10

Conclusions

This chapter provides a summary of conclusion from Paper 1 and Paper 2, outlines the limitations of the study, presents future directions for practice, discusses the implications for educational psychologists (EPs) and outlines recommendations for the school.

10.1 Summary of conclusions from Paper 1 and 2

The findings in Paper1 indicated that even if the extent of gains varied between different participants, the NG intervention has had a positive impact on the children who attended. This adds to the literature of NGs and provides support for the effectiveness of NGs upon student progress.

The findings also indicated a number of opportunity costs attached to the children's placement in NGs. While children's severe behaviour difficulties were identified as one cause of isolation in the sense that they impacted the process of their reintegration in the mainstream class, many school factors contributed to children's isolation within the school. Relating this to the inclusion-exclusion debate outlined by Bennathan and Boxall (2000) one may argue that the NGs in this study do not contribute to the sort of inclusion that benefits the children in terms of their sense of belonging in the school, which is recognised as an important ingredient for children at risk of academic failure (Wang, Haertel & Walberg; 1998) and for children at risk for both internalising and externalising problems (Newman, Lohman & Newman, 2007). This highlights therefore that, given the NG children's difficulties, it is important for the school to support children's development by nurturing their sense of belonging in school.

It was also revealed that, even if the NG provision contributed to positive developments within the school, only one participant considered the NG provision as providing the school with opportunities to facilitate a more nurturing environment. This shows that the school has not embraced many of the NG's practices and principles of effective nurturing

processes. In addition as the majority of disadvantages identified were school based such as the school's 'failure' to make the NGs as integral parts of the school and therefore strengthen people's understanding of the role of NGs and provide an accepting atmosphere for the NG children, one may argue that the NGs operate as an 'add on' to the school rather than as a part of the school. As these were acknowledged it is hoped that the school will fully integrate the work of the NGs into their wider approach to meeting all children's needs.

In Paper 2, it was evident that even if there was some communication between NG and mainstream staff, there was not consistent updating and sharing of information and regular joint planning. The lack of quality communication was identified as a cause of NG's staff isolation within the school.

Developing a collaborative relationship and effective communication with parents was seen as the most important enabler for parental involvement not only in the NGs but also in the school. However, even if arrangements for ongoing contact with parents have been in place there was a more structured communication and a more supportive relationship between the NGs and parents compared to the school and parents. The size of the NGs and the variety of forms of communication used to share information allowed this relationship between NG and parents to flourish. However, in saying that, all the parents that participated in the study were appreciative of the communication they had with the school staff, yet the suggestions made by the mainstream parents indicate that there is room for improvement.

Good practice was also demonstrated through the school's attempts to establish ties with community members by the involvement of parents in the school's decisions and staff's positive attitudes towards parents. However, as a number of factors have been identified limiting parents' ability to get involve in school, despite most of these being attributed to lie within parents' individual circumstances, this work shows that there are steps that the school can take to overcome perceived barriers and encourage wider participation by parents in school.

To conclude, while both papers demonstrate a number of examples that suggest that there is a nurturing focus across the school, the school itself could be described as nurturing when the NGs are run in the ways recommended, when the work of the NGs become fully integrated into the school's wider approach to meeting the needs of all children, when all staff feel nurtured and supportive towards each other and when a more effective communication and partnership is fostered with all parents.

10.2 Limitations of the study

There are several limitations to the study that deserve mention. Although the case study technique employed in this study helped in understanding the role of the NG provision within the school, its impact upon the school and some of the conditions necessary for the school to be described as nurturing, the results must be interpreted with caution. Even if triangulation, the collection of data using a mixture of methods, has been sought to ensure construct validity (Yin, 2009), the researcher did not use the member checking technique; another approach that was argued by Golby (1994) to increase the construct validity of case studies. Member checking method is the procedure '...whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). Further limitations involve the issue of internal validity. Even if it was concluded that the NG intervention has had a positive impact on the children who attended the NG in terms of their SEB functioning and academic development, other factors may have been the cause of their improvement; factors that may have not been considered by the researcher. According to Yin (2009), it is difficult to conclude casual relationships on the basis of a case study design. Incorrectly making an inference that there is a casual relationship between NG intervention and NG children's improved SEB functioning and academic development without considering other possible causes poses a threat to validity (Yin, 2009) Also, according to Yin (2009) explanatory case studies strengthen the internal validity of the results by using the pattern-matching technique. Pattern matching is a technique used to find out whether an empirically based pattern coincides with a predicted one (Yin, 2009). The predicted patterns refer to the theoretical propositions which are posed at the outset of the study (Yin, 2009). In this study,

thematic analysis was used as the analytic technique. Thematic analysis helped in identifying themes presented through the interview data. However, the credibility of the results can be subject to criticism as this technique does not have ‘particular kudos as an analytic method’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 97). The internal validity would have been enhanced if pattern matching analysis instead of thematic analysis was used as this is one of the most desirable analyses when doing case studies (Yin, 2009). Paper 1 can also be criticised in relation to its external validity. Even if the aim of the case study was not to claim generalisation of findings but enrich schools’ understanding about the impact of the NGs, the results would generalise beyond the specific case being studied if they were generalised to a specific theory (Yin, 2009; Miller & Brewer, 2003). Finally, though reliability was addressed using low inference descriptors and steps of data collection were made explicit, reliability would be enhanced if a case protocol (an outline of the procedures and the research instruments that are used to collect data during the research project) was produced.

Observer bias comprises another threat to the credibility of findings in Paper 1; observations were conducted solely by one researcher. The credibility of findings would be increased if the interpretations of observations were dependent on more than one observer through a process of triangulation, though this may have produced greater interference with the natural situation. It is also recognised that the Boxall Profile scores may be subject to criticism as more than one interpreter administered the profile in the KS2 NG during the study. In addition, as the reliability and validity of the Boxall Profile for use with children over 8 years of age has not been evaluated yet, the Boxall Profile scores of children from Year 5 and Year 6 (children aged 9-11) in the KS2 NG can be subject to a further criticism.

With regards to the 2nd paper, the fact that, due to time constraints, the paper has relied heavily on SSIs and the data was not triangulated with observations poses a potential threat to the credibility of findings. As Woods (1986) argues, when interviews are accompanied with observations then there is better credibility of the findings as the construct validity is increased.

In addition, even if the researcher's analyses indicated that overall the NG provision had a positive impact upon the children, the fact that children's academic progress was not assessed poses another threat to credibility of findings. The researcher's intentions were to assess NG pupils' academic progress based on NG and mainstream teachers' perception data focusing on progress in the key subjects (English and Mathematics). However, the idea was abandoned owing to difficulties involved in gathering data from the staff involved in this study as even if they were eager to participate, it was difficult to assign more time for this.

Even if the study ought to generate a representative sample to support the findings the fact that parents were recruited through convenient sampling methods makes it difficult to make any claims of representativeness, particularly in Paper 2. A further sampling limitation is that only a small amount of Boxall Profiles could be gathered at commencement and end of study period. The sample might be considered as typical; other children's records with more serious behaviour problems may have yielded different findings.

Also taking into account the effects of research on participants, it can be argued that it was naive on the part of the researcher to ask children to comment on the progress of other children in the school. Although mainstream children will certainly have a view on the matter (the impact of NG upon NG children) and this was of interest to the researcher, not sufficient care was taken to ensure that the investigation did not have consequences which could have been foreseen. In future investigations, the researcher would make sure those children are not placed in this position. In the research investigation, one mainstream child became upset when interviewed. Even if the interview was ceased immediately, the researcher cannot be sure what exactly caused the distress. It may have had nothing to do with the questions asked or, even if special care was taken when interviewing children, it could have been caused directly by the questions. As an ethical researcher, it is important to be as certain as possible that one's actions have not caused any harm. In this case, this certainty is not guaranteed. This is the consequence of not fully considering carefully the ramifications of the questions asked.

In addition, in order to preserve the anonymity of a parent who commented in an unsolicited way about someone else's child, information has been excluded from the research as the parent was concerned that she might be identifiable as the source of the information from contextual factors.

The researcher's own cultural and educational background may have invoked personal bias with regards to fully understanding the NGs and the school's culture and identifying with them.

Although SSIs gave the researcher the flexibility in probing when appropriate to explore topics in greater depth, predetermined questions may have advertently influenced the participants' responses and biased the results.

10.3 Future Directions and Implications for EPs

The study has revealed a number of future research directions and implications for EPs. These are discussed below.

Further research into the challenges of the NG intervention upon NG staff is needed as well as to what is in place in school to support and advise staff on curriculum delivery.

More case studies are needed that aim to give a thorough description of the positive and negative impact of the NG upon the children that attend the NG and upon the school. It would be useful, if in addition to case study tools official school documents such as policy documents, registers, notice books, school handbooks, school brochure, school newspapers and so on could be reviewed in order to find out how they are constructed and how they are used and interpreted. These could be used to help the researcher develop a picture of the school culture.

EPs can play a distinct role in the contribution of the effectiveness of NGs. As Sanders (2007) commented, EPs can be helpful in facilitating the contribution of the NG initiative within the LAs, exchanging information about groups to other LA agencies, getting

involved in the planning of future NGs, providing assistance to NG staff, and contributing to quality assurance. More specifically, this study also highlights how EPs can be instrumental in improving the effectiveness of NGs and in bringing change in the way schools integrate NG's work in the wider approach to meeting the needs of all children.

Firstly, they can act as critical friends to NGs by helping the NG staff to reflect on the work they are doing, questioning some of their assumptions, and evaluating progress. Secondly, by virtue of the psychological and interpersonal skills, EPs have the ability to create change in the attitudes and behaviours of mainstream staff towards NGs. As discussed, some mainstream staff view NG children through a negative lens. EPs can bring a deeper appreciation for the whole child by helping the mainstream staff see NG children as individuals - with varied family and educational histories, competencies, learning styles and preferences rather than as children with behavioural problems. Thirdly, they can critically evaluate the use of those NGs that adhere to the NG principles but are different in structure and/or organisational features from the classic Boxall NGs and they use NG's reputation as a way of keeping children with challenging behaviour excluded from the mainstream classroom. Fourthly, EPs can play a critical role in teaching staff through in-service education how to develop, build and sustain collaborative relationships. Finally, EPs can equip staff to work with parents of some of the most vulnerable children and help them implement parent partnership programmes.

9.4 Recommendations for practice

Through this study the following recommendations are highlighted:

- NG teacher should be part of senior management in school
- Establish joint planning times for mainstream and NG staff
- Establish links with other NGs in locality
- Some of mainstream staff are trained in NG methods in addition to the NG teachers
- Mainstream staff to observe the NG class

- Workshops with parents on how to communicate successfully together
- Implement and follow NG guidelines with fidelity

Chapter 11

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Section 3

Chapter 12

Appendices

Appendix 1: Completed Observation Schedule

Date:	2/3/10	Time:	10:35
Duration:	40 minutes	Pupil:	NGC1
Setting:	KS2NG		
Context: (e.g. What is happening around the child? Who are the significant adults and peers? How are they organised?)	Numeracy lesson (revising multiplication times tables) led by NG teacher (NGT2). Other children sat in a circle in front of the teacher. 3 NGTAs sit behind the children. Unstructured play. NGTAs play with the children. Teacher has individual discussions with children.		

Event recording: Tick whenever an event has any of these characteristics. The ticks represent the number of times each time of listed behaviour was observed.

Prosocial Behaviour								Totals
Co-operation: (i.e. listening and working/playing with others, sharing)	√	√	√					
Resolving problem: (i.e. engaging in problem solving)	√	√	√					
Caring: (i.e. concerns of another child's feelings/needs)								
Listening to other's views: (i.e. letting others speak)	√							
Responsiveness: (i.e. Showing interest in what others say, following instructions)	√							
On-task behaviour: (i.e. attending to task, screening out distractions)	√	√						
Other:								
Comments:								
Negative Behaviour								Totals
Fighting/arguing: (i.e. initiating physical/verbal fights)								
Unresponsiveness (i.e. ignoring others)	√							

Event recording continued from previous page:							
Off-task behaviour: (i.e. not attend to task, distracted)	√	√					
Rudeness: (i.e. talking back to teacher)							
Selfishness (i.e. refusing to share, demanding attention)							
Withdrawal/anxiousness (i.e. crying, being alone)	√						
Other:							
Comments:							

General Observations:

NGC1 came back to the NG room after his break time. He sat in the corner table. He looked upset. The TA asked him to join the rest of the class for Maths. The other children were sat in a circle in front of the teacher. NGC1 ignored the TA's instructions. The TA sat next to him. She tried again to convince him to join the rest of the class. He said "No". She explained to him his choices. He said "fine" angrily. He dragged a chair and joined the group. The teacher asked him "What's 4X6 ". He refused to answer. He started swinging on his chair. The TA touched him on his shoulder. He stopped. He then voluntarily answered to the teacher's question "What's 5x6" His teacher was pleased with his answer. She praised him and reminded him to put his hand up next time he knows the answer. He smiled. The teacher then said that they will all play a multiplication bingo game. He showed enthusiasm when the teacher mentioned the game. He was cheering. He said "I'll be the first to cross off all the numbers". He volunteered to hand out the bingo cards. He sat down. The computerized bingo machine started displaying a multiplication question every 30 seconds. He started crossing out the answers. He started getting upset when he saw that other children crossed out more numbers. Another child won the game. He stood up and said that it is not fair because he ended up getting the last bingo card. The teacher explained that they all had equal chances and that it was his decision to hand out the cards. He said that next time he will not volunteer. He sat on the chair quietly.

During free play he went up to a child to play with Legos. He was playing cooperatively with the child. He asked him what he wants to build with the Legos. They were sharing ideas about what to build. They decided to build a fire station. NGC1 said that he will build a fire truck, while the other child said that wants to build the station. After a while the teacher asked him to join her. She asked him how his literacy session was in mainstream class (before break time). He explained that he got angry because he found the task difficult and because his partner was teasing him but he ended up being told off by the teacher. He continued by saying that he found that unfair and because of that he left the class angrily by slamming the door but he

returned after 5 minutes. The teacher asked him to reflect on his behaviour. His teacher was helping him to rate his behaviour and think of ways on how he can improve his behaviour. NGC1 was able to discuss how he feels when he gets angry, what the consequences are of his behaviour on other children, what he could have done differently when he got angry, and what he wants to change about his behaviour. NGC1 was able to spend 8 minutes with the teacher and engage well with her by answering all the questions.

Accompanying Notes:

Event recording documented aspects of pro-social and negative behaviours, interactions and participation of the individuals during the sessions. These were totalled at the end of each observation session. The general observations section of the schedule gives a more detailed description of the behaviours, interactions, engagement and outcomes.

Appendix 2: Mainstream teacher Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Part 1

1. What do you think is the aim of NGs?
2. What do you think is the rationale behind the establishment of the NG?
3. What kind of children do you think are placed in the NG?
4. How do you think NGs differ from other support for children with special needs?
5. Did you have any training about the NGs?
6. How do you think the children are affected by being in the NG?
 - a. Have you observed any progress with regards to NG's children academic achievement?
 - b. Have you observed any progress with regards to NG's children social emotional and behavioural functioning?
 - c. What do you think are the potential issues (disadvantages) for the children in the NG?
 - i. Separation from mainstream peers
 - ii. Isolation of nurture group children
 - iii. Prone to labelling as the 'naughty' children
 - iv. Limited access to the curriculum
7. How do you think the school is affected by having a nurture group?
 - a. What do you think are the benefits of the NG on the school?
 - b. What do you think are the potential issues (disadvantages) of the NG to the school?

Mainstream teacher Semi-Structured Interview Schedule continued:

Part 2

1. What is the nature of the working relationship between yourself and the NG staff?
 - a. Collaboration
 - i. Joint planning (i.e. do you set the children's IEP targets together? Do you liaise with the NG teacher/TA prior to the arrival of the NG child in the class?)
 - ii. Development of joint strategies to maximise support for the NG student (i.e. reintegration to mainstream classroom?)
 - b. Exchange of information
 - i. Share of info about students' needs and academic progress?
 - ii. Sharing of student targets that are set in mainstream class?
 - iii. Development of communication tools (e.g. special logs and notebooks)?
 - c. Informal discussions about their daily observations
 - i. Regular feedback of what is being done in the classroom?
2. What is your relationship with parents?
 - a. How often do you meet with parents? Under what circumstances?
 - b. Do you experience any problems with parents? If yes, what are the problems?
3. What is the nature of parental involvement in your classroom?
 - a. How many parents are involved?
 - b. What kind of involvement?
 - c. In what areas they are involved?
 - d. What kind of parents?
 - e. How come certain parents are not involved at all?
 - f. How come it is this way?
 - g. What kinds of parents are not involved?
4. What do you do in your classroom that encourages parental involvement?
5. What is the nature of parental involvement at this school?
 - a. How many parents are involved?
 - b. What kind of involvement?
 - c. In what areas they are involved?
 - d. What kind of parents?
 - e. How come certain parents are not involved at all?
 - f. How come it is this way?
 - g. What kinds of parents are not involved?

6. What does the school do to encourage parental involvement?
 - a. Other teachers?
 - b. Administrators?
 - c. Policies?
 - d. Structure?
7. What barriers to parental involvement do you see?
8. What would happen to improve the situation?
9. Do you think this school is different from other schools in regards to parental involvement? If so, how come?
10. Has parental involvement changed over time?

Appendix 3: NG children Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

1. What are the things you like best about school?
2. What are some things that you don't like about school?
3. What is your favourite subject?
4. What kinds of things do you like to do with your friends?
5. How do you feel being in the NG?
 - Happy/sad/angry
 - Safe and secure/unsafe
 - Comfortable
 - Isolated-lonely
 - Frustrated
6. What do you like in the NG?
7. What do you dislike in the NG?
8. Why do you think you are in the NG?
 - a. Can you talk about the sorts of things that happened in school that you found difficult?
9. How do you feel when you go back to the mainstream classroom?
 - Happy
 - Sad
 - Frustrated
 - Distracted
10. Is that any different from the way you feel when you are in the NG? If yes, how come?
11. Do you feel supported in the mainstream class?
12. In which setting would you prefer to be?
13. What is your relationship with your friends in the other classrooms?
 - a. Do you play with your mainstream peers?
 - b. How are your mainstream peers towards yourself?

14. What is your relationship with your NG teachers/TAs?
 - a. If there is anything in your mind that concerns you would you tell your teacher?

15. What is your relationship with your mainstream teachers/TAs?
 - a. If there is anything in your mind that concerns you would you tell your teacher?

Appendix 4: Mainstream children Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

1. What are the things you like best about school?
2. What are some things that you don't like about school?
3. What is your favourite subject?
4. What kinds of things do you like to do with your friends?
5. What do you know about the NG?
 - a. Would you like to be part of the NG? Please say why...
 - b. What kind of children do you think are in that classroom?
 - c. What kind of difficulties do you think they experience?
 - d. What's different about the NG? Were you told about the purpose of this classroom? By whom? When?
6. What is your relationship with children that are in the NG classroom?
 - a. How do you feel when these children join your year group?
7. How do you think the children are affected by being in the NG classroom?
 - a. Have you observed any progress with regards to their academic achievement? (Maths, literacy....)
 - b. Have you observed any progress with their behaviour?
8. What can you tell me about playtimes? How do you spend your playtimes?
 - a. Do you have fun during playtimes?
 - b. Do you play with children from the NG?

Appendix 5: Table showing a summary of Braun and Clarke’s (2006) Phases of thematic analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data:	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature.

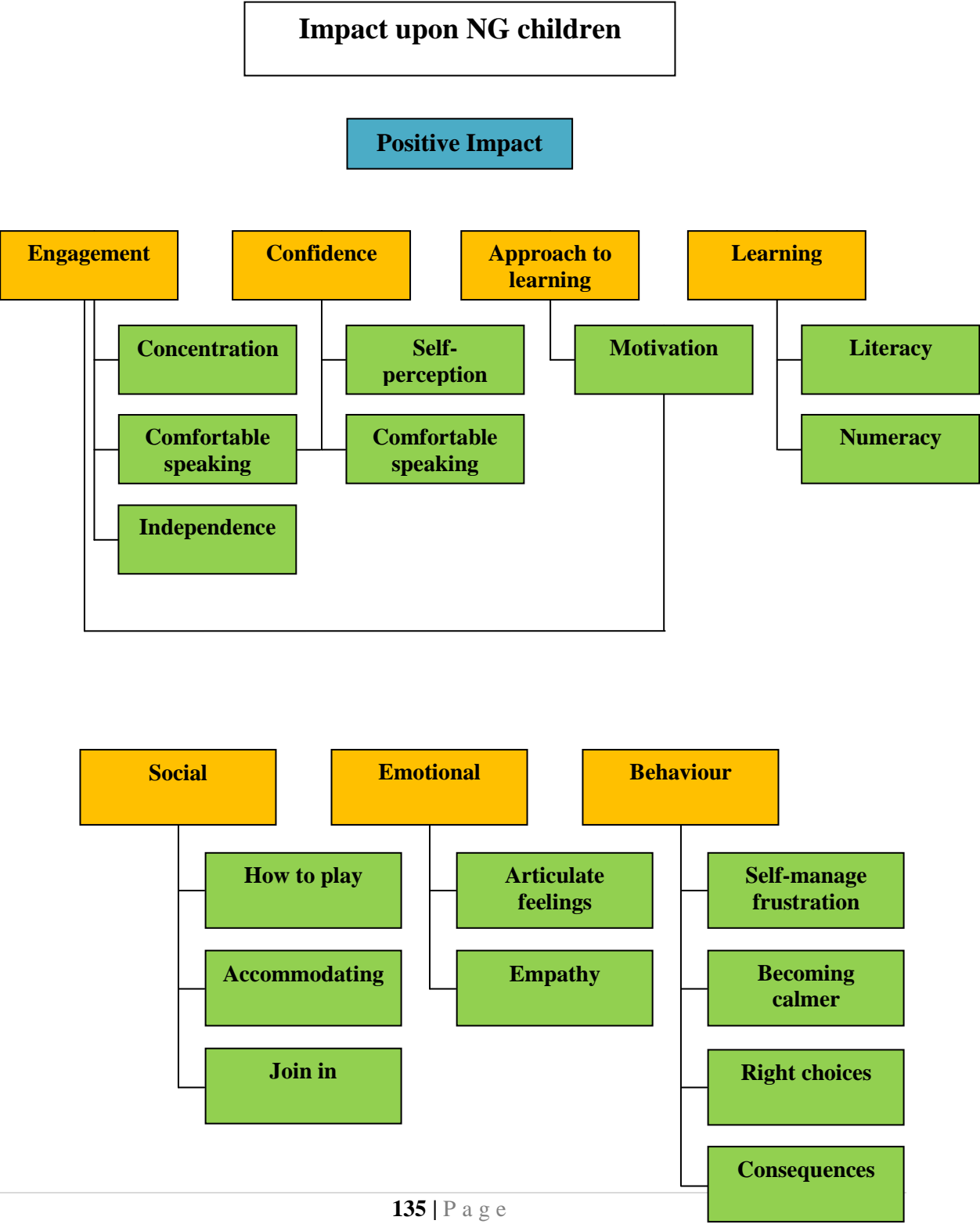
Appendix 6: Table showing an example of the identification of initial codes

Interview Extract (NGT1)	Initial codes
<p>Some of our children are not going to get the help that they would in here. By taking them out it helps the rest of the class because teachers can get on with their teaching. You have got another 29 children that they can learn and this other child that does needs the extra help can still have contact with the mainstream class. If that child is not badly behaved but let's say has a special need which means he behaves in a different way, you don't want the children in that class to resent them in any way or be frightened of them and if they go back and they are introduced in situations that they can cope with, then the rest of the class are going to get to know them positively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NG children less supported in mainstream class • Mainstream teachers can get on with their teaching • Mainstream children get on with their learning • NG children more supported in NG • NG children maintaining link with mainstream class • Positive about the idea of removing NG children-Mainstream children perceiving NG children negatively • Opportunity for mainstream children to get to know NG children in a positive light

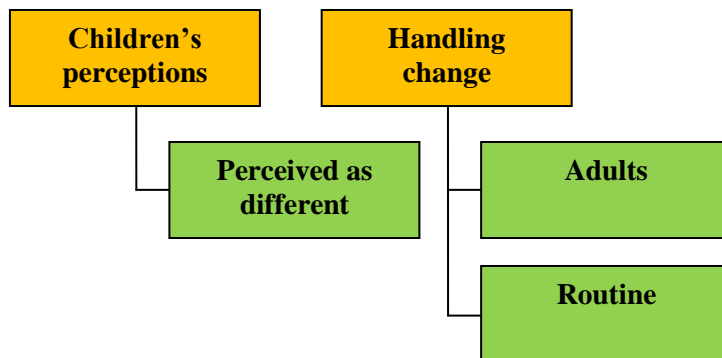
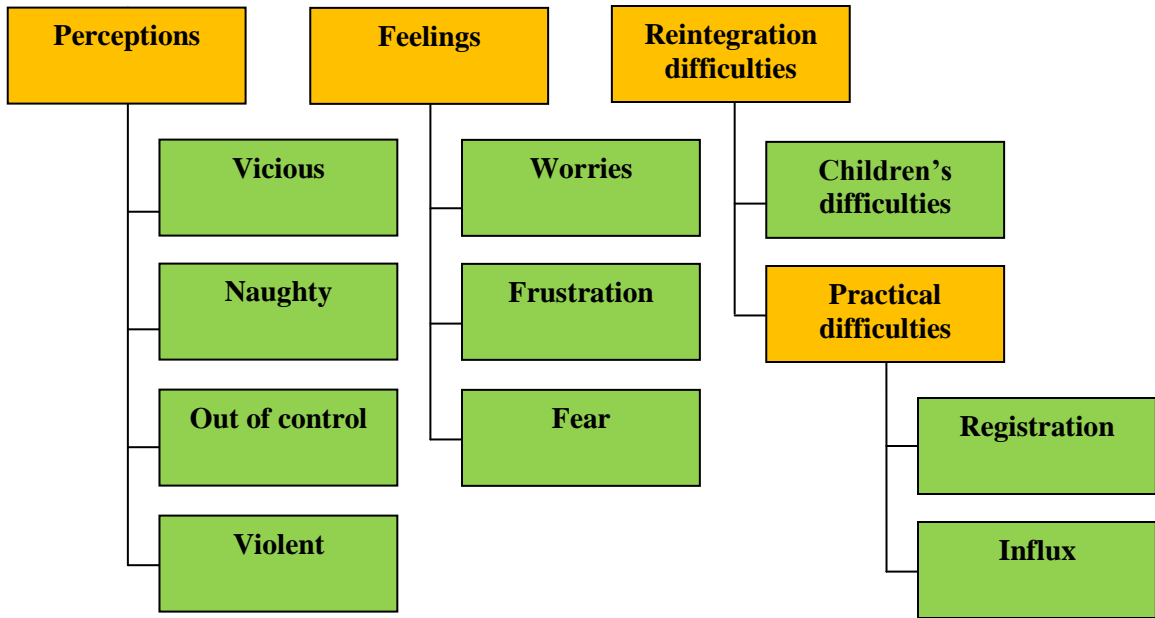
Appendix 7: Table showing data extracts collated together within ‘mainstream teachers can get on with their teaching’ code

Code: Mainstream teachers can get on with their teaching	Extracts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And then the teachers don't want them back because they cause a problem in the class. They spend a lot of time managing their behaviour and they find it difficult get on with their teaching • By taking them out it helps the rest of the class because teachers can get on with their teaching • ...it works for the teachers because they haven't got them in the classes preventing them from teaching • ...the teachers in the mainstream classes have enough leeway that they haven't got those high end really difficult children in their class everyday. • ...the positive is we're very grateful that they're not in the classes. So we're very positive about it because (phew) "I haven't got to teach that child" you know so they're pleased that it's happening because we can't teach as we want when they are in the classes • The main positive impact is that those needy children are not taking all of the teachers' time. We can get on with our teaching without having to manage these needy children. • For me, not having those children in my classroom for 100% of the time allows me to get on and teach • I can get on and teach my average levels • And some of the children that we have now are extremely difficult in their own classes and did cause lots of problems and disrupted the teaching process • I mean there are always children that are a bit noisy or a bit you know, but if it's a real behaviour issue where they need a lot of time – it's taken from the other 20 odd children in the class isn't it? So it does make a difference as teachers can get on with their teaching. • ...those children were taking away from the teaching and learning that was going on in class. Removing them from the classroom help us get on and teach the rest of the children in the class • The classes are not disrupted so much. They can focus on teaching the mainstream children and not on managing one child's behaviour. • It takes the bad behaviour and disruption out of the classroom and teachers can concentrate on teaching the rest of the children in the class.

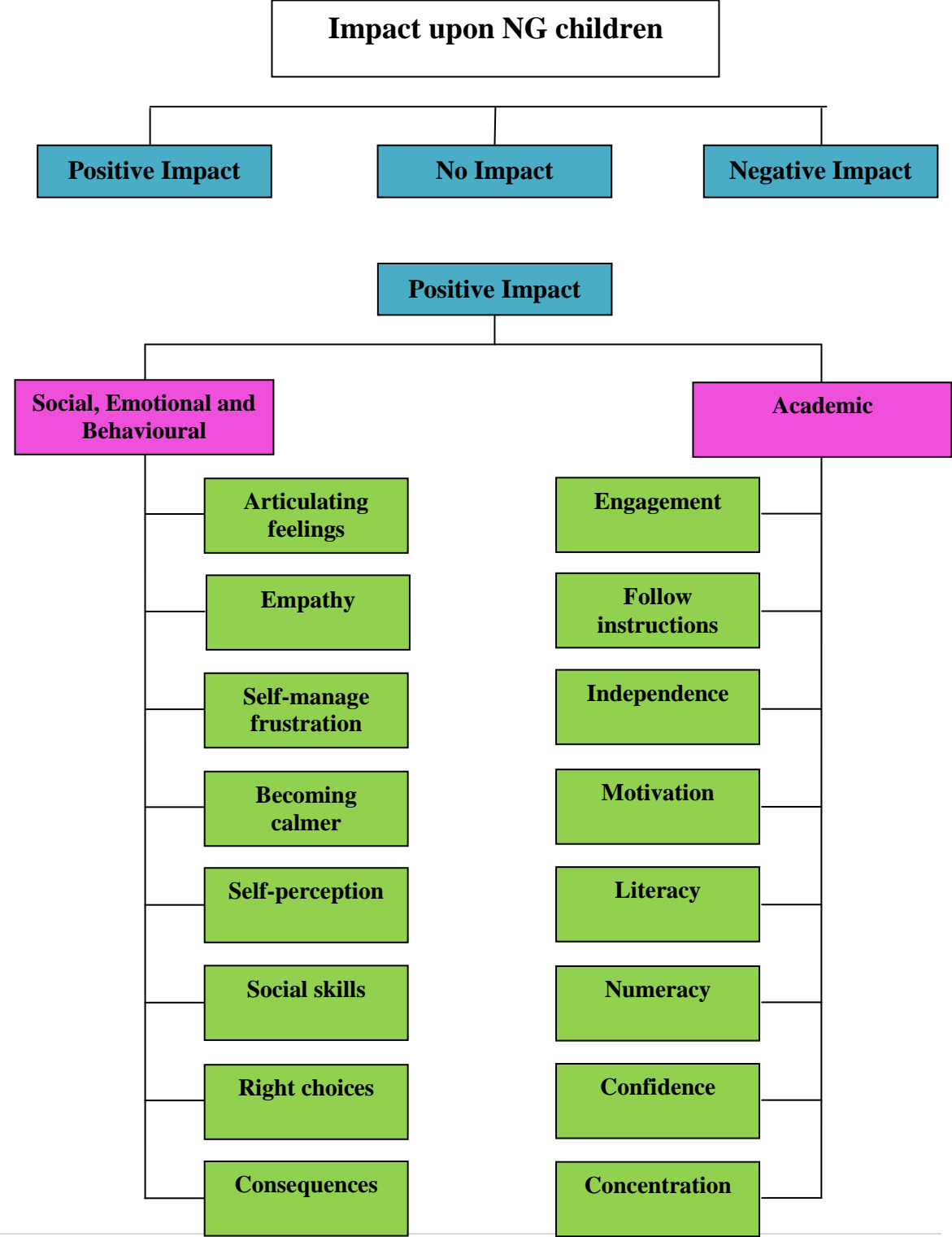
Appendix 8: Figure showing initial thematic map showing seven subthemes that show the positive impact of the NG upon NG children and five subthemes themes that show the negative impact of the NG upon NG children

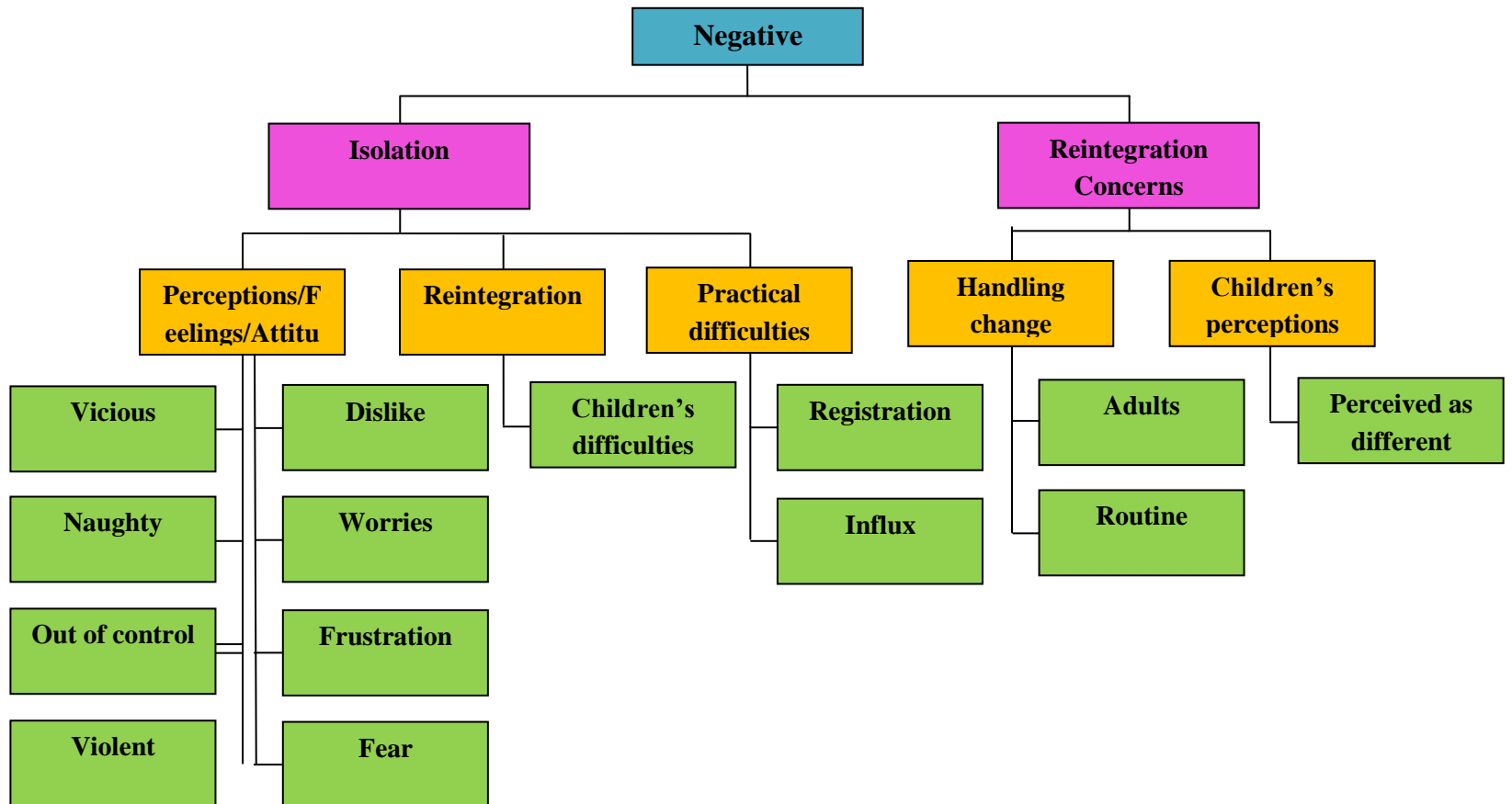


Negative Impact



Appendix 9: Figure showing final thematic map showing four sub-ordinate themes and the result of the re-organisation of codes and subthemes for positive and negative impact of the NG upon NG children





Appendix 10: Table showing themes, codes and their associated meanings

Super-ordinate themes		Sub-ordinate Themes	Sub-themes	Codes
<p>Impact upon NG children Impact of NG upon NG children</p>	<p>Positive Impact Positive impact of the NG upon NG children</p>	<p>Social, emotional, and behavioural NG children’s social, emotional, and behavioural gains</p>		<p>Articulating feelings Improvement in the ability to articulate how one is feeling</p> <p>Empathy Understanding of other children’s emotional states</p> <p>Self-manage frustration Improvement in the ability to manage frustration on their own</p> <p>Becoming calmer Improvement in the ability to become calmer</p> <p>Self-perception A more positive view of oneself</p> <p>Social skills Improvement of social skills</p> <p>Right choices Improvement in the ability to</p>

				<p>make right choices with regards to behaviour</p> <p>Consequences Improvement in the ability to understand the foreseeable consequences of behaviour on self and on others</p>
		<p>Academic</p> <p>NG children's academic gains</p>		<p>Engagement Improvement in the ability to engage in some lessons</p> <p>Follow Instructions Improvement in the ability to follow instructions</p> <p>Independence Improvement in the ability to work on some tasks independently</p> <p>Motivation More motivated to learn and complete tasks</p> <p>Literacy Progress in literacy</p> <p>Numeracy</p>

				<p>Progress in numeracy</p> <p>Confidence Improved confidence in self</p> <p>Concentration Improvement of concentration skills</p>
	<p>Negative Impact Positive impact of the NG upon NG children</p>	<p>Isolation NG children's lack of social interactive behaviour with mainstream teachers and peers</p>	<p>Perceptions/Feelings/Attitudes Mainstream staff's perceptions and feelings of NG children and attitudes towards NG children</p>	<p>Vicious The way NG children were perceived by mainstream staff</p> <p>Naughty The way NG children were perceived by mainstream staff</p> <p>Out of control The way NG children were perceived by mainstream staff</p> <p>Violent The way NG children were perceived by mainstream staff</p> <p>Dislike Mainstream staff attitude towards NG children</p> <p>Worries</p>

				<p>The way mainstream staff feel about NG children</p> <p>Frustration The way mainstream staff feel about NG children</p> <p>Fear The way mainstream staff feel about NG children</p>
			<p>Reintegration Difficulties Difficulties associated with NG children's reintegration in mainstream class</p>	<p>Children's difficulties Difficulties presented by the NG children/Severity of NG children's behaviour difficulties</p>
			<p>Practical Difficulties Difficulties associated with lack of space in the mainstream classes</p>	<p>Registration Difficulties associated with NG children's registration in mainstream classes</p>
				<p>Influx Difficulties presented with the influx of new children in the school</p>

		<p>Reintegration concerns Concerns associated with NG children's reintegration in mainstream class</p>	<p>Difficulties handling change NG children's difficulty adapting to mainstream classroom</p>	<p>Adults Difficulty accepting a change of adults</p>
				<p>Routine Difficulty accepting practical changes in routine</p>
			<p>Children's perceptions Mainstream children's perceptions of NG children</p>	<p>Perceived as different Mainstream children perceiving NG children as different</p>

Appendix 11: Table showing the responses of different groups of participants regarding the positive impact of the NG upon the NG children

Themes	Codes	Staff views	Parents views	Children's views	Others views
Social, emotional, behavioural	Articulating feelings	➤ Use of language to say how they feel	➤ More able to talk about problems	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on
	Empathy	➤ Understanding others' difficulties ➤ Understanding other children's emotional states	➤ More empathetic	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on
	Self-manage frustration	➤ Significant gains in terms of levels of white slips ➤ Perceived as more able to self-manage behaviour	➤ Less frustrated with things ➤ Turn behaviour around ➤ Better able dealing with frustration constructively ➤ No behaviour improvement has been observed	➤ Better in self-managing behaviour ➤ Fewer times getting into trouble for behaviour ➤ Reduced number of behaviour slips ➤ Not as naughty as before	➤ Not commented on
	Becoming calmer	➤ Better able to calm down	➤ Not long lasting tantrums ➤ Quicker to calm down ➤ Take themselves to the calm room ➤ Accept a negative response more calmly ➤ Awareness of behaviour expectations and ability to calm down	➤ Ability to calm down when get angry ➤ No behaviour progress observed	➤ Better able to calm down
	Self-	➤ Perceiving self as	➤ Not commented on	➤ Perceiving self in a	➤ Positive perception of

	perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ different ➤ Starting to have feelings of worthiness 		positive light	one self
Social, emotional, behavioural	Social skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Working cooperatively in groups ➤ Improved turn-taking skills ➤ Better able to sustain friendships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Understanding how to play with other children ➤ More sociable ➤ Less bossy and accommodating 	➤ Getting on with other children on class	➤ Not commented on
	Right choices	➤ Learning not to have tantrums but instead to think of choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Learning to make the right choices ➤ Accepting what is expected with regards to learning ➤ Not persisting on getting own way 	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on
	Consequences	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Acknowledgement of consequences for acting out behaviour ➤ Better understanding of consequences of bad behaviour 	➤ Not commented on
Academic	Engagement	➤ Engaging more with the lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ability to get on with morning work ➤ No impact 	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on
	Follow instructions	➤ Not commented on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ More able to follow instructions ➤ Listening more and following instructions ➤ No impact 	➤ More able to follow instructions	➤ Not commented on
	Independence	➤ More able to do work without help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No impact ➤ Not commented on 	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on
	Motivation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Motivated to learn ➤ No impact 	➤ Motivated to change	➤ Not commented on
	Literacy	➤ Success in literacy lessons	➤ Ability to distinguish the words	➤ Ability to write more things	➤ Improved literacy levels

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Level of writing has improved ➤ Improved literacy attainment levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reading has improved ➤ Came along with literacy ➤ No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Access learning
Academic	Numeracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Able to go back to mainstream for numeracy ➤ Progress in Maths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No impact ➤ Not commented on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ability to reintegrate in mainstream class for Maths ➤ Came along with Maths ➤ No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improved numeracy levels ➤ Access learning
	Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feel more comfortable speaking ➤ Feel more confident ➤ Increased confidence ➤ Confidence in engaging in class orally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Becoming confident with reading ➤ No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Not commented on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Not commented on
	Concentration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Not commented on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No impact ➤ Not commented on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improved listening skills ➤ No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Not commented on

Appendix 12: Table showing the responses of different groups of participants regarding the negative impact of the NG upon the NG children

Themes	Subthemes	Codes	Staff views	Parents views	Children's views	Others views
Isolation	Perceptions/ Feelings/ Attitudes	Vicious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Negative perception -vicious ➤ Swearing ➤ Perceived as disturbed ➤ No behaviour boundaries ➤ Resorting to violence to get what they want 	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on
		Naughty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Negative perception-naughty 	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on
		Out of control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Negative perception-out of control ➤ Reluctance to have creative lessons - tendency to get out of control 	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on
		Violent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Negative perception -violent 	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on
		Dislike	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Negative attitude to being reintegrated into the class ➤ Seen as NG staff's responsibility 	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on
		Worries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Concerns associated with being included in class 	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on

			➤ Worries regarding being in a fit state to participate in class			
Isolation	Perceptions/ Feelings/ Attitudes	Frustration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Frustration having NG children in class ➤ Feeling upset having NG children in class ➤ Resorting to raising voice to NG children 	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on
		Fear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fear having NG children in class ➤ Fear of mainstream teachers swapping with NG teachers ➤ Lack of trust in oneself in controlling the NG class 	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on
	Reintegration	Children's difficulties	➤ NG children's difficulties in being reintegrated back in mainstream class	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on
	Practical Difficulties	Registration	➤ Lack of space in mainstream classrooms to accommodate NG children for registration	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on
		Influx	➤ Interruption of reintegration due to influx of new	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on

			children in school			
Reintegration Concerns	Handling Change	Adults	➤ Children's emotional safety is compromised	➤ Difficulty accepting new other adults	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on
		Routine		➤ Difficulty adapting to a new learning environment ➤ Difficulty accepting practical changes in routine-breakfast	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on
	Children's Perceptions	Perceived as different		➤ Worries regarding mainstream children's perceptions	➤ Not commented on	➤ Not commented on

Accompanying Notes:

The tables show that despite the variation of comments made by different groups of participants, all groups commented on the positive progress made by NG children in their SEB functioning. Consensus in perceptions is observed particularly between staff and parents with regards to their comments on children's SEB and academic gains but discrepancy of perceptions is observed with regards to their perceptions of the negative impact of the NG provision upon NG children. Apart from parents expressing concerns about NG children's difficulties handling change in terms of accepting practical changes in routine and adults and mainstream children's perceptions of NG children's reintegration in the mainstream class, only staff commented on the negative impact of the NG upon NG children. Also, despite of the comments of the majority of parents being positive, some did not perceive any improvements in NG children's academic performance. Whilst the majority of children had made many positive references (one had reported no behaviour progress) with regards to the impact on SEB progress, others (school community members and support professionals), although perceived a positive impact, their comments concentrated solely on the ability of NG children to calm down when they were angry or frustrated and perceive themselves positively. Children's comments on the benefits on the learning, whereas positive, were not

Accompanying Notes (continued from previous page):

unanimous. Others perceived improvements in academic performance in terms of being more able to access the learning and improve the literacy and numeracy levels.

For a more detailed analysis of different participants' views, please refer to the Results Section, p. 39.

Appendix 13: Certificate of Ethical Approval (Note that some changes have been made from the original proposal. These do not affect the cleared ethics status of the research).

STUDENT HIGHER-LEVEL RESEARCH



School of Education and Lifelong Learning

Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS

You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, then have it signed by your supervisor and by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guides.php> and view the School's statement in your handbooks.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter).
DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND

Your name: Anna Papamichael

Your student no: 570027582

Degree/Programme of Study: Doctorate in Educational, Child and Community Psychology

Project Supervisor(s): Andrew Richards and Tim Maxwell

Your email address: ap311@exeter.ac.uk

Tel: 07896360551

Title of your project: The impact of Nurture Group principles and practice on the whole school and on the community

Brief description of your research project:

The provision of Nurture Groups has been recognized as an effective early intervention for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). The high expectations of teachers in the nurture groups can bring an amazing change in the lives of young emotionally disturbed children (DiEE, 1998a). A number of studies explored the effectiveness of nurture groups on student progress

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
last updated: September 2007

and the impact of nurture groups on the whole school in terms of nurture group staff and mainstream staff perceptions and practice. However, in order to provide a deeper understanding on the impact of a nurture group on the whole school and the extent the ethos of inclusiveness can be promoted through the teachers' everyday work, this research study aims to get a more complete picture by carrying out observations in addition to interviews used in previous studies in order to gather 'live' data from naturalistically occurring social situations. Further this study aims to explore the impact of the nurture group upon the community as well as the impact of the whole school upon the community. The involvement of the community is an essential feature of a nurturing school. When efforts are designed to meet the needs of the community setting, there is more support for student learning and involvement from outside the school (Ferguson, 2008). However, despite the importance of the school upon the community, this area remained unaddressed. In addition, the study aims to explore children's and parents' perceptions towards nurture groups. As an illuminative study not only it can add to the literature of nurture groups but it can also identify what promotes or restricts a school from becoming effective for all children. However, it needs to be highlighted that the aim of the study is not to claim generalization of findings but enrich schools' understanding about the impact of the nurture groups based on school staff perceptions and practices. This study can also help educators in other schools to relate to the phenomena that will be explored.

Examination of the abovementioned issues requires an ethnographic approach which allows for extended time in the field in which the researcher can participate in the life of the school and have space for on-going discussion with members of the school community such as school staff and children. In addition, since I am a non-British citizen, I do not have first-hand experience of being educated in the British educational system and similar educational provisions for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties are nonexistent in the Cypriot mainstream schools, the ethnographic stance will help me to acknowledge the cultural differences between the Cypriot and British educational system.

Procedure

This will be a small-scale research project that will take place in a primary school which is situated within the inner area of Exeter. A pilot study will be carried out for two months (June-July 2009) in the primary school. During this time the researcher will volunteer to support the nurture group staff once a week in their everyday activities. This will help the children and nurture group staff feel that they are not 'researched' by a superior agency and it will also help the researcher:

- a. Learn more about the daily life of the nurture group

-
- b. Try different approaches such as interviews and observations on a trial basis
 - c. Refine the data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed
 - d. Establish a feeling of trust and rapport with the school staff, children and parents whose children are in the nurture group. This will in turn improve the researcher's chances of being admitted to the nurture group's /school's culture and reality

The formal study will be carried from September 2009 and will last for approximately three months. During this time the researcher will make regular visits to the school (once a week) with the aim to observe the school community and the wider community in action. Even if some questions emerge from the exploratory phase (pilot study) more interview questions will be developed during the time that the researcher will be makes observations.

The study will be developed based on a three phase data collection and data analysis. The first phase will focus on the impact of the nurture group upon the school in terms of the viewpoints of the different participants involved. This will involve the following series of research questions:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a nurture group?
- What is the nurture group's influence on other classrooms?
- How the whole school is affected by having a nurture group?
- What do nurture group pupils lose when they are separated from their peers?

The second phase will focus on the examination of formal and informal school documents. This will involve the following series of research questions proposed by Hammersley and Atkinson (1983: 142-3):

- 'How are the texts written'
- How are they read?
- Who writes them?
- For what purposes?
- On what occasions?
- What is recorded?
- What is omitted?'
- How are they interpreted?

The third phase will focus on the impact of the nurture group and school upon the community. This will involve the following series of research questions:

- How the school engages families and community?
- What community school programmes exist?
- What are the results of family and community involvement?
- What, if any, are the perceived effects of the nurture group on parents' ways of relating and dealing with their children

This research study will be completed in two stages. The first stage will be based on the first two phases and the second stage will be based on the third phase.

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

- School staff such as mainstream teachers, nurture group staff, and headteacher,
- Parents
- KS1 and KS2 children (primary school aged children)
- People that are part of the school community but not directly part of the teaching staff (e.g. playground supervisor, lunchtime supervisor, school nurse cleaner)
- Outside agencies (such as educational psychologist, health visitors, speech therapists, clinical psychologist, school nurses, occupational therapists, social workers, pediatricians)

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:

Ethnography can involve the exploitation of participants as it often intrudes people's lives (Hammersley, 1998). However, a number of actions will be taken in order to provide the frame of the ethical conduct of the particular study. Participants' physical, psychological and emotional state will be respected at all times during the study. In addition, participants' culture, race, gender, age, religion, socio-economic background and religion will both be respected and protected. The researcher's aim is

to make sure that individuals' rights are not violated and to promote fairness in the interpretation of the data (Woolfson et al., 2007).

Permission to conduct the study will be sought from the school. A letter will be initially sent to the head of school with details of the objectives of the proposed research and a request for permission and support to conduct the study. In conjunction with the head teacher, the consent of the participating teachers will be obtained, and a letter will be sent out to parents explaining the proposed study, obtaining consent for the participation of their children in the research, and requesting their involvement in the research. In addition, verbal consent will be obtained by the children as well as the researcher aims to include the children as active participants in the study and listen to their voices (Farrell, 2007). To ensure that all children understand the process and the nature of the study, a whole-class discussion will follow where the researcher with the teacher, will explain to the children the process and the nature of the study as well as the role of the researcher in it. During interviews, the researcher will ascertain that participants understand the questions. All participants will be ensured confidentiality and the right to withdraw their participation at any time. Furthermore, the names of the participants involved in the study will only be included as pseudonyms.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

The methods that will be used in this particular study are chosen because they are most commonly used in the ethnographic research and because they are believed to be appropriate and relevant in terms of providing more imminent and vivid data that is important in enquiring and understanding the school as a living organism. These methods cannot only be informative but they can also help the researcher build a richer picture and deeper understanding of the participants' beliefs, perceptions and practices. In addition the methods that will be used in this study will help the researcher answer the research question in different ways and from different perspectives. Therefore, observations, interviews, documents and questionnaires are chosen as the methods of data gathering 'that best capture the kind of information sought' (Straus & Corbin, 1990, p.179).

Observations: Participant observation will be employed in order to get an 'inside' view of the nurture group environment. In other words this type of observation will help the researcher collect data by participating as a member of the group while observing the daily life of the nurture group. In theory, this direct participation in the nurture group life not only permits an easy entrance into the social situation by reducing the resistance of the group members but also decreases the extent to which the researcher disturbs the 'natural' situation (Hargreaves, (1967). In addition, by adopting this strategy

the researcher will be able to experience and observe the nurture group's dynamics, interactions, attitudes, quality of learning, and pressures, which (over a long period) cannot be hidden from someone playing an in-group role. Further, the participant observation will be used to contribute in the discussion about the nurture group's impact in the wider school on the whole school environment. Naturalistic observation will also be carried out in order to *grasp the dynamic of natural events as they occur over time and discover things that participants may not feel comfortable discussing in the scheduled interviews* (Cohen, 2007). As Maykut and Morehouse (1994) argue, 'in order to understand any human phenomenon we must investigate it as part of the context within which it lies' (p.68). More specifically, this method will be used to understand patterns of communication in the school and quality of teaching in different settings. Field notes will be used in order to document observations, impressions and reflections.

Interviews: Interviews will be carried out in order to find out what the people's perspectives are on certain issues. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with school staff (such as mainstream teachers, nurture group staff, and headteacher,), parents, children in order to find out what are their perceptions towards the nurture group and whether the theory that underpins nurture groups is applied to the whole school and on the community. Semi-structured interviews have been chosen because although it consists of predetermined questions, there is a considerable freedom in the sequence, in the exact wording of the questions and in the amount of time and attention given to the topic. Unstructured interviews will also be conducted with people that are part of the school community but not directly part of the teaching staff (e.g. playground supervisor, lunchtime supervisor, school nurse cleaner). These will take the form of informal discussions. In some occasions what the researcher understands from the data, may not totally represent the participants' views and intentions, mainly because, the researcher brings different experiences and perspectives in the same issues. Therefore, follow up interviews and comparative methods will be necessary to clarify those understandings and make theoretical connections (Hesse-Biber, 2004; Woods, 1986). The aim of the researcher is to create a non-threatening and enjoyable environment, where the participants will feel confident and comfortable to answer the questions (Cohen, 2007). Field notes will be used in order to record what the interviewees will say, the researcher's impressions of the interviewee's dispositions and their attitudes towards the research and to the researcher in general. When possible the researcher will use audio recording as well. This will be used alongside field notes in order to help the researcher to recapture the fullness and faithfulness of words and idiom and to allow her concentrate on the interviewees' answers (Woods, 1986). The transcripts will be analysed using content NVivo software.

Documents: Documents will be used to provide a more thorough knowledge of the phenomena that will be explored (Charmaz, 2006). Official school documents such as policy documents, registers, notice books, school handbooks, school brochure, school newspapers and so on will be reviewed in order to find out how they are constructed and how they are used and interpreted. Also documents will be used in order to help the researcher develop a picture of the school culture. Therefore, the documents will be examined, not in and of themselves, but rather in the light of the researcher's observation plan. This is because the current research study deals with an ethnographic methodology, not a documentary methodology (Gobo, 2008).

Questionnaire- A questionnaire will be used to survey the views of practitioners outside the school community but involved with the school such as educational psychologists, consultant psychiatrist, health visitors, referral coordinators and so on about the role, function and impact of the nurture upon the school and community. Those professionals interested will be interviewed on a later stage for triangulation purposes.

Data analysis

Data analysis will involve 'organizing, accounting for and explaining the data; in other words making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities' (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007, p. 461).

The data will be analyzed using content analysis. This is a form of analysis that helps to compress the data by classifying words of texts into fewer content categories in order to generate a theory (Weber, 1990). The categories will be devised in advance (pre-ordinate categorization). However, in the case of any emergent theme, the categories will be modified.

Secondary source such as memos can be used in order to aid the analysis process. Memos are forms of written records that include analysis and subjective thoughts about the data, with ideas, reflections, comments, judgments, explanations, considerations, connections, insights and so on (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007). This technique can be used in the initial phase of the study by recording early thoughts and concepts that emerge through the data, up to the final phase of the study. Memos can help the researcher's conceptualize the data, unblock or clarify ideas and to support or amend earlier ideas or final conceptualisations as those emerge during the study progress (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Hesse-Biber, 2004; Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007)

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.):

Recorded interviews and observations will be kept safe

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

This form should now be printed out, signed by you below and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's Research Support Office for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given above and that I undertake in my 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: Anna Papouk date: 17/7/09

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: 09 2010

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature):

Tim Maxwell

date:

17 July 2009

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.

SELL unique approval reference:

D/08/09/69

Signed: Salah Trowan

date:

20/07/2009

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

This form is available from

<http://www.education.ex.ac.uk/students/index.php> then click on On-line documents.

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
last updated: September 2007

Appendix 14: Information Sheet and Consent Form for the Head teacher

Dear Head teacher,

Within the next few months I would like to conduct a study at your school as part of my research thesis for my Doctorate in Educational, Child, and Community Psychology. The research study is titled ‘The impact of Nurture Group principles and practice on the whole school and on the community’ and will be directed by Anna Papamichael under the supervision of Andrew Richards and Tim Maxwell. Before you make a decision about this project, it is important for you to understand what the study will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

A pilot study will be carried out for two months (May-June 2009) in the school. During this time the researcher will volunteer to support the nurture group staff once a week in their everyday activities. This will help the children and nurture group staff feel that they are not ‘researched’ by a superior agency and it will also help the researcher:

- a. Learn more about the daily life of the nurture group
- b. Try different approaches such as interviews and observations on a trial basis
- c. Refine the data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed
- d. Collect data from Boxall Profiles prior to commencing the formal study.
- e. Establish a feeling of trust and rapport with the school staff, children and parents whose children are in the nurture group. This will in turn improve the researcher’s chances of being admitted to the nurture group’s /school’s culture and reality

The formal study was carried from September 2009 and will last for approximately eight months. During this time the researcher will make regular visits to the school (once per week) with the aim to observe the NGs and school community in action. Even if some questions emerge from the exploratory phase (pilot study) more interview questions will be developed during the time that the researcher will be makes observations. Those participants who will express interest in the study will be contacted to arrange a meeting with the researcher at a location convenient for them.

There are two aims. The first aim is to explore the gains and costs that may be associated with the placement of children in the NG and the impact of the NG provision upon the wider

school system. The second aim is to explore the quality of communication between NG and mainstream staff and the enablers and barriers to parental involvement between the NGs and the school.

All the information collected will be confidential. The information collected will be used only for the purpose of the study. No information about individual parents, children or school staff will be made available to anyone. The results of this study will be used as part of my Doctorate in Educational, Child, and Community Psychology.

If you have any questions you would like to ask before replying, do not hesitate to contact by emailing ap311@exeter.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking time to read about this research project.

Anna Papamichael
School of Education and Lifelong Learning
University of Exeter
St Lukes Campus
Heavitree Road
EX 1 2LU
ap311@exeter.ac.uk

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project:

The impact of Nurture Group principles and practice on the whole primary school

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:

Anna Papamichael
School of Education and Lifelong Learning
University of Exeter
St Lukes Campus
Heavitree Road
EX 1 2LU

Please tick box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study.
2. I understand that my participation and I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.
3. I agree to participate in this study.

Appendix 15: Table showing super-ordinate, sub-ordinate and sub themes

<u>SUPER-ORDINATE THEMES</u>		<u>SUB-ORDINATE THEMES</u>	<u>SUB THEMES</u>
3.1 Impact upon NG children	Positive impact	3.1.1 Social, emotional and behavioural gains	
		3.1.2 Academic gains	
	Negative impact	3.1.3 Isolation	3.1.3.1 Perceptions, attitudes, and feelings of NG children 3.1.3.2 Reintegration 3.1.3.3 Practical reasons: Lack of space
		3.1.4 Reintegration concerns	3.1.4.1 Difficulties handing change 3.1.4.2 Other children’s perceptions of NG children
3.2 Impact upon school	Positive impact	3.2.1 Influence on other classrooms	3.2.1.1 Influence on mainstream teachers 3.2.1.2 Influence on mainstream children
		3.2.2 Influence on school’s culture and practices	3.2.2.1 Understanding children’s behaviour 3.2.2.2 Identification of needs 3.2.2.3 Spreading good practice
	Negative impact	3.2.3 Cost	3.2.3.1 Cost of provision
		3.2.4 Perceptions	3.2.4.1 External perceptions of school 3.2.4.2 Internal Perceptions of NG
		3.2.5 Influence on mainstream children	3.2.5.1 Unfairness

Appendix 16: Information about groups of participants

To ensure the anonymity of participants, each participant was assigned a number. Participants were divided into small groups and a prefix has been added before the numeral to identify the different participants:

- Staff' views: Senior management staff (SM), mainstream teachers (MT), mainstream TAs (MTA), NG teachers (NGT), and NG TAs (NGTA).
- Parents' views: parents whose children are in the NG (NGP) and parents whose children are in the mainstream classes (MP)
- Children's views: NG children (NGC) and mainstream children (MC)
- Others' views: School community members (SCM) and support professionals (SP)

In the case of parents and children, the numbers represent related children and parents, for example, parent 1 whose child is in the NG (NGP1) is the parent of NG child 1 (NGC1) and parent 1 whose child is in the mainstream class (MP1) is the parent of mainstream child 1 (MC1). The researcher could interview NG child 4 but not any of his parents. NG TAs consist of one TA working on a full time basis in the NG, and two TAs who had mainstream duties but sometimes supervised NG children during lunch times and during lessons in mainstream classes. However, for the purposes of this study, these TAs were considered to be NG TAs.

Appendix 17: Numbered list of quotations from the transcript that are sourced in the results section

- **Quotation #1:** “One of the children had a really kick off on Friday afternoon very publicly, had to be restrained and the first thing two other children from the NG came up and said is ‘Are you all right?’ And he has been quite horrible to them, but they can’t just see the label. They showed an understanding because they know that that’s happened to them or it happened to other pupils and they don’t actually say ‘you are horrible’, they say ‘that is not very nice what you did but you are all right’. They wouldn’t react like that year ago.”
- **Quotation #2:** “Even if there is a behaviour improvement, he is still very needy. I can’t notice him every single second and it takes a long time for him to calm him down or discipline him with no other adult in the room.”
- **Quotation #3:** “He has learnt a lot in nurture. I don’t think he would have progressed if he was in a mainstream class. I think he would go off the rails. NG is absolutely fantastic. It’s like a five star hotel.”
- **Quotation #4:** “When he was in mainstream he couldn’t even write his name. Now he can write his name and he is doing some reading and he’s coming on there. He’s had that really close attention from the staff in there and he seems to be more motivated.”
- **Quotation #5:** “Suddenly out of nowhere he can read well and enjoys it and word play and yes he reads everything. And he has made it a lot easier because he gets less frustrated with things because he doesn’t need to be shown how to do things; he can read instructions.”
- **Quotation #6:** “We are looking at ways of getting children back in rather than putting them back in the mainstream class with the mainstream teacher that the teachers swap. The NG takes the child and puts him in the mainstream class and teaches most of the mainstream class and the mainstream teacher goes back and takes her place with the NG. It’s a way of getting the children back in, of feeling secured. However, not all our teachers would want to do that. There is a fear element and frustration when having these children in your classroom and children may feel that. They may feel that they do not belong in that classroom and this may contribute in them feeling kind of isolated.”

- **Quotation #7:** “Last summer 10 out of 12 children didn’t have any contact with their year group for all sorts of reasons, mainly because of the severity of their behaviour difficulties. There were only two who were going back for numeracy. The idea was when you first came into the nurture unit that actually you needed the bulk of your time in here. It was difficult to start the reintegration early as most children had big needs.”
- **Quotation #8:** “We wanted them (the NG children) to have an identity in their own classes. The trouble was, and it’s probably not the right reason, but if we had done that year 6 would have had something like 38 children or 36 children and so would Year 5. The class sizes would have been horrendous and so we had too many children, 12 children I think in those two classes it would have been 12 children too many and you just can’t physically fit them in the room. And so we’d identified our children for nurture group and we decided in the end that you can’t expect a teacher to have a class of 30 and suddenly be given another 6 of difficult children. It was just unrealistic. So in the end, although it was the opposite of what we wanted, and although we were aware that that would impact on their sense of belonging, we decided we would have to keep them as a unit at class group”
- **Quotation #9:** “They find it difficult getting to know the adult in the class. They are going from listening to me all the time and see me or the TA whose with them...you know almost that safety net to ‘Ok someone else is in charge’ and it is almost like when you are handed over to a room.”
- **Quotation #10:** “The main positive impact is that those needy children are not taking all of the teachers’ time. I can get on and teach my average levels. I don’t have to deal with their behaviour, so my time isn’t taken up with bad behaviour, monitoring bad behaviour, pre-empting bad behaviour, spending a lot of my time with noticing bad behaviour and dealing with it before the bad behaviour would happen, so I don’t have to do that as they are not there.”
- **Quotation #11:** “When they were in our classroom the behaviour was much more wobbly of them and of the other children in the class. They will be witnessed doing things and saying things that would have a negative impact. The fact that they are not in there all of the time, that they are in their room some of the time has a positive impact so that the rest of the children don’t see those negative tantrums or moments when they can’t cope, so they don’t see that as much so they can get on with their learning”
- **Quotation #12:** “If that child is not badly behaved but let’s say has a special need which means he behaves in a different way, you don’t want the children in that

class to resent them in any way or be frightened of them and if they go back and they are introduced in situations that they can cope with, then the rest of the class are going to get to know them positively”

- **Quotation #13:** “... it’s made people contextualise and understand why children are “kicking off”. Actually you unpick behaviour and try and support children whereas people could in the past have said “that’s inappropriate that’s and the end of the line” and I think it’s supported in that people understand behaviour.”
- **Quotation #14:** “If they feel they need support in understanding NG children’s behaviour tendencies that they might not be used I go and have a meeting with them and help them understand how I address it”
- **Quotation #15:** When that teacher comes back we will have four teachers that have taught in the NGs and two of those teachers will come back in the mainstream and they will bring their own things”.
- **Quotation #16:** “...if there was more investment in the KS1 NG the investment needed for the KS2 wouldn’t be so intense or it would be different. It would have been more positive because the ground work would have been done in an early enough age to avoid some of the most challenging behaviours.”
- **Quotation #17:** “...if you look at the school from the outside, it definitely skews people’s perception of the school. They perceive that we have a lot of naughty children here because we have lot of children with behavioural issues. It’s sort of self fulfilling prophesy really, because we deal with them then their parents bring them here and the LA sends them here but the long- term effects of that is people don’t want to send children here because there are naughty children here and they want to send their children where there are nice children.”
- **Quotation #18:** “The other potential disadvantage is if other parents perceive it (NG) as bringing the school down in some way or that the school is disadvantaging their children because they are pandering to these badly behaved ones because they don’t really understand what the issue and needs are.”
- **Quotation #19:** “They think that bad behaviour should be dealt with by exclusions and certainly not dealt with by reward. I guess if you are six or seven and you make all the right choices during the day and you see a child that doesn’t really make the right choices throughout a six time period but if they make the right choices for three hours they get a sticker or they get to go to a trip I think for mainstream average children that aren’t excelling you might hear them saying ‘Why can’t I go

to a trip? Why I don't get as many sticker charts or reward charts but I get as many commendations as that child because I always ...”

- **Quotation #20:** “If my children are coming back here after an afternoon session I would go to the mainstream class and I would ask the teacher in front of the child how things have gone that afternoon so that they get a chance to see we are communicating. If there is anything that they want to discuss with me let's say if they had a problem with the way the child was behaving and they want to discuss it further with me then we would discuss it privately” (NGT1)
- **Quotation #21:** ‘We get together with the class teacher. It tends to be the first couple of times they (NG children) go back (mainstream class); I go with them and sort of show the behaviour management I use with that child so that the class teacher is got a chance to see how I respond to certain behaviours. We also tend to sit down and have a meeting and I would go through certain behaviour tendencies that they might not be used to and how I address it.’
- **Quotation #22:** “I see them everyday. If NGC3 had a bad day I tell them so that they know how to handle him and what to do. I feel less under stress and less worried because I know that they know what to do”
- **Quotation #23:** “I open my doors 8:45 and let all children in with their parents. If they come in are meant to be with them (children) to do an activity otherwise children are not supposed to come in ‘til 5 to 9. If I need to ask any questions I generally do then and parents can ask me questions or share information with me so that's generally the time to ask. When I let them (children) out in the afternoon that is also another time to ask.”
- **Quotation #24:** “My door is always open and there is a reason for that and I am outside in the morning if parents want to catch me and tell me something. It's very difficult for parents to phone up and make an appointment to see.... It's all about keeping talking. We can only engage them (parents) if we manage to build a relationship with them (parents). It's all about trust. If we haven't got that they (parents) would not come to family learning because we target them (parents). There is a step before that.”
- **Quotation #25:** “They're just open – it's just open. They have got an open policy where if you've got a problem you can just come in any time really.”
- **Quotation #26:** “...we've all got parents targets for parents' evening.... They basically have curricular targets for reading writing and maths, depending on their ability; they'll be red, orange and green. We do a little sheet telling the parents

what we are doing and what the target is. For example, when you are in the car, count with your child from 70 to 101 so they know what we are doing and are able to discuss that. We also have a learning agreement that they see on the first parents evening. The children write what their dreams are and what they want to be in the future, and it's always, kind and caring and perfect and then I talk through that with the parents. I talk through the different forms of support for them, so there'll be the teacher, the class, the family within that and talk through their role, encouraging their children, supporting them with their homework, praising the things they've done well, ensuring they are happy. So that something specific, then the learning agreement is then reviewed at the end of the year, have you been the type of pupil you wanted to be, do they still have the same dream and aspirations? There's also these are all little reward cards so they review them through the year so parents can see how well they've done throughout the year."

- **Quotation #27:** "We do it once a year and it gives the children's levels. We write about Maths, English and Science get the bulk of it and then the foundation subjects about what we've been covering this year. Then we say if they are achieving their Y2 expectation or above or below and at the end we write a general comment about the child and what type of child they are, what they've taken part in, what they've done really well in."
- **Quotation #28:** It is a supportive place and especially in my case – I'm a single parent and I work during the time when MC1 is at school, it is the only time I can work to earn some money. And my work time finishes at the same time as MC1's school time so every since he's been in Year 3 really, the teacher's always agreed to keep him in the school and I collect him when I'm ready as they'll find him little jobs to do."
- **Quotation #29:** "Sometimes parents if it's something they're not happy with or something they don't want to talk to a Head Teacher about or their child's class teacher because they think there might be repercussions on the child for whatever reason they talk to someone from the PTA and filter it through to the teacher and they might say "it's no problem at all I'll talk to the lady" you know so it's always possible to get a conversation going."
- **Quotation #30:** "I chair the community association and I have a lot of dealings with families and I work amongst the agencies. The plan of the community association is to get things going to try and help people so we've got things structured. At the moment we're going to be using the Children's Centre, so we will have a music group running one night a week. My husband plays lead guitar so we know quite a lot of musicians. The possibility is I will have two drummers

coming, basically lead guitarist and I know some of the children on the estate play guitar and drums. They will come along and get help from the people who have more experience. We are planning to have an art group going as well. You know, so it's all about trying to promote the community together – get them together and helping each other because that's how it was when we first lived out here many, many years ago because I've been on this estate 27 years.”

- **Quotation #31:** “Every Wednesday we have a programme for family learning which is a programme which we run for literacy and numeracy for parents. And currently running in the Family Centre we have an Incredible Years - a Webster-Statton model for parents for 3 to 11. That's a parenting class. So we have two ongoing learning programmes that support parents. We also have an NVQ programme that some parents make access of so they can begin to develop skills for family learning which takes them to level 2 NVQ which is level 3 which is the equivalent to a GCSE. So for some parents it's quite a big thing.”
- **Quotation #32:** “Very often it is because sometimes I hear people talk with each other outside “I'm not going to do that!” “I'm glad to be out of school!” you know “I hated the place” and they don't mean this school but another school. I think most parents in this area – their own school experience wasn't very good.”
- **Quotation #33:** “Laziness. Because like my sister in law she's never worked and I've never known her to work and she's been married to my brother for 21 years. Neither of them work and she's never had anything to do with the school. So seeing it from people I know, I think a lot of it is laziness - that they just don't want to. They only care about their own social life.”

Appendix 18: Number of times pro-social and negative behaviours were observed per term

Pro-social Behaviours	Cooperation	Resolving problems	Caring	Listening to others' views	Responsiveness	On-task behaviour	Negative Behaviours	Fighting/arguing	Unresponsiveness	Off-task behaviour	Rudeness	Selfishness	Withdrawal/ anxiousness
KS1C1													
Term 1	5	7	1	4	3	5		11	5	7	4	6	4
Term 2	6	7	2	4	5	6		10	5	7	5	5	4
Term 3	8	6	2	6	8	7		7	3	4	4	3	3
KS1C2													
Term 1	5	2	2	1	1	2		8	8	10	4	12	6
Term 2	4	4	0	2	3	4		9	6	8	2	7	5
Term 3	5	5	1	2	5	5		6	5	5	2	5	5
KS2C1													
Term 1	3	3	0	2	3	5		6	11	8	6	8	9
Term 2	4	3	1	2	4	4		6	10	8	4	7	8
Term 3	6	6	1	4	5	5		6	9	7	3	7	5
KS2C2													
Term 1	2	1	0	1	2	2		9	11	5	9	6	5
Term 2	4	4	2	2	4	5		10	9	8	5	7	4
Term 3	5	6	3	2	6	7		9	8	8	6	6	4
KS2C3													
Term 1	3	0	2	4	5	3		11	7	8	7	5	4
Term 2	2	1	3	6	6	3		8	6	7	6	4	3
Term 3	3	2	4	8	9	4		7	6	7	5	3	3
KS2C4													
Term 1	4	2	3	3	2	2		8	7	9	5	7	7
Term 2	4	1	2	1	4	3		8	6	10	5	6	6
Term 3	4	2	2	3	5	5		6	6	9	5	5	5

Appendix 19: Table showing the behaviour progress made by individual children each term

	KS1C1	KS1C2	KS2C1	KS2C2	KS2C3	KS2C4
Term 1 progress	0.68	0.27	0.33	0.18	0.40	0.37
Term 2 progress	0.83	0.45	0.42	0.49	0.62	0.37
Term 3 progress	1.54	0.82	0.73	0.71	0.97	0.58
Term 1-Term 2 progress	0.15	0.18	0.09	0.31	0.22	0
Term 2- Term 3 progress	0.71	0.37	0.31	0.22	0.35	0.21
Term 1-Term 3 progress	0.86	0.55	0.40	0.53	0.57	0.21

Note:

Each child's behaviour progress for each term has been calculated by dividing the number of pro-social behaviours by from the number of negative behaviours. Each child's behaviour progress from one term to another has been calculated using subtraction (e.g. KS1C1 →Term 1 -Term 2 → 0.83 - 0.68)

Appendix 20: The table is showing the total number of times pro-social and negative behaviours were observed in Term 1, Term 2 and Term 3

Total Number of observed behaviours	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Total Number of Pro-social Behaviours of 2 children in KS1NG	62	86	116
Total Number of Negative Behaviours of 2 children in KS1NG	177	159	130
Total Number of Pro-social Behaviours of 4 children in KS2NG	33	33	51
Total Number of Negative Behaviours of 4 children in KS2NG	85	75	67

Note: The total number of observed behaviours for each term was calculated by adding the ticks for pro-social and negative behaviours for the 2 KS1NG children and 4 KS2NG children, respectively.

Appendix 21: Table showing the pre and post NG intervention Boxall scores for a sample of six children in addition to the impact scores

Developmental (a-j) and Diagnostic Profile (g-z) Strands																				
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	g	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z
Gives purposeful attention	10	6	5	13	6	8	6	8	3	3	0	5	0	8	0	5	6	6	8	4
Participates constructively	13	8	5	11	4	6	11	9	5	4	3	4	1	6	1	2	3	1	1	0
Connects up experiences	3	2	0	-2	-2	-2	5	1	2	1	-3	1	-1	2	-1	3	3	5	7	4
Shows insightful involvement	8	6	6	14	4	7	5	8	4	3	9	9	10	12	7	5	13	13	13	5
Engages cognitively with peers	16	9	9	14	6	10	10	13	4	4	5	10	9	2	4	3	11	8	9	8
Is emotionally secure																				
Is biddable and accepts constraints																				
Accommodates to others																				
Responds constructively to others																				
Maintains internalized standards																				
Disengaged																				
Self-negating																				
Makes undifferentiated attachments																				
Shows inconsequential behaviour																				
Craves attachment, reassurance																				
Avoids/rejects attachment																				
Has undeveloped/insecure sense of self																				
Shows negativism towards self																				
Shows negativism towards others																				
Wants, grabs, disregards others																				

Post																				
Impact	8	3	3	0	2	3	5	5	0	1	4	-1	1	10	3	2	2	5	4	-3
KS2 C1 Pre	16	10	11	14	6	11	7	11	6	8	0	1	0	10	3	1	10	2	13	2
KS2 C1 Post	20	11	12	19	6	12	13	15	7	7	0	4	2	4	5	0	7	3	12	1
Impact	4	1	1	5	0	2	6	4	1	-1	0	-3	-2	6	-2	1	3	-1	1	1
KS2 C2 Pre	14	9	9	9	2	7	14	13	3	6	11	6	6	5	8	6	8	6	5	4
KS2 C2 Post	15	8	10	13	4	11	11	12	5	6	7	7	0	9	6	8	10	5	7	4
Impact	1	-1	1	4	2	4	-3	-1	2	0	4	-1	6	-4	2	-2	-2	1	-2	0
KS2 C3 Pre	15	7	7	13	7	8	12	11	4	5	0	6	0	10	3	3	10	8	12	6
KS2 C3 Post	18	10	8	16	5	9	12	12	5	6	1	11	4	7	3	6	12	5	9	2
Impact	3	3	1	3	-2	1	0	1	1	1	-1	-5	-4	3	0	-3	-2	3	3	4
KS2 C4 Pre	9	8	9	13	8	8	9	12	4	7	2	9	1	8	2	4	9	8	10	4
KS2 C4 Post	17	9	11	18	7	8	11	13	5	6	3	10	1	5	3	6	8	18	12	2
Impact	8	1	2	5	-1	0	2	1	1	-1	-1	-1	0	3	-1	-2	-1	-10	-2	-2

Appendix 22: Table showing a summary of improvement for the two strands for a sample of six children in addition to the impact scores

KS1 and KS2 NG Children						
	KS1 C1	KS1 C2	KS2 C1	KS2 C2	KS2 C3	KS2 C4
Developmental strands impact	8	30	22	9	12	18
Diagnostic strands impact	20	27	4	2	-2	16
Total impact	28	57	26	11	10	2
*Developmental sub-strands improvement	6/10	10/10	9/10	7/10	9/10	8/10
*Diagnostic profile sub-strands improvement	7/10	8/10	6/10	5/10	5/10	2/10
No. strands positive change	13	16	13	10	12	8
No. strands neutral	1	2	2	2	2	2
No. strands negative change	6	2	5	8	6	10

*See below the improvements made each child on each sub-strand of the two main developmental strands and the three main diagnostic profile strands

Developmental Strands:

1. Organisation of experience

Sub-strand A. Gives purposeful attention (KS1 C1, KS1 C2, KS2 C1, KS2 C2, KS2 C3, KS2 C4)

Sub-strand B. Participates constructively (KS1 C1, KS1 C2, KS2 C1, KS2 C3, KS2 C4)

Sub-strand C. Connects up experiences (KS1 C1, KS1 C2, KS2 C1, KS2 C2, KS2 C3, KS2 C4)

Sub-strand D. Shows insightful involvement (KS1 C2, KS2 C1, KS2 C2, KS2 C3, KS2 C4)

Sub-strand E. Engages cognitively with peers (KS1 C2, KS2 C1, KS2 C2,)

2. Internalisation of controls

Sub-strand F. Is emotionally secure (KS1 C2, KS2 C1, KS2 C2, KS2 C3, KS2 C4)

Sub-strand G. Is biddable and accepts constraints (KS1 C1, KS1 C2, KS2 C1, KS2 C3, KS2 C4)

Sub-strand H. Accommodates to others (KS1 C1, KS1 C2, KS2 C1, KS2 C3, KS2 C4)

Sub-strand I. Responds constructively to others (KS1 C1, KS1 C2, KS2 C1, KS2 C2, KS2 C3, KS2 C4)

Sub-strand J. Maintains internalised standards (KS1 C1, KS1 C2, KS2 C2, KS2 C3)

Diagnostic Profile Strands:

1. Self-limiting features

Sub-strand Q. Disengaged (KS1 C2, KS2 C1, KS2 C2,)

Sub-strand R. Self-negating (KS1 C1)

2. Undeveloped behaviour

Sub-strand S. Makes undifferentiated attachments (KS1 C2, KS2 C2, KS2 C4)

Sub-strand T. Shows inconsequential behaviour (KS1 C1, KS1 C2, KS2 C1, KS2 C3, KS2 C4)

Sub-strand U: Craves attachment, reassurance (KS1 C2, KS2 C2, KS2 C3)

3. Unsupported development

Sub-strand V. Avoids/rejects attachment (KS1 C1, KS1 C2, KS2 C1)

Sub-strand W. Has undeveloped insecure sense of self (KS1 C1, KS1 C2, KS2 C1)

Sub-strand X. Shows negativism towards self (KS1 C1, KS1 C2, KS2 C2, KS2 C3)

Sub-strand Y. Shows negativism towards others (KS1 C1, KS1 C2, KS2 C1, KS2 C3)

Sub-strand Z. Wants, grabs, disregarding others (KS1 C1, KS2 C1, KS2 C2, KS2 C3)

Appendix 23: Selected observations about the ways nurturing is promoted in the wider school environment and extracts from the researcher's reflective journal

Promotion of social and emotional development

There were a number of programmes running in the school which attempted to teach children social and emotional skills and foster positive behaviours. One such programme was SEAL. SEAL was perceived to be an integral part of the school as it was embedded in whole school assemblies where each half-term a new SEAL topic was introduced and in family assemblies. Family assemblies involve a system of teams. All children from reception to Year 6 belong to a family colour as do all members of staff. During family assemblies children engage in SEAL related discussions and activities. Emotional literacy of those children who are showing signs of emotional and social difficulties is also addressed by running small SEAL groups. In these groups issues such as self-esteem, social skills, social use of language and others are addressed. In addition to SEAL, social and emotional development is promoted through PSHE and circle time in the classrooms.

Children's social and emotional skills were also promoted through the Forest School programme. This programme was used with children from all year groups. Within the ambit of Forest School children learn a variety of outdoor activities such as how to make robes out of nettles how to tie different types of knots, how to build a shelter and a tunnel out of natural materials such as wood and leaves and how to light a fire. They also learn about different trees and flowers and vegetables and how to cook over a fire.

Other than learning practical skills and developing nature awareness, the objectives of the Forest School programme were to offer children enjoyment by having stimulating and exciting activities and help children develop interpersonal skills such as teamwork and communication skills, social and emotional skills such as self-discovery, confidence and independence as well as raising self-esteem.

The following extract from the researcher's field notes illustrates this:

‘Observation of a Year 6 child during a small group Maths activity - he appeared to

be disengaged and distracted from work as he was fiddling with his pen and occasionally he was checking what everybody else is doing. The other two children were trying to engage him by asking him questions about the task activity. He responded with 'I don't know' answers. The same student was also observed during Forest school- which was after Maths lesson. He was observed being co-operative and communicative - he was negotiating with his group what they should do in order to build a tunnel out of willow sticks. My curiosity prompted me to ask him how he finds the Forest School activities. He replied "I am very excited whenever we have Forest School. I am not very good in Maths and English. I find them boring. I don't think I am very clever. I like Forest School. I learn a lot. I learn how to tie knots, about different plants...I like doing things with my hands. I have fun. And I like working with my friends'

FS's objectives are linked with Building Learning Power (BLP). BLP was used in FS extensively. During and at the end of each lesson the FS teacher referred to the capacities of the four 'learning-power dispositions' of BLP (resilience, resourcefulness, reflectiveness and reciprocity) in order to help children understand what skills they have used to achieve their goal.

The following extract illustrates how the teacher used BLP with a group of children.

"Brilliant. You are an amazing team. You worked together and you listened to what other children in your group had to say. And what does that mean? You've been reciprocal. And I know that it was really cold today but none of you complained. You didn't give up until you finished your tunnel. And that means that you showed resilience. I am proud."

BLP was also used in other lessons; however it wasn't used as widely as it was used in the FS.

Response to children's academic and developmental needs

There were many examples of good differentiation by mainstream teachers. All teachers observed appeared to be responding to children's academic level by differentiating and providing teaching activities suited to the children's needs. This is illustrated below:

‘Two NG children joined mainstream class for the ICT lesson. The task is to draw an animal. However, the two NG children’s task was to colour the animal picture provided to them.’

Some teachers particularly teachers of younger classes were also observed to be responding to children’s developmental level particularly NG children reintegrating from NG placement by giving simpler responses to their question compared with their classmates compared with other more ‘mature’ children by tailoring the way they speak to them and by giving manageable activities to the child so upon completion to feel satisfaction.

Behaviour management

There are many behaviour management techniques adopted by teachers reflect the nurturing approach.

While some of the behaviour management techniques adopted by teachers reflect the nurturing approach, some other techniques reflect a punitive approach. During observations in different classrooms, positive discipline and behaviour was promoted through a focus on praise, rewards, choices and listening and private discussions between teachers and children whose behaviour has been/was inappropriate. The latter is of particular importance as it denotes teachers’ attempts to understand the reasons behind children’s misbehaviour and also their attempts to alter a child’s behaviour before pursuing to a punishment. The following excerpt is from a child-teacher private discussion that occurred during a lesson.

Teacher: Would you like to tell me how come you are behaving like this?

Child: I don’t know why.

Teacher: Can you see that the way you act is inappropriate?

Child: Yes.

Teacher: In what way?

Child: I am noisy. I don't let other children get on with their work.

Teacher: So what you should do next?

Child: I'll be quiet.

Teacher: Ok, then.

In addition to positive discipline, restorative approaches were also used when dealing with conflict. During conflict children involved in the conflict were encouraged to give their perspective on what has happened, what they were thinking and feeling at the time of the incident and what was the impact of their behaviour on each other. They were also encouraged to take responsibility for the impact of their behaviour on each other. The following extract is from a discussion between the children involved in the conflict and a member of staff who was acting as a mediator:

Mediator: Why don't you both tell me what happened?

Child 1: He pushed me because I had the ball and I fell down. So I pushed him back.

Mediator: What were you thinking when you pushed (Child 1)?

Child 2: He wouldn't pass me the ball. I got angry.

Mediator: And (child 1) what were you thinking when you pushed him?

Child 1: I got angry too.

Mediator: And what happened when you started pushing each other?

Child 1: The game stopped and child 3 got hurt. He was trying to break us up.

Mediator: So what do you think should happen now?

Child 1: Apologise to each other. I am sorry for pushing you back.

Child 2: It's my fault. If I didn't push you first then you wouldn't push me back. I feel bad about child 3.

However, some teachers' role was subsidiary when NG children were joining the mainstream class as the management of NG children's behaviour was seen TAs responsibility. This is illustrated in the extract below:

‘Science lesson. Three NG children join the class and two TAs are with them supporting them with the work. One of the three NG children becomes frustrated because a mainstream child told him something. The NG child starts speaking to the mainstream child in an aggressive way. The TA is trying to deflect him from what he might be going to do by saying what the expectations are in advance of his actions. The child's face goes red and trouble breaks out. He starts swearing. The TA removes him from the class to calm him down. The teacher took a subsidiary role leaving the TA having the responsibility of the child's behaviour’

However, positive discipline and restorative approaches were not promoted by all staff all the time. There were times that teachers engaged in an argument with a student in front of the class, using ‘inappropriate’ language. The following extract illustrates the researcher's thoughts.

‘The pupil was told off by a teacher because he was acting out; talking to other children while they should be doing the assigned work. The teacher gave him a warning. The child continued talking. She then shouted at him. The child started being defensive by blaming others and saying that the other children are talking to him. She continued shouting at him. The child looked at the teacher and smiled. The teacher then said “How dare you looking at me like that? Wipe that stupid smirk off your face.” Of course children need discipline, but with a focus that actively treats them with respect and dignity. You need to give respect to gain respect’.

Also some of the approaches used to discipline had a punitive emphasis as several levels of sanctions and consequences were imposed as a response to difficult behaviour from children, with the sanctions becoming more severe as the levels increase.

Voice of the child

The voice of the child was considered to be important in the school. The voice of the child was strengthened by encouraging children to participate in pupil councils, allowing opportunities to make decisions about their learning in class situations, and by allowing them to participate in discussions about provisions and annual reviews. Opportunities to make decisions about their school were also created through, for example, pupil parliament. The following extract illustrates an observation of a pupil parliament.

‘Pupil parliament. The topic was about healthy lifestyle and the first motion was ‘Try to walk to school in order to get more exercise’. This motion was suggested in family assemblies by staff. Children from reception to year 2 presented their argument in favour of this motion. All children had to decide whether they are for or against the motion. All the children voted by standing up (agree with the motion) or remaining seated (disagree with the motion). Some year 6 children counted the votes. The majority of children voted in favour of the motion. The second motion was ‘Try to eat two or more vegetables with our meals’. Most children voted in favour of the motion. These decision were taken by the children for themselves’

Playtimes

The school offered a wide variety of lunch-time clubs for KS2 children such as arts and craft, drama and ICT clubs. Attendance in clubs was optional. Those children interested in participating in clubs had to sign up so that school staff knew where they are. A sanctuary club is also offered for quiet moments and quiet play activities. This is for those children who feel intimidated by the unstructured environment of the playground. Additional organised large group games in the playground were also offered. Most clubs and all playground games were supervised by members of staff; mainly TAs and MTAs. Their role was to facilitate play when necessary, identify possible equipment hazards, promote positive behaviour, deal with incidents and accidents and report major incidents to a senior member of staff.

Fewer led structured games and clubs were available for KS1 children. However, opportunities were provided for Year 6 children to act as playground ‘friends’ for the

younger children and organise games for them.

At the end of every lunch time break children are gathered together and a senior member of staff responsible for playtimes shares her thoughts with children regarding the day's lunch break and asks children how their lunch break was. The following extract from the researcher's field notes illustrates this:

'It's the end of lunch time break. A senior member of staff blows the whistle and calls the children. They all sit in front of her. She asks them "How was lunch time for you today? Hope you have a good lunch break. I am pleased nobody was reported to me for bad behaviour. You are all having a happy lunch time and it is my job to make sure that you have a happy lunch time. If anybody is feeling unhappy you should be coming to me and say I am unhappy because of this and this and we will do something about it'

Celebration assemblies

Once a week the school holds a celebration assembly. During this assembly the Headteacher shares individual children's good news as well as whole class news and teachers select one or two children in their form as stars of the week. Some children have also the opportunity to choose some of their classmates that believe have been stars of the week. Those children selected are awarded certificates. The reason for the award is briefly explained and applauded as motivation to others. The reason for the award is also written on the certificates. The chosen children are awarded for their good work, acts of kindness, for making a good choice or for good manners. During the last celebration assembly of each term, the winning family colour team also gets awarded.

Extracts from Reflective Journal: Did the researcher feel nurtured?

9th July 2009

I managed to 'get in' the school. First day in KS1NG. One of the admin staff accompanied me to the class and she briefly explained to the teacher that I would like to spend the day in the class. The teacher told me to sit down and she continued with her work. I was not asked who I was and what the purpose of my visit was. I felt unwelcomed. Breakfast time -

they all had their breakfast and drink but none of the staff asked me if I wanted a drink. End of breakfast - children sit around a table and continue with the assigned task. They cut out the pictures they took from a visit and the glue them on a big sheet. I've tried to join in by helping children with the activity; I was asking them questions about their visit in order to help them organise the pictures. Two children did not respond to my questions. They turned their head away. The third child looked at me and said "Why are you in our class? Are you a teacher?" The teacher did not explain my presence in the class to the children and the staff did not invite me to participate in the class activities. I was a stranger for the children. I explained to the child that I would like to spend some time in their classroom because I am interested in finding out what they do. I did not mean to intrude into the staff's normal daily work but I think if I was introduced to the children I would have been more accepted by them.

6th October 2009

Today I visited the KS2NG. While I was in the classroom, SM1 stormed in as she wanted to ask some questions the teacher. She did not even look at me. Did she recognise me? Does she remember me? I wanted to ask her something so while she was leaving the classroom I ran behind her. She disappeared. I managed to find her office but she had a meeting with someone. I did not interrupt her. While I was walking in the corridor I saw her walking towards me. I said 'Can I ask...' she passed me...I did not even finish my sentence. I left the school wondering what is going on and whether 'getting in' the school means you are being accepted in the school culture.

23rd November 2009

I was supposed to have 4 interviews today; one with SP1, with MTA2, and with 2 Year 2 children. Both the SP1 and MTA2 forgot to make a note in their diary and the children couldn't have the scheduled interview because the teacher wanted them to stay in class. It's the third time in a row that people did not show up for the interview. Finding time in school for me clearly creates tension for staff.

10th February 2010

A great part of my afternoon has been spent observing Governors' Body meeting. Finally I gained access to more restricted discussions. SM1 introduced me as a student who does a research on SEN children. She did not mention my name. It was a great opportunity for me to observe how a decision is made and which governor represents parents' views. It also gave me an opportunity to approach some members of the governing body and ask them to participate in my study.

2nd March 2010

Today I had an interview with SM1. She was very collaborative and very welcoming. The interview was very smooth. The interview was very much like a conversation. Even if I had a number of predetermined questions I wasn't following the order of my questions as she had a lot to say and she made very good points. I was directing the flow of the conversation so I got the information I needed, without peppering her with questions. I felt that I was taken seriously and I felt that my research study would help them to acknowledge some things that maybe they couldn't see at that time. I asked if I could have a follow up interview in case I need to clarify or ask some further questions. She was willing to meet with me again. I am feeling such a relief.

6th July 2010

Another observation in KS2NG. As always they welcome me in the class, they give me time to observe and take notes of my observations, they allow me to participate in the activities and even work with one or two children. During break time I asked the teacher if I could make some copies of the last assessment of children's Boxall Profiles. I could see the annoyance on her face; but she did not say anything. Clearly her schedule was tight. She was having her lunch when I asked about the Boxall Profiles and she was preparing for a meeting. I told her that I could go back another time for the Boxall Profiles. She said 'No, I will look for them now. Give me two minutes'. She went through some of the files because she did not know where exactly the Boxall Profiles are and she gave them to me.

Appendix 24: Shows the factors that affected the effectiveness of NGs

1. The temporary replacement of the teacher in the KS2 NG due to maternity leave during the running of the group
2. The composition of the NGs. The majority of children placed in the NGs was exhibiting disruptive and challenging behaviour in the classrooms and were at risk of exclusion.
3. Gender inequity; KS1 NG consisted of 4 boys and in KS2 NG 10 out of 12 were boys.
4. The length of time the NGs have been running. Both NGs were in early stages as the KS1 NG has been in existence for two years, and the KS2NG has been in existence for three years.
5. The 'ability levels' of the majority children in the NGs were at the lower end of the range within the relevant age group.
6. The school staff were not trained in the functioning of NGs at the inception of the groups. Thus the NG system was implemented with the majority of staff having unclear and hazy perceptions about the NGs.

Appendix 25: Table showing super-ordinate, sub-ordinate and sub themes

<u>SUPER-ORDINATE THEMES</u>	<u>SUB-ORDINATE THEMES</u>	<u>SUB THEMES</u>
8. 1 Quality of communication	8.1.1 Communication	8. 1.1.1 Sharing information 8.1.1.2 Sharing Practices 8.1.1.3 Reasons for poor communication 8.1.1.4 Impact on NG staff
8. 2 NG enablers	8.2.1 Communication	8.2.1.1 Impact on NG parents 8.2.1.2 Share of strategies 8.2.1.3 Understanding and support developed good perceptions of NG staff
8. 3 NG barriers	8.3.1 Challenges to involvement in the NGs	8.3.1.1 Stigma attached
8.4 School enablers	8.4.1 Forms of communication	8.4.1.1 Informal meetings 8.4.1.2 Formal meetings 8.4.1.3 Reports 8.4.1.4 Newsletters 8.4.1.5 Phone calls
	8.4.2 Positive attitudes	
	8.4.3 Decision making	8.4.3.1 Participation in formal bodies 8.4.3.2 Engagement in informal school decisions
	8.4.4 Community-school relations	8.4.4.1 Out-of-school opportunities 8.4.4.2 Volunteering 8.4.4.3 .Learning opportunities
8.5 School barriers	8.5.1 Attitudinal barriers	
	8.5.2 Sociocultural Barriers	
	8.5.3 Time barriers	
	8.5.4 Communication barriers	

Section 4

Literature Review

N.B. This literature review has been marked and examined separately from the examination of this thesis. It is appended here for completeness and to give coherence to the whole thesis.

1. Introduction

1.1 Educational Context

School staff are presented with many challenges today. During the last few years ‘they have had to respond to a plethora of curriculum and assessment reforms, Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, Government-led moves toward performance indicators, regular Ofsted inspections and a general push toward accountability and raising achievement levels of pupils’ (Thompson, Arora, & Sharp, 2002, p. vii). Despite all these challenges, staff have other concerns that are not only more enduring but also affect the everyday functioning of schools i.e. concerns about unruly and difficult children.

There is a growing incidence of, and concern about, students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) as they pose a continuing challenge to their parents, teachers, support services and local authorities (LAs) (Farrell, 1995). It is generally accepted and acknowledged that children with EBD have ‘increasingly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age’ (DfEE, 2004) are more vulnerable to educational failure (Campion, 1992) and are more likely to get excluded from mainstream schools and/or be referred for special schooling (Upton, 1992). Hardly a week goes by without sections of articles in the popular press discussing the perceived rise in challenging behaviour in schools and reporting on incidents that spark disruption and violence in schools (Rushton, 1995) and these reports are usually accompanied by suggestions about various ways of preventing and overcoming these problems. These range from exhortations to bringing back corporal punishment (Paton, 2007), to reducing the amount of violence shown on television and at the cinema (Farrell, 1995), to removing

incompetent teachers (Downey et al., 2008), to improving the quality of teacher training, to teaching children SEB skills through classroom lessons and coaching outside the classroom (Weare, 2007), and to establishing provisions for disruptive pupils (Ofsted, 2005).

For the purpose of this study the researcher focuses on nurture groups (NGs) - a form of educational provision for children with EBD. The aims of this educational provision is to provide a safe and supportive environment that facilitates children's emotional, social and cognitive development and also attempts to remove any barriers in relation to those factors in order to prepare and enable children to function constructively and at a level appropriate with their age in mainstream classrooms (Boxall, 2002). The main principles of NGs include 'valuing the child, responding to them at whatever developmental stage they may have reached, helping them to reach any developmental stages they may have missed and developing language for expressing emotions' (DfES , 2005, p. 70).

1.2 Interest in this research

The researcher's interest on this area emerges from the non-systematic educational provision in mainstream schools for children with EBDs in Cyprus (researcher's country). The lack of services providing psychological and social support in mainstream schools as well as the lack of therapeutic communities for children with behavioural or developmental disturbances, leads to the insufficient handling of the children's difficulties and the outcome is that these children are forced out of the educational system (in special schools) or, when within it, being constantly rejected. No methodological support is offered to a child with EBD. Also, the teachers' lack of knowledge of the conceptualization of EBD and training on how to support children with EBD adequately is another obstacle to the inclusion.

Before embarking on the analytic discussion of NGs, it seems important to outline the conceptual framework around EBD.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Policy Background

In the early years of the twentieth century, disruptive behaviour was understood as ‘maladjustment’; a category of handicap and illness. This was defined in the 1945 regulations (Ministry of Education, 1945) as children showing ‘evidence of emotional instability or psychological disturbance and require special education treatment in order to effect their personal, social or educational readjustment’ (quoted in Laslett 1983, p.2). At that time, the only expertise available to deal with this behaviour came from medical staff. The main goal was to further promote the development of a well-adjusted personality drawing on the medical perspectives of psycho-analysis and psychotherapy (Cooper, 1999).

In 1967 (Plowden Report) there was a movement towards the improvement of provision of disadvantaged children in mainstream schools (Cooper, 1999). This was further recommended in subsequent legislation, in the Warnock report (DES, 1978). The central argument was that children who have physical or other disabilities should, where possible, be able to access mainstream education and work alongside their peers (Cooper, 1999). Through the Warnock report there was a swing away from the medical perspective to a more educationally based perspective. By the 1980s the conceptual shift was deemed irreversible; the 1981 Education Act marked the abandonment of the medical model by abolishing the pathological categorical system and made the concept of ‘special educational needs’ (SENs) central to the decision-making processes concerning children who had previously been termed ‘maladjusted’ (Jones, 2003; Visser, 2003). There was acceptable support of the educational model of EBD, which was supported by ideas in the social and behavioural sciences such as family approaches (Barker, 1998).

2.2 Definition and perspectives on EBDs

The term (EBD) refers to a range of behaviours that are considered to be challenging. Even if there is not an agreed, coherent and cogent definition of EBD, the various

definitions share commonalities such as the following: behaviour that goes to an extreme such as aggression, suicidal attitudes and violence; behaviours or emotions that are inappropriate under normal conditions such as shyness and disruptiveness, uncooperative and antisocial behaviour; inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with significant others such as peers, teachers and parents; behaviours or emotions that adversely affect a child's educational performance such as school phobia and frustration (DfE, 1993; Soles, Bloom, Heath & Karagiannakis, 2008).

There is no agreement between commentators and authors as to which model is actually in evidence (Peagam, 1995). While Thacker, Strudwick, and Babbedge, (2002), asserted that the medical model has faded, others argued that the medical along with the psychological model are still in force in the UK and USA (Maras & Kutnick 1999; Thomas & Loxley, 2001; Skidmore 1996). The authors who argue that the dominant perspectives on EBD are informed by psycho-medical assumptions provide a number of criticisms. Some of the criticisms are that these perspectives tend to focus on the individual at the root of EBDs as they view 'problematic behaviours as manifestations of generalized, mysterious intrinsic property' (Gresham, 2002: 159), do not take into consideration the social contexts that may play a role in the generation of behaviour difficulties and also 'tend to deny agency and individual subject consciousness to students seen to be determined and defined by their disorder' (Lloyd, 2006, p 217). In addition, these perspectives even if they acknowledge the link of emotion with behaviour, take little account of emotion (Maras & Kutnick 1999).

Others (including myself) argue that there has been a shift towards systemic viewpoints, especially ecosystemic, 'where the child is seen as embedded in networks of relationships which create meaning, and where understanding is aided by considering all the elements in these networks' (Thacker, Strudwick, & Babbedge, 2002, p. 6). This approach proposes that problem behaviour should be seen as the product of interaction between the child and other individuals (i.e. family, peers, teachers), the product of the individual's way of perceiving the situation or an interaction between these factors (Wearmouth, Glyn, & Berryman, 2005).

2.3 Teachers' perceptions of the nature of EBD difficulties

Even if a systemic and interactionist account is supported by a substantial number of family therapists and educational psychologists, it is somewhat ignored by educators (Souter, 2001). Evidence from a number of sources (Panayiotopoulos, 2004; Poulou & Norwich, 2002; Tobbell & Lowthom, 2005) suggests that some teachers still tend to attribute particular behaviour to a within individual model. By placing an emphasis on disturbed rather than disruptive behaviour, teachers show that they don't believe they have the power to change the child's behaviour by changing their teaching methods (Poulou & Norwich, 2002)

Despite the difficulties of some teachers to develop a new perception of the negative behaviour and consequently change their teaching methods, the ecosystemic approach gave rise to the development and implementation of behavioural interventions at the school, home, and community levels, where there are numerous systems in continual interaction with each other (Wearmouth, Glyn, & Berryman, 2005). In addition it gave rise to the development and implementation of behavioural and psychodynamic interventions in the classroom; especially in the NG where teacher-pupil-parent interactions may exert myriad influences on each other (Bentham, 2002; Cooper, 1999).

3. History, theory and practice of NGs

3.1. History of NGs

In the mid 1960s there was much concern about the number of children unable to access the curriculum due to their inability to regulate their behaviour (Bennathan, 1997). Referrals for placement of these children in special schools and for child guidance treatment grew rapidly.

Marjorie Boxall, an ILEA Educational Psychologist, saw the difficulties presented by most of these children as stemming from impoverished early nurturing. Lacking an adequate experience of being cherished and attended to, they were not ready to enter school aged

five with the ‘concepts, skills and controls’ which are vital to succeed in school (Bennathan, 1997). Faced with the reality reflected in the research statistics, Boxall decided in 1970 to establish a safe place in school where these children could grow and develop socially and emotionally (the so called NGs).

Not long after the establishment of the first NG group, the groups spread rapidly in Inner London and in other places in the UK, and quickly gained official approval (Bennathan & Rose, 2007). In 1978 the Warnock report (DES, 1978) stated:

“Among compensatory measures which may be taken we have been impressed by the ‘nurture groups’ which have been started in a number of primary schools in London for children approaching or over the age of five who are socially and emotionally affected by severe deprivation in early childhood.” (Para 5.30).

The importance of NGs and the recognition of the groups as an inclusive approach was also highlighted in the 1985 Educational Opportunities for All report. In 1989 the Greater London Council was abolished and Marjorie Boxall retired. The NGs were no longer an incipient national focus and the New Inner London Boroughs did not take them into account in their special education plans.

The removal of NGs from the national agenda led the Association of Workers for Children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (AWCEBD) having increasing concerns about the probable effects of the 1988 Education Act on children with EBDs. The Act, with its introduction of the National Curriculum and Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) and its focus on raising standards of achievement and on parental choice of schools resulted in schools being less tolerant and supportive of difficult children (Bennathan & Rose, 2007). However, Bennathan and Boxall’s publication in 1996, *Effective Intervention in Primary Schools: Nurture groups*, helped to get NGs back on the national agenda. The book focused on the successful experience of Enfield where NGs were part of the LA’s official special needs policy (Bennathan & Rose, 2007).

The NGs in Enfield were recognized as examples of good practice in DfEE Excellence for

all children: Meeting Educational Needs (1997) and Social Inclusion: Pupil Support (DfEE, 1999) paper. The positive response for the NGs led to high demands for training and to the development of NG Network (NGN). The NGN, a national umbrella organisation for NGs, started offering courses to local authorities in 2003.

3.2 Rationale of NGs

The main theoretical model illuminating the underlying purpose of NGs is attachment theory. There are different stances on attachment theory. The first and most well-known stance on attachment theory is that of John Bowlby. Bowlby (1969) proposed that infants have an innate tendency to seek closeness to particular individuals, usually their mother or other caregivers who are genetically related to the child and interact with them on a regular basis (Hrды, 1999; Pringle, 1975). According to Bowlby, this attachment is innate as the infant is biologically predisposed to use the caregiver as a haven of safety or a secure base while exploring the environment (Benoit, 2004). Uncertainty often follows the infant's exploration as the infant confronts new situations, objects or experiences during the exploration of the environment (Holmes, 1993). The caregiver's protection, reassurance and sensitivity to the infant's needs helps the infant to contain the emotions (i.e. anxiety) aroused by this normal and healthy uncertainty (Geddes, 2006). The caregiver may either help resolve the difficulty or encourage the infant to resolve the difficulty. The success that is experienced by the infant produces excitement and increased agency (Holmes, 1993). The caregiver's response to the child's exploration helps shape a strong affectional bond between the two that develops over the first year of life. (Geddes, 2006). This developing relationship between infant and caregiver helps the infant to begin to predict the caregiver's response to bids for comfort (Bowlby, 1984).

Mary Ainsworth, a research psychologist, further extended and tested Bowlby's ideas by suggesting that a number of attachment styles exist. She set up a Strange Situation laboratory, a separation and reunion procedure, in order to study the quality of parent-infant attachment (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). The study involved observing infants responding to a situation in which they were briefly left alone with a

strange woman (the researcher) and then reunited with their mother. The stresses inherent in such a situation activate infants' attachment behaviour and, according to Ainsworth, help to understand the nature of early attachments with the mother and the ways in which infants differ in the type of attachment they have formed with the mother. These differences have been classified in terms of three basic attachment patterns: secure attachment, avoidant attachment and anxious attachment. (For more information about the attachment patterns in infants see Ainsworth et al. (1978)).

While attachment theory has been influential in psychology, there have been a number of criticisms. Harris (1998) argued that peers have more influence on children's personality or character than parents. He reasons that if a child grows up in an area of high levels of crime and socialises with delinquents he will be more susceptible in committing the same kinds of crimes, despite the best efforts of his parents. Field (1996) also argued that a limitation of Bowlby-Ainsworth's attachment theory is that the "model attachment is based on behaviours that occur during momentary separations (stressful situations) rather than during nonstressful situations. A broader understanding of attachment requires observation of how the mother and infant interact and what they provide for each other during natural, nonstressful situations" (p. 543). It was also commented that Bowlby and Ainsworth place too much emphasis on the attachment between the infant and the mother as they view the mother as the primary attachment figure and they tend to ignore that a father or sibling can have the same type of attachment with the infant at the same time (Belsky & Isabella, 1988). A further criticism of attachment theory involves the concept of the internal working model that is the foundation for understanding how attachment processes operate throughout the life course. According to Dunn (1988, 1993) the idea of the internal working model is vaguely conceived, as there are many unanswered questions about the nature and structure of working models. Thompson and Raikes (2003) argue that the defining features, development and sequelae of internal working models are not well defined by Bowlby-Ainsworth's attachment theory and Dunn (1988, 1993) expressed reservations about the ability of an infant to represent internally both sides of a discrepant relationship. Also the role played by the child's temperament, which is based in part on inherited physiology, is not acknowledged by Bowlby-Ainsworth's attachment theory.

Although there is limited evidence regarding the connections between temperamental characteristics and attachment security, research suggests that a temperamental dimension reflecting negative emotionality may be linked with insecure attachment (Kagan, 1994; Thompson, 1998). Another limitation is the lack of acknowledgement by Bowlby and Ainsworth that attachment occurs during adolescence, adulthood and later life (Field, 1996; Shaver, Hazan & Bradshaw, 1988; Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1994). For example in their paper about adult attachment, Hazan and Shaver (1994) reason that even if parents are never completely relinquished as attachment figures, attachment is transferred from parents to adult peers (close friends or romantic partners). Their justification for such an assertion is that adult peers can satisfy the same needs for emotional support and security for which parents were primarily responsible. They argue that all attachment functions (proximity maintenance, safe haven and secure base) are gradually transferred one by one from one attachment figure (a parent) to another (adult peer).

Despite the above-mentioned criticisms, the work of Bowlby and Ainsworth marked the importance of developing secure attachments and the consequences of poor and insecure attachments. As mentioned before, the quality of interaction between caregivers and the child in early years can influence their development and behaviour later in life. Through these interactions children develop internal working models, which consist of the internalised attitudes, thoughts and behaviour of the primary caregiver towards them, and the child's view of their own interactions with others (Holmes, 1993). Also the internal working model is said to not only be the child's representational model of the caregiver but also the child's sense of self (Holmes, 1993). If the child's internal working model has developed a representation of the caregiver as being warm, available, reliable and responsive to their needs, Bowlby suggested that the child's sense of self would be one of being of value and worthy of love (Bowlby, 1969). In addition responsive care helps the child get armed with confidence to tackle new challenges and manage the uncertainty and frustration that is part of exploration and to acquire age-appropriate behaviour displaying a concomitant regard of others' needs and feelings, decreasing egocentrism and enabling a sense conducive to healthy social and emotional development. Inadequate nurturing, on the other hand, results in an internal model of others being unavailable and perceiving oneself

as unworthy and incompetent. Such feelings make it difficult for these children to achieve a sense of security and safety and according to Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs theory, these difficulties 'hamper their access to the higher needs of affiliation, self-esteem, and self-actualization' (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001, p. 160).

NGs try to help children re-experience early nurturing care and develop trusting relationships with adults in a secure, stable environment. The focus is on modelling the interactive process between the child and primary caregivers in a structure commensurate with the developmental age of the child. According to Boxall (2002), the acceptance, the warmth and understanding offered by the NG staff seems to enable the personal and social and emotional skills that are needed for successful learning.

Practical insights of attachment theory are employed in a number of ways. These are explained explicitly in the following section.

3.3 NGs in Practice

A classic NG is a discrete class in a primary or infant school where a teacher and a teaching assistant cater for up to 12 children (usually 5-7 years of age) who find it difficult to learn and cope in a mainstream class. The children typically have a stressful and disrupted background and they most commonly exhibit disruptive and/or withdrawn behaviour. They are usually perceived to be at risk of exclusion or needing significant levels of support. The warm and overtly co-operative relationship between the NG staff provides an important social experience for children to observe and imitate. Also the provision of predictable structure and routine helps children develop trust and self-esteem (Sanders, 2007).

According to Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001) there are four distinct variations in the NG theme. The characteristics of each variant are described below.

Classic Boxall NG

These groups are referred to as ‘genuine’ as they show all the characteristics of the model conceived and established by Marjorie Boxall (Boxall, 2002). The placements are temporary and part time; usually children spend nine out of ten half-day sessions per week in the NG and one afternoon per week in the mainstream class. In order to maintain the sense of belonging to the school as a whole, the children attending the NG remain members of a mainstream class where they register daily and attend specific activities. The principal purpose of the NG placement is to enable children to return to mainstream class and thereby, gain full access to the curriculum. Children are expected to return to their class during their third or fourth school term, though a few may be thought as needing less support and therefore may return in class earlier. Identification of NG candidates, target setting and the monitoring of an individual child’s progress are made through the use of the Boxall Profile and the SDQ. The Boxall Profile is a diagnostic tool that ‘deals with developmental factors underpinning children’s ability to engage effectively in the learning process’ and with the ‘child's behavioural characteristics that may inhibit or interfere with the child's social and academic performance’ (Cooper & Lovey, 1999, p. 125-126)

New variants NGs

NGs of this type adhere to the key aspects of the classic Boxall model but are different with regard to the structure and/or the organisation of the group. One way this variant may vary from the classic model is in terms of the amount of children’s time spent in the NG.

Groups informed by NG principles

These are groups which are sometimes called NGs but which depart radically from key defining aspects (structure and/or organisation) of the Boxall groups. They may, for example run during break times by a non teaching adult such as a mentor. The focus of these groups’ activities is on social and developmental issues and not on academic learning.

Aberrant NGs

These are groups which are called NGs but which do not follow the Boxall group principles. These groups tend to favour control and containment and tend to lack the educational and/or developmental emphasis of the classic and new variant groups.

The NG room is designed to have a nurturing home atmosphere. The mealtimes and break times are deemed to be particularly important because these are times that social and emotional learning takes place. Mealtimes and other periods of social contact between NG staff and pupils provide opportunities for pupils to talk to each other and exchange ideas and help pupils to build a sense of being valued and cared for (Cooper & Lovey, 1999).

There are also explicit regular work routines to ensure children follow the National Curriculum. Key subjects like reading, writing and mathematics are introduced at a level appropriate to each individual and are usually taught at a slower-than-usual pace. As the children may be at different developmental and intellectual levels, formal work and the materials the NG staff use are differentiated. Other subjects like music and PE are also seen as integral in the children's learning experience. NG staff try to make learning and social interaction rewarding and affirming by showing warmth towards them and willingness to listen to them. This results in helping the pupils to feel acknowledged and therefore encouraged to freely express their personal views and concerns in relation to the formal curriculum and in terms of their personal, social and emotional functioning. This shows that by being sensitive, contingently responsive and warm, the NG staff help the children experience the secure or 'safe base' through their relationship with them; two fundamental elements of attachment theory.

Part of the daily NG routine is also the early play opportunities. Through play, children learn how to personalise the toys and use them to express their feelings and how to co-operatively play with other children. Also these activities help them in understanding the importance of creating and obeying rules and in developing thinking and social communications skills.

Rules of conduct are developed in discussion with children and behavioural problems are dealt with by having therapeutic rather than non-therapeutic strategies. Therapeutic discipline (i.e. discussion about the situations that provoke trouble and feelings) provides children with a more fulfilling educational experience where they learn the meaning of their behaviour and others' behaviour, become aware of the consequences of their behaviour in relation to others and the self and develop and carry through a constructive course of action to alter their behaviour (i.e. by developing self-control).

Information for the following literature review was gained through access to EBSCO and PsycINFO databases, Google scholar online searches and relevant books. Some of the key words/phrases for searches included: social and emotional difficulties in schools, challenges in schools, effectiveness of NGs, success of NGs, partnership with parents, parent partnerships in NGs, communication in schools, collaboration in schools, and enablers and barriers of parental involvement.

Articles and journals that were relevant from the search were also used for references for further search of primary sources.

4. Literature review

4.1 Effectiveness of NGs upon children

The effectiveness of NGs is reflected in a number of research studies and is recognised in the 1997 Green Paper from the DfEE, Excellence for All Children: meeting special educational needs, which recommends NGs as effective early intervention for children with EBD (DfEE, 1997).

The majority of research has measured NG effectiveness by using the Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1999) (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005).

In 1992, Iszatt and Wasilewska (1997) conducted an evaluation in the London Borough of Enfield. This study found that out of 308 children attending six NGs between 1984 and 1998, a successful reintegration rate was achieved after an average placement of less than a year. A follow-up in 1995 showed that 87% of the original cohort not only remained in mainstream classrooms but they also required no additional SEN help. Only 4% required stage 3 (DfEE 1994 SEN Code of Practice) support. In addition, 13% of NG pupils were approved for statements of SENs and 11% of the original cohort was referred for special schooling. A comparison between this group and a second non-matched group that consisted of 20 mainstream pupils with EBD not receiving the support of a NG as placement was not available showed that 35% were placed within special school provision (three times more compared with those placed in NG). Only 55% were able to remain and cope within mainstream education without additional support. This study could be subjected to criticism as the groups and measures were not adequately matched and therefore the significance of differences in outcomes of the two groups are difficult to interpret. The positive performance of the majority of the NG cohort was highlighted because this finding was evident in other studies that assessed staff perceptions regarding the effects of NGs. Other studies showed that staff perceived NGs as effective because they could see improvements in children's self-management behaviours, social skills, self-esteem and confidence and their approach to learning (Cooper & Lovey, 1999; Doyle, 2001; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007).

Another well-known study is the one by O' Connor and Colwell (2002). O' Connor and Colwell (2002) conducted a study to validate the rationale of the NG approach of keeping children within the mainstream setting. This was a longitudinal study that examined the diagnostic and developmental profiles of children upon entry, exit, and two years after attending a NG. The researchers found that children made marked improvements with regards to their emotional and behavioural difficulties upon their exit, therefore enabling their return to mainstream classrooms. The gains were maintained over two years but the interpretation of the results must be exercised with caution because the sample size was

small (only 12 of the 68 children were followed up after the 2 years).

Cooper and Whitebread's (2007) large-scale study charted pupil progress in 34 schools with NGs across 11 LAs. In this study 359 NG children were compared with 184 children from 4 control groups. Again improvements in social, emotional and behavioural functioning were found using Boxall Profile and SDQs, with gains being greater for the children in NGs than it was for children who were not attending NG and with gains continuing across four school terms. Similar findings were noted in Sander's (2007) pilot study. Findings from Boxall Profiles showed significantly greater gains for children in the NGs compared with the children in the comparison group. Similar findings were also noted in Cooper, Arnold and Boyd's (2001) quantitative study. In addition, using a wide range of other measures (provision questionnaires, pupil assessment forms, staff questionnaires, naturalistic observations, teacher data on social, emotional and academic gains and interviews with NG children, staff and parents) Sanders reported significant gains for NG children's social, emotional and behavioural functioning and academic attainment. However, in this study staff rated children's academic gains using a pupil assessment form which was devised specifically for this research and the reliability of this tool is not discussed. This poses threat to the reliability of the findings.

While these quasi-experimental studies suggest positive progress in key areas of development, results should be viewed cautiously. The studies can be criticised for not using adequate matching measures or for not identifying the exact variables with which the participants were matched. Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001) matched comparison group 1 in terms of age, gender, educational attainment and level of SEBD in mainstream classrooms. Cooper and Whitebread (2007) matched some participants in terms of age, gender and perceived academic attainment and Sanders (2007) used one comparison school with which it was comparable in terms of its size, levels of social and economic deprivation and levels of educational needs. Sanders (2007) does not specify what the variables were that the 9 children from the comparison school were matched to the children who attended the NG. Failure to identify the matching variables is also evident in Iszatt

and Wasilewska's (1997) study. It may have been important to consider matching variables such as the types of behaviours associated with SEBDs, the period of time participants were experiencing SEBDs, their attendance at school, their home life and school ethos as these variables could arguably have influenced individual outcomes.

The above-mentioned studies can also be criticised in terms of the heavy reliance on Boxall Profile and SDQ for measuring changes in children's behaviour (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005). Both tools are based on subjective teacher assessments and therefore subject to the teacher's own values and feelings towards the child (Connor & Colwell, 2002). They are also dependent on the teacher's understanding of the child's functioning and their ability to accurately interpret the tools' descriptive items.

Results from qualitative studies also show gains for NG children. Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) explored the experiences of children in NGs in 3 schools. Similarly to other studies, they found that school staff and NG children conceptualised pupil progress holistically in terms of behaviour, self-esteem, confidence, engagement in learning and literacy. These interviews derived from semi-structured interviews with staff as well as 40 hours of non-participant observation. Whilst the researchers used different methods in their study, it is not clear how their observations inform their research. In addition, the researchers do not discuss analytic frameworks and do not explain how themes and categories are generated from data. This lack of elaboration makes it difficult to critically determine how the researchers' insights and reflections map onto data and validate claims. This was evident in other qualitative studies as well (Bishop & Swain, 2000a; Cooper & Lovey, 1999; Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001). Also, Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) only gather the views of school staff and NG children and disregard other stakeholders' viewpoints (i.e. parents of NG children) who may be able to offer valuable insights. However, data triangulation was demonstrated in other studies (Bishop & Swain, 2000a; Sanders, 2007) as they collected information from different participants.

4.2 Opportunity Cost

What is the opportunity cost to the NG children? What do they lose when they are separated from the peer groups in the mainstream setting? Howes, Emanuel, and Farrell (2003) argued, after exploring three case studies which describe something of the context of the NG, that when there are no particular links between the NG staff and pupils with the rest of the school then it is more likely that the NG children will feel isolated and be labelled by their peers and by the mainstream class staff as the 'naughty' children. This view concurs with Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) as through their study it was implied that inadequate relationships between NG and mainstream staff led to mainstream staff perceiving NGs as being for 'lower ability' children. Therefore, one can argue that only when a NG is properly connected into the school; (if there is an ongoing communication between the school staff and if there is a general positive attitude across the whole school), can the opportunity gains outweigh the costs. Other findings reported by Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) related with the separation of NG children from the mainstream classrooms were the tendency of some children to trigger each other for disruptive behaviour, the problem of the restricted range of children and the difficulties related with the reintegration of children back to their mainstream classrooms. Despite their study being illuminative in terms of the barriers of NGs facilitating inclusive practice, Cooper and Tiknaz highlight the need of more case studies as these will not only help to produce different issues but will also warn the schools of the dangers of this educational provision on children attending NGs.

4.3 Effectiveness upon the school

Whilst NGs are recognized as a distinct early intervention provision, the ultimate success of NGs is dependent on whether they are an important part of the wider school community and on whether schools are instrumental in promoting their success (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007). The principles of nurture are equally crucial in the wider school environment and can be effectively applied by all school staff in many areas of the school (Holmes, 2000; Lukas, 1999). Bennathan and Boxall (2000) stress that in order for the development of the

nurturing school to be successful, there should be a commitment to the principles of nurture, which need to become part of the normal mainstream practices as well as effective communication between NG and mainstream school staff.

Research has shown that NGs can have a positive impact on the whole school community (Binnie & Allen 2008; Cooper & Lovey, 1999; Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005; Doyle, 2003; Sanders, 2007). For example, Doyle (2003) showed that nurturing approaches can be embraced by all staff in challenging school contexts to create a 'Nurturing School'. In her study, she outlines how social development curriculum informed by earlier work reintegrating pupils from the NG into mainstream classrooms using the Reintegration Readiness Scale (Doyle, 2001) was implemented in an infant school. Doyle (2003) explains that it resulted in a significant positive change to the school environment and ethos. However, despite the effectiveness of the scale in helping the school (Doyle, 2003), there are some limitations attached to it. Firstly, it has only been used in one setting and only two examples of its use with children are presented. Secondly, it has been designed to be used with infant children and in doing so restricting its suitability for use with older children. Binnie and Allen (2008) showed that the NG provision helped in the creation of links with other schools, in the involvement of parents, in benefiting the rest of the children in the class, and in the understanding and support of children with certain behaviours. The latter is assumed to stem from the communication between NG and mainstream staff and will be discussed later in Paper 2. Participants' views were gathered through questionnaires which were devised specifically for this study. As these were not shared with the reader the questionnaires' validity and reliability is questionable. Likewise, Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) reported that NG provision led to whole school improvements such as the creation of calmer classroom, the introduction of nurturing practices, and the better understanding of children with difficult behaviour. Again, through this study the importance of communication between NG and mainstream staff is highlighted; something that will be explicitly explored in Paper 2. Similarly, Cooper and Lovey (1999) showed that the NG provision contributed to the overall ethos of the school, in the contribution of nurturing principles to whole-school policies, in the ability of school staff to deal with difficult situations in a constructive manner and in improving the relationships between school staff

and parents. These findings were evident in Sanders' (2007) study as well. However, Sanders (2007) also reported that the NG provision resulted in staff absenteeism being greatly reduced, in concerns about children being shared between NG and mainstream teachers, in mainstream teachers feeling secure leaving the school to access training or join meetings and in head teachers having calmer assemblies as well as fewer incidents throughout the day to which they had to act in response.

Even if the positive impact of NG provision upon the school is documented in the NG literature the findings should be interpreted with caution as many studies (i.e. Cooper & Lovey, 1999; Cooper, Arnold, & Boyd, 2001) used solely interviews to elicit participants' views regarding the impact of the NG upon school. Exclusive reliance on interviews may have biased the researchers' picture or the reality of what was being investigated. In addition, some studies (i.e. Arnold, & Boyd, 2001; Sanders, 2007) did not clarify the type of the interviews used. Such lack of clarification makes the researcher to assume that structured interviews were used. If this is the case, then it could be argued that interviewees' responses might have been coloured and affected by the interviewer's structured questions. Leading questions might have spoiled the outcome as the structure and close focus of a structured interview may well have directed the interviewees to make certain responses which they might not have made in a more open structure.

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4.4 Importance of communication in schools

In building strong school communities it is vital that there are effective communication systems in schools and strong teacher networks (Grotsky & Gamoran, 2003). The rise of interest in interpersonal relationships between teachers is mirrored by an increased focus on the relationships among educators as for many years practitioners have bemoaned the isolation of teachers in their classrooms. (Lortie, 1992)

Isolation seems to be caused by physical arrangements in schools, and lack of communication and collaboration structures and to be a cause of limited innovation, high burnout, and insufficient learning (Boyd, 1992; DelliCarpini, 2009, Farber, 1991).

“Separated by their isolated classrooms and tightly packed daily schedules, [teachers] seem resigned to the fact that they rarely work with colleagues on matters related to teaching and learning. This traditional structure and culture of teacher isolation stands in sharp contrast to the collective inquiry, reflective dialogue, and collaborative culture of the professional learning community” (DuFour, 1999, p. 61).

As a result there was an urge to capitalize on teacher relationships and to create communities of practice with time allotted for communication among teachers that allowed information, knowledge and expertise to be shared (Frank, Zhao, & Borman, 2004) and joint planning to be facilitated (Uzzi, 1997).

The positive outcomes of teachers’ professional communities have been well documented. For example, Bryk and Schneider (2002) demonstrated how a variety of interactions and communication in schools can shape an environment of trust. DelliCarpini (2009) also illustrated how interdisciplinary collaboration and communication helped mainstream and ESL teachers develop skills making it possible to meet the needs of language learners in a way that enhanced instruction for all learners.

4.5 Communication between NG and mainstream staff

All the studies cited above highlight the importance of communication between educators for the purposes of sharing information and ideas, establishing professional norms, and building trust. As identified above research has concentrated mainly on the impact of NGs upon the school where the aspect of communication was looked at indirectly. Sanders (2007) illustrated how the NGs impacted positively upon the school in terms of enhancing the communication between NG and mainstream teachers; mainstream teachers were more able to provide the children with a higher teaching and learning experience, they were less stressed when leaving the school, and they had increased sense of empowerment when they were using positive behaviour management strategies. Similarly, Binnie and Allen (2008) demonstrated that communication between NG and mainstream staff contributed to mainstream teachers improving their teaching.

The findings of both studies should be interpreted with caution as there is no clarification

as to whether school staff was divided into different focus groups. The research implies that there was only one focus group so it is possible that interviewees responded in a desirable way that would not match what is actually occurring or believed. For example, mainstream staff's responses regarding the positive impact of NGs upon themselves may have not been entirely truthful if the NG staff were present. A group setting can place constraints on individual responses and interviewees may distort information through selective perceptions and desire to please the interviewer or the other members of the group.

These studies show that effective communication facilitates the development and adoption of a more nurturing approach in the mainstream setting. However, despite the importance of communication, the literature does not appear to address specifically the nature of NG-mainstream teacher communication. A focus on the nature (what is communicated, how it is communicated) of communication between NG and mainstream staff could help the identification of barriers and enablers to communication and consequently help schools to address potential problems associated with poor communication and/or draw on examples of effective communication.

What happens when there is a lack of collaborative partnership work between NG and mainstream staff? Research evidence indicates that tensions can be created when there is poor communication between NG and mainstream staff. Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) indicated that poor communication resulted in staff being unclear about each other's roles and objectives. Bailey (2007) implied that the lack of constructive communication between NG and mainstream staff led to mainstream staff perceiving the NG as a *sin bin*, where children were sent when they did not fit the demands of the mainstream class. Communication was therefore recognised as an important factor for the effective running of the NGs and for developing a nurturing school ethos.

4.6 Communication with Parents

Effective communication and partnership with parents are also vital in developing a nurturing school ethos. As stated in the Code of Practice (DfEE, 1994):

‘Children’s progress will be diminished if their parents are not seen as partners in the educational process with unique knowledge to impact. Professional help can seldom be effective unless it builds on parents’ capacity to be involved and unless parents consider that professionals take account of what they say and treat their views and anxieties as intrinsically important’ (p. 12)

The importance of parents in children’s education has been recognised not only in the 1994 Code of Practice but also in research literature and in more recent government initiatives. Different sources highlight the positive effect family involvement can have on students’ academic achievement, attendance, behaviour and social skills as well on less traditional measures such as students’ self-efficacy about education (see for example, Barton, 2007; DfEE, 1994; DfEE, 1997; Ferguson, 2008).

Developing a working partnership with parents of NG children is vital to the success of the NG provision as parents can provide NG staff important information about their child upon entry in the NG and also they can support the NG with their own resources (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007). However, despite the importance of nurturing parental involvement with the families of children placed in the NG, ‘the notion of parental involvement seems to be hazy in practice’ (Rautenbach, 2010 p. 206). Reviewing three papers (Binnie & Allen, 2008; Cooper and Lovey, 1999; and Gerrand, 2006) Rautenbach (2010) questioned whether fostering parental involvement is a key issue for NGs.

Considering the existing research, Rautenbach (2010) explored how NG staff foster partnership relationships with parents and what is the impact of such partnership on parents. Her case study revealed that different forms of communication systems and NG staff’s positive attitudes allowed positive relationships between NG staff and parents of NG children to flourish. As a consequence, parents felt respected, understood, and confident in seeking support, more able to apply NG practices as home, and better able to understand their child’s strengths and difficulties.

According to Bishop and Swain (2000b), another factor that may impact on the difficulty of NG staff working in partnership with parents of NG children is related to the problematic and loosely defined meaning of ‘partnership’. In their study, Bishop and

Swain (2000b) showed how teachers were perceived as the ‘experts’ who own the knowledge and skills and the parents as the untapped resource for helping in the teaching of the child. This shows that the influence is largely in one direction, from school to home—something that is perceived as problematic.

Armstrong (1995) states that partnership implies some sort of cooperation, mutual respect, sharing of information and knowledge, and influence. As mentioned above the call for partnership is set out in current policy guidance. Despite the importance of partnership with parents it seems that NGs find it difficult to incorporate the values espoused by Armstrong (1995) in their practice. Cunningham and Davis (1985) identify three models of professionals working in partnership in different ways. First, the ‘expert model’ is a model where professionals exercise control over intervention and parents are the passive recipients of advice and remain dependent on professionals. Second, is the ‘transplant model’ where the skills and expertise of professionals are transplanted to the parents. Third, is the ‘consumer model’ which allows for a more equal partnership as it acknowledges parents for the unique knowledge of their child’s needs.

According to Rautenbach (2010), NGs operate largely on the transplant model. This model has been criticized by Cunningham and Davis (1985). They argue that as the professionals retain control then this cannot be regarded as full partnership. Another criticism is that within the transplant model there is a tendency to regard all parents as a homogeneous group without taking into account that parents differ with respect to resources, culture, priorities, support network, and values (Dale, 1996; Peshawaria et al., 1998). Also it is possible that by adopting this model, there is a risk of parents feeling pressurized to conform to professionals’ expectations.

These criticisms draw attention to the need for NG staff to perceive parents as equal partners in their children’s education. Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2008) argue ‘those professionals who engage with parents as guides, experts on their children who can identify the skills as well as the deficits, are trusted and well received (p. 645). However, parents need to have effective communication and partnership not only with the NG staff but with all of the school staff who work with their children. Lucas, (1999) argues ‘There

should be some form of home-school contact which includes support for the school ethos and rules and its organisation and curricular requirements such as attendance, punctuality and homework” (p. 18). There should be arrangements for ongoing contact not just when problems and/or concerns arise. However, while the NG literature underlines the value of parental communication and collaboration, it does not address specifically the possible enablers and barriers of parental involvement in the NG and how their work with parents is extended to the rest of the school.

Partnership between certain schools and parents may be difficult; especially in schools in areas of poverty and deprivation (Yanghee, 2009). Lack of communication and partnership between schools and parents may be due to language barriers (Daniel-White, 2002), parents’ low self-esteem (Davies, 1993), parents’ low level of education (Stevenson & Baker, 1987), and differences of opinion on child rearing between teachers and parents (Schneider & Lee, 1990). When schools value supportive parents, try to engage uninvolved parents and create a welcoming environment that transcends context, culture and language, then parents may feel more encouraged to get engaged with their children’s education and have collaborative relationships with teachers (Caspe & Lopez, 2006; Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

5. Summary and Research Aims

Over the past century behavioural difficulties have been described by an increasing variety of terms and have been explored by a number of perspectives. Traditionally perspectives took an individual rather than an educational orientation and during the last few years there has been a shift towards ecosystemic accounts; the understanding that some of the behavioural problems individual students experience may arise from dysfunctions in the family system, in the school system or in the family-school relationships (Campion, 1985). The ecosystemic account gave rise to the development and implementation of behavioural and psychodynamic interventions in the classroom. A strategy based on these approaches is the NGs.

NGs have a long history of providing successful early intervention for children whose social, emotional and behavioural needs are difficult to be met in the mainstream

classroom (Cooper, 2004). As outlined above, research has shown that NG provision can lead to improvements in children's self-management behaviours, social skills, self-esteem and confidence and their approach to learning. Notwithstanding the general consensus from quantitative and qualitative NG research that NGs are effective in meeting the needs of children with SEBDs as well as the needs of the wider school community, there are a number of opportunity costs attached to the children's placement in the NGs such as the likelihood of NG children feeling isolated and being subject to labelling for inappropriate behaviour by the rest of the school. Additionally there is the tendency of some NG children to trigger each other for disruptive behaviour, the problem of the restricted range of children and the difficulties related with the reintegration of children back to their mainstream classrooms.

Therefore, for Phase 1 the aim of this study is to add to the literature of the NGs by addressing the following two questions using a case study methodology:

- How are NG pupils affected by the NG provision? What do the NG pupils gain and lose from their placement in the NG?
- How is the school affected by the NG provision?

The review shows that communication in schools is important in building strong school communities. Although research within NG literature points out that communication between NG and mainstream staff is an important factor for the effectiveness of NGs and for developing nurturing school ethos, the literature does not appear to address specifically the nature of NG-mainstream teacher communication. A focus on the nature (what is communicated, how it is communicated) of communication between NG and mainstream staff could help the identification of barriers and enablers to communication and consequently help schools to address potential problems associated with poor communication and/or draw on examples of effective communication.

Research also indicates that the idea of the 'expert model' permeates in education (Davis & Meltzer, 2007). However, NGs as agents for change (Lukas, 1999) can play a critical role

in the way the wider school involves parents. Bishop and Swain (2000b) argue that the NG staff should extend their expertise to the wider school in order to have more holistic effects, in relation to their approach to working with parents. Despite this being acknowledged, this area remained unaddressed. Therefore, for Phase 2 the aim of this study is to add to the literature of the NGs by addressing the following three questions:

- What is the nature of communication between NG and mainstream staff?
- What are the enablers and barriers of parental involvement in the NG?
- What are the enablers and barriers of parental involvement in the school?

As an illuminative study not only can it add to the literature of NGs but it can also identify what promotes or restricts a school from becoming effective for all children. It needs to be highlighted that the aim of the study is not to claim generalization of findings but enrich schools' understanding about the impact of the NGs. This study can also help educators in other schools to relate to the phenomena that will be explored. In addition the results may motivate changes in the way NG and mainstream staff communicate and also school staff's thinking around, and approaches to, the involvement of parents in schools.

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