"Cause if you get on with people, you're gonna get on in school": staff and student views on what affects motivation to learn in alternative provision.

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Summary

The following thesis has been organised into three sections: a literature review, an empirical chapter and a reflective account of the process. The first section gives context to permanent exclusion from school and the Alternative Provision (AP) sector. This is situated within broader socio-political influences. The literature review then considers provision within AP, with a particular focus on student engagement and motivation. This illuminated possible future directions for research informing the empirical paper. The empirical paper provides an account of the rationale for the current research which explored staff and students' perceptions around what affects motivation to learn in secondary AP. The study itself utilised semi-structured interviews with staff and students which were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022a). Analysis locates current findings in the context of previous research, utilising the theoretical lens of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2019). This paper concludes by summarising implications for practice (with reference to Educational Psychologists, AP and wider systems) and suggested future directions for research. Lastly, a critically reflexive account is provided of the research journey. This chapter allows for reflection on how previous experiences and personal beliefs shaped the researcher's approach to this study.

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Introduction

Headteachers may remove pupils from school on a temporary (fixed term) basis or permanently if there has been "a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy" and allowing the child to continue learning would risk the education of other pupils (Department for Education; DfE, 2022, p. 13). The local authority (LA) must ensure full-time education is provided from the sixth day following a fixed term exclusion or the first day after permanent exclusion, this is described as "alternative provision" (AP; DfE, 2022). Children who have been permanently excluded typically attend AP (Isos Partnership, 2018). AP can be used as an umbrella term including specialist provision such as hospital schools or settings which provide part-time placements (DfE, 2022). However, this review is concerned with AP as full-time education provision primarily for permanently excluded children both maintained by the LA and by academy trusts (differences in types of AP will be described within the "current picture and provision nationally" section). AP is described in government guidance as a means of ensuring excluded students remain "engaged in education" (DfE, 2022). Nevertheless, in reality the picture is complex.

Students arrive at AP with a variety of different needs and experiences which shape their engagement with education (His Majesty's Government; HM Gov, 2023; Pyne, 2019; Timpson, 2019). The very nature of attendance to an AP is considered by some to highlight disengagement from learning (e.g., Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Malcolm, 2019; McCluskey et al., 2015). Education and employment outcomes for pupils who learn in these settings are typically poorer than peers in mainstream school (e.g., DfE, 2018a; Mills & Thomson, 2018). A recent improvement plan for the area of AP highlights unequal delivery across the sector, describing a "postcode lottery" of provision (HM Gov., 2023, p.26). This complicated and often negative picture for children in AP warrants further exploration.

This chapter offers a narrative thematic literature review, organised by topic pieced together to describe the context for the current project (Tracy, 2019). An extensive literature search took place between June 2022 and February 2023, with a focus on full-time provision for permanently excluded children. This literature review will firstly consider contextual information, situating this issue historically, politically and locally (e.g., Cole et al., 2019; DfE, 2022; HM Gov., 2022a). The review will then move onto research exploring the population of students within AP and their experience, with a focus on what supports and hinders their learning (e.g., Graham et al., 2019; Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Following which an overview of engagement and motivation in relation to AP will be discussed including previous research (e.g., Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016) and current theoretical perspectives (Reeve, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2019). Finally findings will be summarised with regard to EP practice and the current study.

This review used Google Scholar, and also included various databases (e.g., ERIC, JSTOR, ScienceDirect) alongside appropriate journals (e.g., Educational Psychology in Practice) to generate this review. Search term combinations were primarily derived from the following words: "alternative provision" (studies explored to assure relevance i.e. full-time provision for excluded children, deviation from this is commented upon), "pupil referral unit", "motivation", "engagement", "self-determination theory", "teachers", "teaching assistant" and "rural". Initially, only peer reviewed research published within the last 10 years was considered alongside older research which added historical context to the current academic or political picture. This was preferred as research from this time period is more likely to reflect the present landscape of provision, for example occurring after the Academies Act (HM Gov., 2010). However, as the review progressed time boundaries were increased to 15 years in particular areas of limited research (around motivation within AP). Moreover, the decision was taken to include previous relevant doctoral level theses in this area to increase the depth of literature considered (this is caveated as it appears within the review). Preference has been given for research which took place in the United Kingdom (UK).

However, where research was deemed to be relevant and was conducted outside of the UK, it is commented upon alongside an appropriate qualification of relevancy.

Current Picture of AP in the UK

The majority of AP in the UK is provided via pupil referral units (PRUs; provision which is maintained by the LA), followed by AP academies (Mills & Thomson, 2018). More recent data could not be found as yearly published government statistics on pupil placement combines the two types of provision (HM Gov, 2022a).

Typically students attend AP on a short-term basis with a view to reintegrating into either mainstream or specialist provision, however some students remain in AP for longer than anticipated or even on a permanent basis (Kinsella et al., 2019; Mills & Thomson, 2018). While AP settings also cater for students who can't attend school for other reasons (e.g., health) the main route into AP is exclusion (DfE, 2018b). The latest data shows there are 338 AP settings in the United Kingdom, providing education for 11,684 children, 72% of these are boys (HM Gov., 2022a). The same data set shows school exclusions peak at age 14 and that the majority of students in AP are secondary age. Statutory regulation places responsibility on AP to: provide the same amount of education as mainstream, include a focus on attainment, offer appropriate challenge in core subjects (English, maths, science) and respond to students' personal needs (social or academic; DfE, 2013).

Permanent Exclusion

The majority of students in AP have experienced exclusion (Timpson, 2019). The demands placed on AP are specifically tied to permanent exclusion (Isos partnership, 2018; Mills & Thomson, 2018), therefore it is a useful phenomenon to consider.

Permanent exclusion terminates a young person's attendance to their school setting (Ford et al., 2018). Within the UK, England permanently excludes at the highest rate (McCluskey et al., 2019). McCluskey et al found that pupils in England are excluded at a rate

of 0.1%, in comparison to 0.04% in Wales, 0.01% in Northern Ireland and negligibly above 0% in Scotland (one student was permanently excluded in the year data was compared; 2016/2017). Within England, 0.1% indicates the rarity of this occurrence. However, Timpson (2019) highlights that this still averages at 40 children per day. McCluskey suggested national policy around exclusion in Scotland (which emphasises early intervention and relationship building with "at risk students") may shape the particularly low rate.

Scottish exclusion policy asserts an aim of keeping "all children and young people fully included, engaged and involved in their education" (Scottish Government, 2017, p.2). Equivalent guidance within England centres on the maintenance of a calm learning environment, emphasising the "government's ambition to create high standards of behaviour in schools so that children and young people are protected from disruption" (DfE, 2022, p.8). The English policy references protection which could be considered as linked to the implicit separation of pupils who threaten a calm classroom environment. However, guidance does assert that permanent exclusion should be as a "last resort" (DfE, 2022, p. 36).

In terms of recent data, there were 3900 permanent exclusions in the academic year 2020/21, 1000 lower than the previous year (HM Gov., 2022a). While it is unclear how the pandemic affected these numbers, the previous year (2019/2020) would also have included lockdowns in which the majority of children did not attend school (Timmins, 2021). It should be noted that exclusions rose from 491 across all schools in the spring term of 2021 to 2100 in the autumn term of 2022 (HM Gov., 2022a). Pupils began returning to school for face to face teaching in March 2021 (Roberts & Danechi, 2022). Indicating that lockdowns likely limited the number of exclusions by virtue of children not being in school. Prior to the Covid 19 pandemic permanent exclusions were steadily increasing from 5795 in 2015/2016 to 7894 in 2018/2019 (DfE, 2017, 2020). Recent HM Gov (2022a) data shows "persistent disruptive behaviour" was the most prominent reason for permanent exclusion (1526 exclusions) followed by "physical assault against a pupil" (878 exclusions) and "physical

assault against an adult" (568 exclusions). Historically rationale for exclusion has centred around the notion of protecting other students (Solomon & Rodgers, 2001), as continues to be reflected in English government guidance (DfE, 2022).

Academic outcomes for students who have been permanently excluded are often poorer than mainstream peers (Timpson, 2019). Alongside this, permanent exclusion has been linked to increased risk of offending (Barnardos, 2018; Hudek, 2018), increased likelihood of social exclusion and mental health difficulties (Institute for Public Policy Research, 2017). Perhaps unsurprisingly as the majority of students who attend AP have experienced exclusion (DfE, 2018b), the academic outcomes for pupils in AP are significantly worse than peers; 4.5% of pupils achieving grades 9-4 in maths and English compared to 65% of pupils in mainstream schools (Mills & Thomson, 2018). The AP population is also overly represented within the justice system, 63% of prisoners surveyed as part of a government research project in 2012 had experienced some form of school exclusion (Ministry of Justice, 2014).

There are likely to be a broad range of influences contributing to permanent exclusion (Timpson, 2019), described by McCluskey (2019) as a "layering of disadvantage". Given the link between permanent exclusion and AP (Isos partnership, 2018; Mills & Thomson, 2018) these underpinning factors (layering of disadvantage) will be considered as the review progresses.

Broader Context and Austerity

Inclusive practice in schools can be harder to maintain in an epoch of stripped back public services (Cole et al., 2019; Veck, 2014). Austerity is a term used to describe the spending cuts to public services which occurred under the Conservative and Liberal-Democrat coalition government formed in 2010 (Fairclough, 2016). While cuts occurred in response to the 2008 financial crisis, it has been argued austerity was part of a longer-term ideological project (Hastings et al., 2017; Levitas, 2012; Veck, 2014). Granoulhac (2017)

suggests this period of austerity (2010-2016) reflected political ideology centring on the rejection of local government. Granoulhac notes during this period the LA education services grant (providing ancillary services to schools) was cut 37%. Alongside this there was emphasis on themes of choice and empowerment (Veck, 2014). Cuts to public sector services were so severe that they have been equated to the dismantlement of the post-war welfare state (Dwyer & Wright, 2014; Youdell & McGimpsey, 2015).

The financial picture for schools continues to be challenging. Britton et al (2020) noted that LA spending per pupil fell by nine per cent between 2009/10 and 2019/20. Excluded children frequently have a range of additional vulnerabilities e.g. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or social disadvantage (Graham et al., 2019; HM Gov., 2022a; McCluskey et al., 2019). It has been proposed that the increased rate of exclusion for these groups has been aggravated by a reduction in funding, meaning schools are able to pay for external support less (Graham et al., 2019; Partridge, 2020). This decline in spending is mimicked across supplementary public services for young people such as youth centres and mental health services (Granoulhac, 2017; Youdell & McGimpsey, 2015; YMCA, 2020). As LA services become more stretched school staff feel they must find alternate routes for support, often via groups of academies known as Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs; Cole et al., 2019; Rayner et al., 2018).

Academisation has been described as an expression of neoliberal ideology within the educational sphere, an extension to austerity measures (Granoulhac, 2017; Rayner et al., 2018). "Neoliberal" refers to ideology which emphasises the success of private companies through the liberalisation of commerce including the privatisation of state assets (Ganti, 2014). The effect of academisation on exclusion will be explored in the "academisation and exclusion" section below.

Academisation and Exclusion

Academisation refers to publicly funded settings where the running of a school is transferred from the LA to private management (Neri & Pasini, 2018). Academisation affords more agency to individual settings, for example with pay and the curriculum (Gill & Janmaat, 2019). From 2000 "poor performing" secondary schools could be forced to become academies (Blunkett, 2000). Schools could be converted if they were judged as "below acceptable levels" by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills; Ofsted, Department for Education and Skills; 2001, p.50). Ofsted provide inspections of schools and other services delivered to children (HM Gov., n.d). Academisation was introduced by the Labour party with rhetoric of supporting equality through targeting disadvantage, but some have argued that it only further embedded variation in schools (Goodman & Burton, 2012).

The Conservative-Liberal Coalition government continued in this direction with the Academies Act introduced in 2010 (HM Gov., 2010). This opened the process of academisation to any school maintained by the LA, as well as allowing for the creation of new provision to be created in the academy model (Gill & Janmaat, 2019). New provision created in this model are called free schools, however they operate under law as academies (DfE., 2023). This threefold route to academisation (schools forced to convert, schools offered the choice to convert and new provision opening as "free schools") had the effect of universalising the model for education provision across the country (Wiborg, 2015). Recent data shows 39% of primary and 80% of secondary schools are now academies or free schools (HM Gov., 2022a). While the forced conversion of all English schools into academies was halted in 2016, the goal of total academisation remains a political objective for the Conservative party (DfE, 2016; Rayner et al., 2018).

Academisation principles have been critiqued for construing education as a commodity, forcing schools to act within a market place (Heilbronn, 2016). The placement of

education within the commercial sphere has led to increased emphasis on league tables which inform customers (parents) and evaluations of teachers/head teachers which can shape future investment (Machin & Sandi, 2020; Rayner et al., 2018). The growth of marketisation and competition within education has been critiqued as damaging inclusivity in schools (Veck, 2014), perhaps linked are accusations of academies excluding students who are expected to perform poorly on exams (Cole et al., 2019; Machin & Sandi, 2020; Parsons, 2018). AP is more often used in countries which follow a neoliberal agenda, prioritising the attainment of the majority of pupils (Farouk, 2014). Students who are viewed as being a risk to a school's "outcomes" are in effect "sorted out" of the mainstream school system (Fletcher et al., 2015).

There is research suggesting academies exclude children at a higher rate than LA maintained schools (Adams, 2015; Cole et al., 2019), some estimate at three times the frequency (Brown, 2015). However, Machin & Sandi (2020) argue that the highest excluding academies were converted prior to 2010, asserting high rates of exclusions are as a result of "tough discipline" policies used by settings rather than intentional manipulation of test scores. Thus the picture is complicated. However, the rate of exclusions in England remains high, predominantly from secondary schools, of which 80% are academies (DfE, 2018b; HM Gov., 2022a, 2022b). The House of Commons Education Committee (2018) described the high levels of exclusion as placing strain on the AP sector, hindering the quality of provision they were able to provide. Male (2022) went so far as to describe this as an abuse of the AP sector by mainstream schools.

AP is not just the recipient of pressure from mainstream schools which may result from marketisation, but also exists within the sphere of academisation. Therefore learning in AP remains situated in a wider performative culture with an emphasis on attainment and accountability (Wilkins, 2015). How this affects delivery of provision is underexplored, an in depth evaluation of how marketisation effects the delivery of AP has been called for (Malcolm, 2020). However, this is beyond the scope of the current research.

Local Context

The current research occurred in a largely rural county (defined as over half of the population living in settlements of less than 10,000 people; Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2011; HM Gov., 2021) . While two of the APs within the research are in centres of denser population (one large town and one city), the catchment is the entire county and therefore the student experience often remains impacted by issues of rurality. Possible issues experienced by students as a result of this are described below.

Authors such as Farrugia (2014) and Wyn and White (2015) have asserted the concept of place has been neglected when considering the trajectory of youth. There are idealised tropes about living rurally, including close communities and a high quality of life (Shucksmith, 2018). However, the influence of individuals socio-cultural identity on experience must be considered (Halfarcree, 1993). AP in rural counties may be accompanied by specific challenges. For example low wages are more typical of rural labour markets, which in turn can mean challenges of affording housing (Moore, 2015). McKee et al (2017) noted that rural areas have less social housing and are affected by second home ownership increasing prices. This makes it harder for lower paid individuals to have secure housing. There is some evidence that housing insecurity is associated with neglect risk and abuse of children (Warren & Font, 2015). This research took place in the United States, where there are different welfare systems. However, Warren uses the family stress model as an explanation for this relationship. The family stress model proposes significant economic challenges increase parental stress and limit resources for parenting (Conger et al., 2010). The family stress model has good empirical applicability and versatility (Masaryk & Conger, 2017; Neppl et al., 2016), including with regards to the UK (Mari & Keizer, 2023). Not only does this suggest Warren's findings may be applicable to UK populations, it also raises broader questions about the impact of low wages in rural areas which were cited by Moore (2015).

Limited accessibility of affordable transport can influence the opportunities available to young people living rurally, at times restricting access to specialist support services (Black et al., 2019; Preece & Lessner Lištiaková, 2021). The large size of the county and locations of secondary AP mean that students will often have long commutes. Travel to AP in rural settings was outlined as an issue in the Taylor (2012) report into improving AP. There has been no further comment in subsequent government commissioned reviews or policy statements considering travel to fulltime AP. Although not from the UK there is some international evidence that long commutes to school can impact student's health (Voulgaris et al., 2019), and ability to learn (Tigre et al, 2017). Another consideration is that these studies did not explore the use of taxis as means of commuting (taxis are the typical mode of transport to the AP this research took place within).

There is some evidence that the experience of stigma can be greater in rural settings (due to lower levels of anonymity). However, relevant research was conducted in the United States of America about mental health (Schroeder et al., 2021) and LGBTQ identities (Henriquez & Ahmad, 2021). It is unclear if stigma may be experienced differently for students who have a label which arguably indicates risk (Deakin et al., 2022). Deakin et al argued the stigmatisation of "risky" identities is cyclical, often resulting in removal from groups, which heightens incidents of stereotyping. This combined with indications that stigma may be heightened in sparsely populated areas means the label of "excluded" could be particularly challenging for students in rural AP.

Provision in County

The AP maintained by the county in which the current research is conducted transitioned to become an academy in 2014. The aim of provision is to supply short term placements primarily for students who have been permanently excluded, before pupils return to mainstream or (on occasion) specialist schools. The three secondary APs which took part in the research are operated by a MAT. Although the county is rural, there are pockets of

urbanisation. One AP is located in a city, one within a large town and the final AP on the outskirts of a village.

The MAT also is responsible for primary APs alongside therapeutic provision and various mainstream schools. The most recent Ofsted report (2019) graded the specialist provision offered by the trust as "good" noting many strengths including: staff pupil relationships, effective leadership and helping students to manage their behaviour. Issues with staff retention were highlighted but otherwise comments were positive.

Also of note, is that while the national exclusion rate is currently 0.05, the rate in the county in which this research occurs is 0.11, over double (HM Gov., 2022b). This may put extra pressure on services.

Covid 19 Pandemic

This research takes place following two lockdowns as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic (from March 2019 to September 2020, and from January 2021 to March 2021) in which schools were closed to all students except children of essential workers and those deemed to be vulnerable (House of Commons, 2022). Vulnerable children included those with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP; legal document securing provision for children who require over and above typically provided levels of SEND support. DfE & Department of Health, 2015), known to social care or otherwise thought to be vulnerable by the LA (House of Commons, 2022).

Conversations with school staff from the AP prior to research being undertaken highlighted an anecdotal perception that the needs of students had increased following the Covid 19 pandemic, particularly in the area of Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH). This is in line with emerging research which indicates the Covid 19 pandemic has heightened the mental health needs of young people (Kauhanen et al., 2022; Ravens-Sieber et al., 2021; YoungMinds, 2021). International studies have noted how mental health concerns following

the pandemic can lead to behavioural difficulties (Schaffer et al., 2021; Schwartz et al., 2021).

These difficulties may be exacerbated for children who already navigated adversity prior to the pandemic. The increased time indoors is thought to have caused potential increases of domestic violence, overcrowding, or caring responsibilities (Holt & Murray, 2022). This is alongside gaps in learning which may have occurred as a result of lockdowns and intermittent school attendance (Christakis, 2020; Hoofman & Secord, 2021).

Those with less social capital are arguably more vulnerable to the effects of major negative events such as the Covid 19 pandemic (de Miranda et al., 2020; Power et al., 2020). Lower socio-economic groups and groups with SEN are proposed to see the widest gaps in attainment following the pandemic (Bayrakdar & Guveli, 2020; Holt & Murray, 2022; Hoofman & Secord, 2021). Engagement with distance learning over lockdowns was unequal. Emerging evidence highlights that well off families were more likely to receive online classes and video calls with their child's teachers, have access to better at home resources and spend longer on learning (Andrew et al., 2020; Bayrakdar & Guveli, 2020; Cullinane & Montacute, 2020; de Miranda et al., 2020).

Students who have been excluded and attend AP may be disproportionally from the at risk groups noted above. Over half of children in PRUs are eligible for free school meals (FSM; 54%) compared to 22% in mainstream schools (HM Gov, 2022a). FSM eligibility is a typically used measure of socio-economic status within the UK (British Psychological Society; BPS, 2022a). Admittedly, this form of assessment negates an individual's experience of class. Other research has used parental occupation (Paget et al., 2018), and also suggests a link between lower socio-economic status and permanent exclusion. Similarly, students at AP are more likely to have SEND, with 28% of students at AP settings having an EHCP compared to 4% of children in mainstream secondary (HM Gov., 2022d).

This research does not have a focus on the experience of class or SEND within AP. However, it appears that groups of children who are more likely to be permanently excluded and attending AP may have had increased disadvantages as a result of Covid 19. This research took place at a unique moment as pupils re-engage with "normal" school systems, how this has affected learning within AP is important to consider.

Population of Young People in AP

As touched on in the above section, particular groups are overly represented in the population of AP. The majority of AP pupils are boys, being excluded at three times the rate of girls (HM Gov, 2022b). Certain ethnic groups are overrepresented in the exclusion data and by extension in attendance to AP (Malcolm, 2018). Black Caribbean children are four times more likely to be excluded, similarly children who are Gypsy/Roma or travellers of Irish heritage are disproportionately affected by exclusion (Demie, 2021; Graham et al., 2019; Parsons, 2018; Timpson, 2019).

The overrepresentation of these students is linked to stereotyping and institutional racism, echoic of wider societal discrimination (Demie, 2021; Graham et al., 2019). Schools are microcosms of society and the experiences of staff and pupils will likely be influenced by prejudice (Poku, 2022). The area which this research takes place within is predominantly white (e.g., 0.5% of the population is Black Caribbean compared to 3% in England; Office for National Statistics, 2021). Racism thrives when it is invisible and white populations remain ignorant (Sullivan, 2014). The homogeneity of the population in which research is conducted in, taken alongside the ethnicity of the researcher (white) amplifies the need to hold in mind the concept of race throughout the research process.

Children in AP are likely to have a complex array of needs (Trotman et al., 2019). Such as: SEND (Malcolm, 2018), police or social care involvement (Taylor, 2012) or having parents who experience mental illness (Macleod et al., 2013; Page, 2021a, 2021b). This is alongside increased likelihood of experiencing a lower-socio-economic status (Cajic-

Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; HM Gov, 2022a). Malcom (2018) asserted there is a "moral imperative" to scrutinise provision in these settings effectively given the vulnerabilities children in attendance may experience (p. 70).

Attendance at AP as an Indicator of Educational Disengagement

Attendance at AP has been consistently linked to educational disengagement in the literature (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Malcolm, 2019; McCluskey et al., 2015; Mills & Thomson, 2018; Page, 2021b; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015; Smyth & McInerney, 2013). Some authors use the term disaffection alongside disengagement (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; McCluskey et al., 2015; Mills & Thomson, 2018). Despite the common use of "disengagement", the term has not been defined in the papers cited above. There are mentions of behavioural indicators such as disrupting others and low attendance (Mills & Thomson, 2018) or accessing a reduced curriculum (Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). The re-engagement in education of children is described as essential to the role of AP in statutory guidance (DfE, 2022), government commissioned reviews (Taylor, 2012), and research (Page, 2021b). Given this it feels appropriate to explore the concept of engagement in greater depth.

"Engagement" is a much used concept in educational research and while there is debate (Moreira et al., 2020), broadly a three tiered (cognitive, behavioural, affective) understanding of engagement is most recognised by authors (Fredricks et al., 2016; Reschly & Christenson, 2012; Parsons et al., 2014; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). Fredricks et al (2016) described these three dimensions as the prevalent conception of engagement. However, Kahu (2013) voiced concerns that a focus on internal processes (cognitive, behavioural, affective) negated critical reflection on the context children exist within.

Kahu (2013) asserted that negotiating an identity of other in a learning environment may influence why "non-traditional" learners might not engage, as they do not have the

socio-cultural capital to align with the norms of the setting. Kahu's work concerned university students. Nevertheless, students in AP have been described as struggling to meet behavioural norms within education systems (Thomson & Pennacchia, 2016), therefore Kahu's work feels appropriate to reflect on. Kahu calls for more research into specific population groups using qualitative methodologies to explore the multiplicity of their experience.

Factors Affecting Educational Engagement in AP

Concepts from the literature which were related to educational engagement within AP are summarised below.

Relationships

Relationships are consistently mentioned across the literature as supporting young people in AP settings (Cockerill, 2019; Hart, 2013; Jalali & Morgan; 2018; Malcolm, 2019, 2021; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Mills & Thomson, 2018; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015; Thomson & Pennacchia, 2016).

Hart (2013) explored the views of children (aged 9 to 13) within a PRU in an "urban area" (countywide characteristics were not discussed) from a resilience perspective. Protective factors included relationships between: staff-pupil, pupil-pupil and staff-parent. The most significant relationships directly involved the child. This relationship development was supported by staff availability as well as the qualities of individual staff. Staff relationships were linked to academic outcomes and peer relationships helped students manage stress. Similarly, positive relationships were the most common enabling theme reported within Michael & Frederickson's (2013) study. Michael & Frederickson interviewed pupils in a PRU in London, exploring their views on enablers and barriers to achieving positive outcomes in the setting. Student relationships with teachers were most influential in supporting academic and social-emotional outcomes. Relationships with peers were

described as supporting integration into the PRU and family relationships were named as providing encouragement to attend the AP. Positive relationships with teachers were also linked to successful learning outcomes by Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson (2016). Students mentioned feeling listened to and supported by staff within the AP. Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson interviewed 15 and 16 year olds who were excluded or at risk of exclusion, exploring engagement with learning. It's important to note, this was a case study design into the effectiveness of a specific program for year 11 pupils available in a London borough. The program utilised a higher staff to student ratio, mentoring and increased links to external support services.

Cockerill's (2019) study explored views of staff and students in schools and AP regarding engagement of pupils on shared placements between mainstream and AP (which supported SEMH needs including PRUs). Staff and students were interviewed across three LAs in the south of England. Cockerill found students experience of belonging was central to engagement in either setting. All students highlighted positive relationships with staff in AP. Naturally the shared placement nature of the participant group caveats applicability to students in fulltime AP.

Choice

Students in AP report that feeling listened to is important, as is being able to express genuine choices and have views valued (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Allowing young people autonomy and appropriate independence in learning is frequently cited as supporting engagement in education and behavioural improvements within AP (Malcolm, 2019; Mills & Thomson, 2018; Thomson & Pennacchia, 2016).

Mills & Thomson (2018) were commissioned by the DfE to conduct a large scale exploration of practice within AP (25 case studies with AP providers and 476 telephone interviews with AP and mainstream schools). Mills & Thomson noted students and families

felt frustration at the lack of choice in their placement, compounded by some experiencing managed moves prior to exclusion. This offers insight into how feelings of choice in learning can be stifled before students are even in the AP classroom.

Kinsella et al. (2019) considered how despite agency being noted in the literature as key to the engagement of young people in AP, this can be difficult to facilitate given the complex needs of students and the time limited manner of provision (the expectation of students re-integrating following AP). Kinsella explored how agency was exercised during two practical lessons (art/engineering). Agency, in this research, was explored via Rainio's (2008) framework. Rainio's framework sees agency as a complex interactional process. Rainio identified three ways of understanding the development of individual agency via social practice: through self-change and changing the objective of an activity, through intentional shared group behaviours, and through resistance to dominant powers. This offers an alternative construction of "transgressive talk" (described as interactions which challenge the pre-existing order of the classroom) as an expression of agency rather than a deficit in compliance. Staff views were not sought in relation to this.

Kinsella summarised that the need for order and predictability in the classroom can make it difficult for teachers to support agency. Observations were conducted in practical lessons and it is unclear what similar explorations would reveal in more traditional academic subjects. Kinsella considered that the dominance of staff voices in the classroom reflected staff trying to shape students' energies in line with the AP ideology. Michael & Frederickson (2013) described the most important implication of their research as centring the voice of pupils in decisions affecting their education, indicating the significance of choice for this group.

Curriculum

A curriculum which is viewed as related to the lives of students is considered to be enabling, whether this is through providing more practical courses (Hart, 2013; Michael &

Frederickson, 2013) or providing qualifications which help students secure future training (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016). A mixture of vocational and academic subjects has been construed as important for re-engaging students in learning (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016). One in ten mainstream schools contacted by Mills & Thomson (2018) said they considered referral to AP to provide a more vocational curriculum for a student, indicating an association between AP and practical learning. Mills & Thomson highlight referrals for only this reason are illegal. APs contacted by Mills & Thomson described wanting to match the national curriculum whilst also viewing vocational subjects as supporting student interests and learning styles.

Thomson & Pennacchia (2016) were commissioned by the Prince's trust to explore the quality of AP. They conducted case studies in 17 AP settings (7 part-time and 10 full-time) across the UK. Case studies included reviewing documents, observations and interviews with staff and students. They found that despite staff purporting the need for practical learning to engage students, teacher directed worksheet based practice was the norm. Thomson & Pennacchia describe worksheets as clearly evidencing "progress", perhaps reflective of performative educational pressures (Wilkins, 2015). An area of concern noted by Thomson & Pennacchia (2016) was that "relevant" vocational courses often appeared to be suggested in line with gender stereotypes. This may reflect cultural ideas permeating the AP, as seen with institutional racism (Miller, 2021; Poku, 2022).

There is debate over how best to tailor the curriculum for students in AP, some arguing for the importance of vocational subjects (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016), others noting this can negate access to a full and stimulating curriculum (Mills & Thomson, 2018). Thomson & Pennacchia (2016) described how languages and social sciences were typically cut from AP curriculums, being viewed as either too hard or unimportant in the job market. Thomson & Pennacchia criticised the removal of social sciences as disempowering because such subjects can help young people consider questions pertinent to their lives. This removal is concerning given institutional prejudice can be shaped by how power is

distributed within a system (Griffith et al., 2007). For example overt decision making (e.g., curriculum planning), could be argued to hinder the development of knowledge which enables students to challenge present power inequalities. Therefore tailoring of the curriculum in AP not only affects engagement but is a social justice concern.

A lack of flexibility within the curriculum, for example not being able to study a valued subject upon moving to AP is a barrier to engagement (Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Thomson & Pennacchia (2016) saw a strong trend for trying to resolve "behavioural issues" before considering learning. Only one site described learning as having the possibility to shape engagement and behaviour.

Highly personalised curricula utilising individual's interests and tailored to their learning level have been found to support engagement (Hart, 2013; Jalali & Morgan, 2018; Malcolm, 2019; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Mills & Thomson, 2018; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). Specifically, appropriately differentiated work which is clearly scaffolded, broken into manageable steps and allows children to experience success is thought to be beneficial (Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015; Putwain et al, 2016). This is supported by well documented referrals which identify any needs prior to attending AP (Mills & Thomson, 2018).

Being able to take part in extra-curricular activities has also been described as an enabling factor in AP (Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Thomson & Pennacchia, 2016). Similarly, Mills and Thomson (2018) note there is evidence that engagement with the wider community can be motivating for pupils.

Perceptions Around Education

Both permanently excluded children and their families have reported feeling stigmatised prior to attending an AP (Mills & Thomson, 2018; Jalali & Morgan, 2018). Perceived stigma may present a barrier to belongingness within AP which can be expressed through disengaged behaviour (Cockerill, 2019). Conversely, students may perceive greater

acceptance in an environment where most pupils share the label of "excluded". Jalali & Morgan (2018) saw excluded secondary school pupils reject mainstream education, not wanting to return from AP.

Jalali & Morgan (2018) conducted 13 semi-structured interviews across 3 AP settings in the south east of England, with students aged 7-16 years old. The research aimed to explore the experience of AP, comparing primary and secondary students views. Jalali & Morgan commented on how students in AP maintained an external attribution style regarding challenging behaviour in AP (pupils often felt wronged by others). Jalali & Morgan suggested disruptive behaviour was viewed by students as a protest against perceived unjust treatment. Jalali & Morgan noted that positive behaviour changes were also attributed to external factors. Jalali & Morgan questioned how this external attribution bias will serve young people upon returning to mainstream school, noting this may impact their motivation to regulate behaviour.

This focus on external attributions could be extended through acknowledgement that students may well have experienced unfair treatment, excluded children are often from a stigmatised group (e.g., HM Gov, 2022a; Graham et al., 2019), and report experiencing unfair treatment (Michael & Fredrickson, 2013). Moreover, if external changes have resulted in improvements for these children perhaps it would be useful to consider replicating those changes to make mainstream settings more accessible. Of particular concern is that Jalali & Morgan (2018) noted secondary age PRU attendance as linked to a profile of low self-worth and perceived inadequacy.

Some children report viewing attending AP as a "fresh start" (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Thomson & Pennacchia, 2016). Malcolm (2019) described the social space of AP as "qualitatively different" from mainstream due to the focus on relationships and flexibility in provision, as such Malcolm purported AP can facilitate a "new mindset" developing (p.26). Likewise, contrary to Jalali & Morgan's concerns over attribution styles, some pupils in Michael & Frederickson's (2013) interviews saw their own personal

motivation and self-discipline as supporting their learning. Although authors note this was a small number of participants.

Environment

Smaller classes in AP are generally viewed as supportive of engagement in learning (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Mills and Thompson, 2018; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). Nicholson & Putwain (2015) interviewed 35 pupils in a secondary AP, exploring their perspectives on engagement with learning. A high ratio of staff to students was described as key to supporting engagement. However, Thomson & Pennacchia (2016) reconceptualised small classes as being a form of surveillance. This demonstrates how the high staff-to-pupil ratio in AP may be experienced subjectively by students. Alongside this, a generally calm, structured environment is considered to support engagement (Jalali & Morgan, 2018; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). Students in Michael & Frederickson (2013) reported a desire for more care to be taken over the appearance of the school.

Expectations

Consistent and high expectations of students, supported by goals and rewards is thought to be beneficial for engagement in learning in AP (Hart, 2013). Likewise a consistent disciplinary system is viewed by students as supportive (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Michael & Fredrickson (2013) noted disruptive behaviour as being the most dominant barrier to education mentioned by students in their study.

Critique of Literature

While the literature above provides a wealth of supportive information there are some limitations. Research was often conducted in urban areas (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Hart, 2013), or specifics of location (e.g., urban/rural) were not commented upon (Cockerill, 2019; Jalali & Morgan, 2018; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015;

Malcolm, 2019). AP in a rural location may be subject to specific challenges which have been noted earlier in this review.

Furthermore, much research comes from the field of education or sociology and does not use a psychological theory in analysis (Malcolm, 2019; McCluskey, 2015; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Mills & Thomson, 2018; Thomson & Pennacchia, 2019). While these findings are undoubtedly useful, structuring these through the frame of a relevant psychological theory may be helpful in guiding implications for practice and future research, particularly to the field of educational psychology.

Staff Voice

Teaching staff are described as the main "agents of change" for children who have difficulty regulating their behaviour (Rae et al., 2017, p. 2). In line with this, the literature emphasises the importance of relationships, particularly with teaching staff within AP (Cockerill, 2019; Hart, 2013; Malcolm, 2021; Malcolm, 2019; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Mills & Thomson, 2018; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015; Thomson & Pennacchia, 2016). Therefore, understanding staff student relationships is thought to be fundamental to providing quality AP (Malcolm, 2020).

AP academies and PRUs are subject to the same external pressures as any other school, for example inspections by Ofsted (Bolton & Laaser, 2021). This must be negotiated while supporting a complex cohort of children and receiving external pressure to improve standards within AP (DfE, 2016; Ofsted, 2016; Menzies & Baars, 2015; Taylor, 2012). This means the role of teacher and teaching assistant within such settings are often demanding and critiqued as being undervalued (Bolton & Laaser, 2020). Teachers often are the recipients of antagonistic behaviour (Bolton & Laaser, 2021). In such high pressure systems alongside the aspects of ranking and review that teachers experience staff can become de-professionalised and vulnerable to burnout (Bolton & Laaser, 2020). Dr Mary Bousted (joint secretary for the National Education Union) decried the "excessive demands" put upon

school staff as leading to mental illness (National Education Union, 2020). Teaching staff experiencing high levels of stress are likely to respond differently within the student/teacher relationship, for example potentially being more reactive or recognising mental health difficulties less frequently (McLean et al., 2019, von der Embse et al., 2017). Further to this, the staff/student relationship has been described as particularly intense in AP, given the smaller number of students (Farouk, 2014).

Within the literature, it has been noted there is a limited account of staff perspectives from within AP (Malcolm, 2020). Farouk (2014) asserts that as teachers are personally involved in the act of teaching, it is impossible to advise pedagogical improvements without exploring their views. Teaching assistants (TAs) are central members of AP staff (Mills & Thomson, 2018). Children with SEND or low attainment (of which there are a high proportion in AP; HM Gov., 2022d) are more likely than others to spend time with a teaching assistant (Blatchford & Webster, 2018; Timpson, 2019; Webster & Blatchford, 2013). Likewise teaching assistants are present in AP and able to provide students with relational opportunities, thus considering their contribution is necessary.

Relationship Between Motivation and Engagement

Within research motivation is thought of as the internal processes which encourage engagement (An, 2015; Hidi & Renninger, 2019). The view of motivation as a pre-requisite for student engagement is shared by many authors (Alsawaier, 2018; Ferrer et al., 2020; Fried & Konza, 2013; Järvelä & Renninger, 2014; Lee & Reeve, 2012; Saeed & Zyngier, 2012; Stroet et al., 2013; Wigfield et al., 2015; Zumbrunn et al., 2014). As motivation underpins engagement it is important to understand what supports or hinders this, particularly when regarding a group construed as disengaged.

There are indicators that motivation in education may be difficult to maintain for this group (Jalali & Morgan, 2018). Alongside which authors have emphasised the importance of understanding motivation within AP (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Malcolm, 2019). DfE

(2013) guidance states AP has a statutory duty to aim to improve student motivation. Nevertheless, published literature is limited in this area.

Motivation is touched upon within Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson (2016). Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson describe how the students in their study may have lower aspirations because their parents were unemployed or on low wages and call for teachers to be more well trained in motivational pedagogy. This deficit focus feels somewhat uncomfortable, and could be viewed as placing the problem within the child and their family, obscuring investigations into structural inequalities (Gorski, 2012; Smyth & Mcinerney, 2013). Furthermore it does not consider the multitude of experiences children from lower income backgrounds have, including that of intersectionality (Gorski, 2012). For example systemic barriers students encounter on the basis of their race or class (Gillborn, 2012). The BPS report on the psychology of social class-based inequalities (2022a) touched on the challenges parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face, including (amongst other factors) limited access to technology, more crowded conditions at home and parental confidence to support with school work.

Mainwaring & Hallam (2010) compared the constructed "possible selves" (Markus & Nurius, 1986) of year 11 students in a PRU and a secondary school in inner London. All pupils in secondary school were able to generate positive versions of their future selves, compared to 69% of pupils in AP. School students also created more subgoals and alternative positive possible futures. This may be reflective of Jalali & Morgan's (2018) finding that attendance to secondary AP is linked to low self-worth. Mainwaring & Hallam advocated for time to be built into the curriculum to consider students' future possibilities to enhance motivation. However, the study did not explore students underlying beliefs which shaped their imagined future selves. Beliefs around competence for example could be influential and shape motivation in learning (Cook & Artino, 2016).

Malcolm (2015) touched on motivation within the analysis of their doctoral thesis, which surveyed providers of AP and conducted life history interviews with 18 young adults

retrospectively considering their time in AP. Malcolm noted AP provided motivation to return to education and provided "drive in their chosen direction" despite previous negative experiences in school (p. 242). Relationships with staff were a key supporting factor. For context, Malcolm noted the county research occurred in had a low rate of exclusions and provision rated highly by Ofsted. This paper does not ask students within AP to reflect on their current experiences.

While no more recent published studies were found specifically exploring motivation in this population. It is explored in doctoral theses which will be discussed subsequently.

Thacker (2017) conducted semi-structured interviews to explore the educational journeys of girls attending a PRU. Thacker also used possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1987) as a theoretical lens alongside narrative analysis of interview data. All students reported increased feelings of agency upon attending the PRU, viewing it as a "turning point". However, Thacker voiced concerns about limited use of sub-goals and strategies named to pursue future aims (similar to Mainwairing & Hallam, 2010). Such tools are described by Thacker as supportive of behaviour change. Similarly Cosma (2020) used possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1987), in a case study design with seven girls in a PRU. Semi-structured interview data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All of Cosma's participants generated a hoped for self, the dominant component of which was employment. Facilitating factors (described by students as supporting movement towards future selves) were relational support provided by staff within the PRU and use of outside support agencies. Hindering factors include perceived limited options following learning at a PRU, low academic attainment and motivation. Difficulties with motivation were linked to perceptions about student's own ability and education in general. The views of staff were not gained by either Thacker (2017) or Cosma (2020). Moreover Cosma and Thacker touched on what could support attaining goals, but neither allowed for in depth exploration of students' views on the support received within the PRU.

Kinsella (2017) conducted an in depth case-study of a PRU in North-West England following the introduction of a visual arts initiative. Self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2019) was used alongside cultural historical activity theory (CHAT; Engeström, 2001) to analyse multiple data sources (questionnaires, interviews, observations).

Five staff were interviewed exploring their perception of what supports student engagement. Staff emphasised the benefits of sharing positive accounts of the pupils with their families and that relationships were easier to build in practical subjects. Likewise practical activities were viewed as having a calming effect on students. Student choice was viewed as being limited by practicalities of the setting (e.g., class size, budgeting), pressures from senior leadership and systemic requirements (e.g., national curriculum). Concerns were raised about managing behaviour and this was construed as hindering autonomy supportive teaching. Staff also were concerned with supporting students to build a positive view of themselves as learners.

Questionnaire data and interview data was gathered from five students who were taking part in a specific art initiative within the AP, exploring perceptions of the fulfilment of their basic psychological needs (BPN; relatedness, competence and autonomy) which are viewed within SDT as underpinning motivation. Data yielded a diverse picture of students' perceptions in relation to the art initiative. Kinsella described this as presenting a challenge for those planning intervention within the classroom.

Observations were conducted during art, ICT and engineering, using an observation schedule which looked for teaching which supported BPN and observed need satisfaction for students. Findings indicated positive association between need supportive teaching and observed need satisfaction. Kinsella highlighted that each lesson had a different patten of BPN satisfaction. No observations were conducted in core (English, maths, science) subjects. This would have been interesting given the differences in value placed on topics compared to vocational lessons in wider society (Francis et al., 2017).

Finally, verbal interactions in art and engineering lessons were analysed using Rainio's (2008) framework to explore student agency. This section of the thesis went on to be published, and is commented upon earlier in the review (Kinsella et al., 2019).

Kinsella makes comment on the systemic pressures placed on staff as shaping teaching within the PRU. This research was conducted within a LA maintained AP. Academies are described as giving more autonomy to settings (Gill & Janmaat, 2019), for example not having to follow the national curriculum. There may be a different experience of systemic pressures placed on staff within the current research project, as this takes place within academy APs. This is relevant given the dominance of the academy model in current political discourse (DfE, 2016). The multitude of data sources within this case study is a strength of the research, allowing for triangulation. However, the qualitative data gathered by Kinsella was focused on the art initiative within the AP. This is a limitation and leaves space for greater depth to be added on the experience of BPN for children in AP.

Bovell (2022) interviewed students in a PRU in an inner London Borough, focused on the experience of mainstream school and permanent exclusion. Data was analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith et al, 2009). Bovell reflected on themes in relation to self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Six overarching themes were generated. The first three themes focused on the challenges of mainstream secondary school: fewer positive relationships and more behavioural requirements than primary school, the emotional impact of unmet academic needs, and defences created in response to negative events (e.g., the endorsement of self-protective behaviours such as avoiding difficult situations). The fourth theme concerned students' perception of learning as generally boring and difficult. The last two themes reflected students experience of permanent exclusion as both a relief and as leading to personal development. Despite Bovell's research taking place during the Covid 19 pandemic, the experience of this is not considered within analysis.

With regards to SDT, Bovell emphasised that relationships with staff which had foundations of respect, care and security supported the fulfilment of relatedness. Nevertheless, permanent exclusion was described as causing significant relational disruption for pupils, hindering the experience of belongingness. Permanent exclusion was constructed as supporting the experience of autonomy through energising students to seize control of their lives. The BPN of competence being frustrated is linked by Bovell to students' reports of being bored in class or of learning being too difficult. Themes from this research provide valuable considerations for provision in AP (for example the creation of defences in response to negative experiences in mainstream). However, there was no dedicated exploration of students' views of their current AP (instead focusing retrospectively on exclusion). Likewise, this study did not include the views of staff which is central to informing pedagogical recommendations (Farouk, 2014).

Wilson (2014) interviewed seven secondary age students in a PRU in London. Wilson used a combination of inductive and deductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to explore how BPN were supported in the PRU, their mainstream school (retrospectively), and outside of school. Wilson found that the PRU was more successful than mainstream in supporting competence and relatedness. Wilson proposed this led to students experiencing increased internalisation of PRU rules, leading to autonomous compliance with behavioural expectations. Competence support was facilitated within the PRU by opportunities for a broader range of topics (i.e. vocational subjects) as well as smaller class sizes. Despite this Wilson highlighted students' as having negative self-concept, tied to their permanent exclusion. Participants experienced relatedness as more fulfilled outside of school and in the PRU, than in mainstream. PRU staff were viewed as building strong connections with students which fulfilled relatedness, although difficulties with peer relationships were noted across mainstream and PRU settings. Students described other pupils in the PRU in negative terms and as different from themselves. Wilson argued this protects their experience of competence, given the negative stereotypes associated with

attending a PRU. This is in contrast to peer relationships outside of school which were mainly supportive (social media was integral to these relationships).

Wilson's research yields interesting contributions, particularly around the role of social media and challenges with peer relationships which exist across educational settings. Similar to Bovell (2022), this research did not include the voice of staff within AP, and was conducted in London. Learning experiences may be different in a rural county.

Indicators of barriers to motivation (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Cosma, 2020; Jalali & Morgan, 2018; Mainwaring & Hallam, 2010; Solomon & Rodgers, 2001) and lack of research considering the voices of both staff and students with regard to motivation make this a pertinent area to explore.

Self-Determination Theory

Authors often describe pupils attendance to AP as an indicator of disengagement (e.g., Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Malcolm, 2019; Mills & Thomson, 2018; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). Disengagement is sometimes referred to as disaffection within the literature and is conceptually similar (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; McCluskey et al., 2015; Mills & Thomson, 2018; Reschly & Christenson, 2012). Wilding (2015) called for an exploration of systemic factors which underpin the disaffection of learners. Wilding proposed the use of SDT as an appropriate tool for this (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Wilding (2015) described SDT as offering a means of critiquing social context via exploration of fulfilment or frustration of three basic psychological needs (BPN) which in turn influence motivation to engage in learning. Deci & Ryan (2012) reflect that at any one time people are embedded within a range of contexts, citing both proximal (e.g., family norms) and distal (e.g., economic structures), these contexts either impair or facilitate satisfaction of BPN (Deci & Ryan, 2012).

SDT's understanding of motivation focuses on the central tenet that humans are innately curious, agentic and motivated to learn (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Within SDT intrinsic motivation is not caused, it is viewed as perennially part of the human experience, however it

is stifled or supported by external conditions (Cook & Artino, 2016). Higher levels of intrinsic motivation are linked to better engagement and attainment in learning (Froiland & Worrell, 2016) and higher levels of task persistence (Augustyniak et al, 2016).

SDT encompasses six mini theories which explain different facets of the overarching theory. Ryan & Deci (2017, 2019) provide outlines of each mini theory which will be summarised now.

Cognitive Evaluation Theory

- Proposes that any external event (e.g., feedback) which supports feelings of autonomy or competence will positively affect intrinsic motivation.
- External events which are perceived as controlling (e.g., rewards, controlling praise/threats) lead to a perceive external locus of control, hindering intrinsic motivation.

Basic Needs Theory (BPN)

- Identifies autonomy (sense of volition in one's behaviour), competence (experiencing self as efficacious) and relatedness (feeling connected to others) as underpinning psychological wellbeing and the innate human propensity to learn.
- Satisfaction of these needs is a central principle of SDT.
- Explains why engagement fluctuates across activity or setting (as needs are supported to different extents).

Organismic Integration Theory

- Describes levels of externally regulated motivation.
- Externally regulated motivation can be compelling but is difficult to maintain as it's dependent on extrinsic rewards.
- Asserts students inherently want to internalise rules and values of their social context to align more closely to others. This can be supported or thwarted by fulfilment of BPN.

- Levels of extrinsic motivation have been developed on a continuum in table 1. Explanations are given alongside each level of motivation as to how it might present in school. Based on taxonomy of motivation present in (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Table 1.

Intrinsic motivation (most autonomous)	Activity is engaged with for the "sake of it". Perceived locus of control is with the student.
Integrated regulation	When an activity is in line with an endorsed aspect of the self (e.g., "I am training for this sports day", becomes an extension of "I'm an athlete"). Internally perceived locus of control.
Identified regulation	Value is seen in the external request, and it becomes internalised, becoming part of the individual's sense of self (e.g., school ethos of not littering which student values). Internally perceived locus of control.
Introjected regulation	Student obeys external requests to maintain self-esteem (e.g., studying a test to avoid shame linked to failure). External locus of control.
External regulation (most controlled)	Least autonomous/lowest personal value seen in task. Behaviour is engaged in to gain a reward or avoid a punishment. (e.g., a student wears uniform correctly

to avoid detention). External locus of

control.

- Students may also experience amotivation (a lack of drive to engage in any activity) (Deci & Ryan, 2013). Amotivation occurs when a student lacks perceived competence or the task is viewed as not valuable or relevant at all (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Ryan & Deci (2020) describe amotivation as strongly negatively associated with learning and engagement.

Goal Contents Theory

- Psychological wellbeing and persistence are linked to how internally regulated a goal is viewed to be, rather than beliefs about attainment. This is in contrast to other theories of motivation (e.g., expectancy-value theory; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) which include a focus on perceived attainability of a goal (Reeve, 2012).
- Intrinsically motivated goals (e.g., personal growth/development of relationships) lead to fulfilment of BPN, which in turn elevates engagement and wellbeing.
- Extrinsic goals (for external rewards/social approval) are more likely to lead to BPN being neglected.

Causality Orientations Theory

- Accounts for personality differences in response to motivational conditions.
- Three motivational orientations are experienced by individuals: "autonomy orientation" (focus on interests/growth), "controlled orientation" (focus on external guidance), and "impersonal orientation" (focus on performance anxiety and ego involvement).
- Orientations can be experienced at different levels by individuals, they are often context dependent and can be shaped by experience.

Relationship Motivation Theory

- Suggests humans are naturally inclined to build close relationships.

- Proposes close relationships are characterized by high levels of reciprocal autonomy and relatedness.

- Views autonomy and relatedness as complementary. For example being able to express oneself freely enables feelings of closeness (Knee & Browne, 2023).

Focus in Analysis

SDT is a broad theory containing many elements. Analysis within this research primarily focuses on basic psychological needs theory (BPNT) and organismic integration theory (OIT). BPNT was chosen to facilitate Wilding's (2015) call for an exploration of systemic factors which influence the motivation of "disaffected" students (through the extent BPN are fulfilled). OIT was also drawn on in analysis to reflect the importance of relationships as a factor in shaping behaviour in the literature (e.g., Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Mills & Thompson, 2018). This is particularly relevant as OIT suggests that students are more likely to internalise motivation for behaviours endorsed by those they feel high levels of relatedness too (Deci & Ryan, 2019). For example, if students feel high levels of relatedness to staff they may be more likely to internalise motivation for behaviours associated with learning.

Comparison to Other Theories of Motivation

Many core elements of other motivational theories can arguably be found within SDT. For example expectancy of success as a motivating factor is present within attribution theory (AT; Cook & Artino, 2016) and expectancy-value theory (EVT; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), alongside self-efficacy from social cognitive theory (SCT; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020) both of which have been construed as from the same theoretical family as competence within SDT (Hattie et al., 2020).

Agency is named within SCT as an internal process supporting motivation (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Likewise AT views attributions as being influenced by the perception of control, the more a student perceives an internal locus of control the greater motivation is

thought to be (Cook & Artino, 2016). Locus of control as affecting motivation is the central component of SDT's mini theory Organismic Integration Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2019).

Cook & Artino (2016) argued that the unique contribution of SDT is an emphasis on the role of choice and human relationships. Building on this, Hattie (2020) proposes that social aspects of motivation from other theories (e.g., modelling) are linked to relatedness within SDT. However, it could be argued that relatedness within SDT is a broader concept, linked to belonging, value and respect (Ryan and Deci, 2020). Children must feel secure and important if they are to internalise knowledge and practices of those around them (Ryan & Deci, 2016). Knee & Browne (2023) go so far as to describe SDT as a theory of "optimal relationship development" (p.160). This is particularly so since the introduction of the sixth mini-theory relationship motivation theory (RMT). RMT moves beyond the functional view of relationships present in other theories (e.g., for modelling) to considering a drive to form "true relational" bonds as innate. (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p.294).

Relationships are cited as one of the main factors which support student engagement in AP (Hart, 2013; Malcolm, 2021; Malcolm, 2020; Malcolm, 2019; McCluskey et al., 2015; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). Relationships with staff are often particularly important (Nicholson & Putwain, 2015), students highlighting the trusting, respectful, individualised nature of relationships with staff in AP as valued (Cajic-seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Hart, 2013; Malcolm, 2021, Mills & Thomson, 2018; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). Students' sense of connection to AP settings is associated with improved behaviour and learning (Cockerill, 2019; Jalali & Morgan, 2018; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). These themes of trust and belonging align with RMT, autonomy supportive strategies fostering closer relationships (Ryan & Deci, 2017). It could be argued that other theories of motivation do not consider what supports relationship development and how this impacts motivation in the same depth. Each BPN in the context of AP will be reflected on below.

Relatedness

The process of removal from mainstream to AP is a form of social marginalisation (Arnez & Condry, 2021; Kinsella et al., 2019; Malcolm, 2019, 2021). Students are physically separated from familiar environments and peers. Moreover, they are labelled as 'risky' (Deakin et al., 2022), therefore at risk of stigma which may weaken ties with non-stigmatised peers (Goffman, 2009; Jacobsen, 2020). Therefore, students arriving at AP may experience feelings of rejection. Alternatively, arriving at a setting with other excluded children may provide a sense of belonging to a larger social group (Knowles & Gardner, 2008).

Often children arriving at AP have a history of difficulties with behaviour (the most common reasons for permanent exclusion being persistent disruptive behaviour and assault against a pupil; HM Gov, 2022a). Peer rejection is a common occurrence for children with these difficulties (De Leeuw et al., 2019; Rosen et al., 2014). As such children attending AP may already have a fractured sense of relatedness. Further to this they have been moved to a setting which is expressly transitory, potentially affecting the development of relationships (Page, 2021b; Warner, 2021). Equally, the over representation of certain groups within exclusion statistics may impact AP students' unique sense of relatedness (e.g., Graham et al., 2019).

Autonomy

Attending AP is very rarely a choice actively taken by parents or students (Malcolm, 2018; Thomson & Pennachia, 2014). Further to this, students' choices in subjects to study are often curtailed when moving to full time AP (Lanskey, 2015; Mills & Thomson, 2018; Thomson & Pennachia, 2014). Both factors may place pressure on the experience of autonomy. Likewise, the time constrained nature of the work in AP alongside the complex picture of need can lead to infringements on student's liberties in favour of prioritising educational aims (Kinsella et al., 2019). Kinsella asserts staff need to balance students' personal rights with "wider social obligations" (p.2). Unfortunately Kinsella does not elaborate on what these obligations are. As the statement is contextualised with regards the short

term nature of AP, it possibly relates to pressure to help students be at an academic level where they can successfully reintegrate back into mainstream.

Excluded students can be viewed as "risky" (Deakin et al., 2022). Deakin et al proposes they will therefore be subjected to increased surveillance. A finding which was echoed by Thomson & Pennacchia (2016), who emphasised the continual and visible surveillance which took place inside AP. The impact of this on the experience of autonomy was not commented upon. Equally, there are accounts of attendance to AP instigating a renewed sense of agency and ownership over students' own behaviour (Bovell, 2022; Thacker, 2017), indicating diversity in experienced autonomy within these settings.

Competence

Positive achievements in school can shape a student's view of their own competence (Cook & Artino, 2016). Students who attend AP often have lower levels of attainment than mainstream peers (Timpson, 2019), therefore, this may impact the frequency of which pupils in AP experience felt competence. There is evidence that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds may be disproportionally represented within the AP population (HM Gov, 2022a; Graham et al, 2019). There is some indication that students from these backgrounds may experience less confidence in their own abilities (BPS, 2022a). Both factors may influence the experience of competence for children in AP.

Implications for Educational Psychologists' Practice

Students attending AP are often some of the most complex in the school system. Pupils are more likely to receive free school meals (Graham et al., 2019; HM Gov., 2022b), be known to social services (Malcolm, 2018), and have SEND (Graham et al., 2019; Malcolm, 2018; HM Gov., 2022b). Alongside this concerns have been raised about the mental health of pupils in AP (Jalali & Morgan, 2018; Martin-Denham, 2020). This presents a complicated picture where AP must meet considerable needs, needs which typically fall within the realm of Educational Psychologists (EPs) to support (association of educational

psychologists, 2022; BPS, 2022b). The literature exploring the role of the EP within these settings is scant and will be briefly summarised below.

Cullen and Monroe (2010) worked as EPs to facilitate and evaluate a program run by a local football club within a PRU. The program was informed by personal construct psychology (Kelly, 1995) and solution focused brief therapy (De Shazer & Berg, 1997). Cullen & Monroe identified higher levels of pro-social behaviour and better engagement when students played football within the PRU. This project saw a decline in fixed term exclusions for 6 of the 8 students who took part. The football club providing the intervention reported valuing EP input and wanted more of it. This shows the applied psychological skill set of EPs informing interventions which supported the social development of students in AP. However, there was no exploration of whether this intervention affected learning, further to this it was a unique situation as the football club were looking for a community project in line with a government initiative.

Bruder and Spensley (2015) documented the experience of a clinical psychologist employed to work on site at a PRU. They were employed as they had experience working with: mental health, developmental disorders, learning disabilities and addiction. With perhaps the exception of addiction it could be argued that these are all fields of knowledge which EPs would be competent in supporting. Similarities are such between the two professions that universities are being recommended to merge elements of training (National College for Teaching and Leadership & Health Education England, 2016). Input from the psychologist centred around consultation, assessments, training and support for teachers. Bruder & Spensley found basing a psychologist in a PRU made access to psychological services more practical for pupils. There was no exploration of how a psychologist's presence in a PRU influenced learning.

Blyth (2021) highlighted the limited research exploring the role of EPs within AP settings as context for their doctoral thesis. Blyth sought to explore successful EP practice within key stage 4 PRUs in London. Blyth jointly interviewed EPs and those who

commissioned their work at PRUs. Blyth found a positive and collaborative relationship with the setting, alongside shared goals and a nurturing school ethos which values the student voice were influential in supporting the EP's work. Blyth advocated for EPs moving away from individual casework within AP towards supporting the development of systems which offer containment for staff and pupils. Blyth notes this could be supported through collaborative working practices, alongside a focus on empowering staff.

Statutory guidance for AP recommends having "good working relations" with EPs (DfE, 2013, p.12). The use of EPs has also been linked to high performing AP (Mills & Thomson, 2018). Likewise, various studies make recommendations for EPs to offer support to AP. Michael and Frederickson (2013) called on EPs to focus on fostering positive relationships between school staff in AP and pupils alongside supporting settings to provide a varied and appropriately differentiated curriculum. Jalali & Morgan (2018) echoed this message for EPs to help improve relationships alongside building shared understandings around SEMH needs. Hart (2013) advocated for EPs to utilise positive psychology principles and systemic thinking when working within an AP.

Mills and Thomson's (2018) review of AP made no recommendations around working with other agencies including EPs. This is interesting because it does recommend all pupils should receive a comprehensive assessment of need when joining AP. In theory EPs should be relevant professionals linked to these settings, particularly given the EP's role in SEND and the high level of children with additional needs within AP (Blyth, 2021; Graham et al., 2019; HM Gov., 2022b). However, constrained resources and financial pressures are reported to affect the EP and AP relationship, limiting the impact an EP can have (Blyth, 2021; Bolton & Laaser, 2021). The SEND and AP Improvement Plan (HM Gov., 2023) highlights the "critical role" EPs play for "children and young people with SEND" (p. 61). It also purports commitment to ensuring AP is "fully integrated within the wider SEND system" (HM Gov., 2023, p.6). How this will impact EPs working within AP is not commented upon.

However, it is feasible the role for EPs will increase as AP is brought under the umbrella of SEND. SEND being the traditional working area of EPs (BPS, 2023; Lee & Woods, 2017).

To further explore the relationship between SEND and AP, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) have announced their intention to investigate AP through a series of "thematic visits" during 2023. Visits will focus on how AP meets education, health and social care needs, how external partners are used and how AP is differentiated from specialist provision (Ofsted & CQC, 2023). The role AP has in providing outreach and supporting reintegration to mainstream will also be considered. EPs are not specifically mentioned. It is possible the role of the EP may be explored with regards to how education needs are identified and supported within AP or with regards to working with external partners. A national report will be published in the autumn of 2023.

The Current Study

This research aims to offer insight into pupil motivation to engage in learning within secondary AP. This aim will be addressed through the use of qualitative methods to centre the voices of participants, in line with research methods previously used in the area (Jalali & Morgan, 2018; Michael & Fredrickson, 2013; Nicholson & Putwain, 2016). Likewise, it addresses calls to centre the voice of pupils (Michael & Fredrickson, 2013) and the need for greater inclusion of staff voice (Malcolm, 2020).

The implications of this study will have relevancy for EPs, as it will build knowledge on supporting effective motivational systems within AP. The applicability of this research for EPs may increase in the future under new SEND policy directions (HM Gov., 2023). In addition, scant recent literature exploring motivation for this cohort will be added to. This is pertinent given indications of ongoing challenges within this area for AP students (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Cosma, 2020; Jalali & Morgan, 2018; Mainwaring & Hallam, 2010; Solomon & Rodgers, 2001) and a statutory responsibility on AP to encourage motivation (DfE, 2013). While there have been doctoral theses considering motivation and

SDT within AP, they have centred on student experiences prior to exclusion (Bovell, 2022; Malcolm, 2015), or they have not included qualitative data from both staff and students focusing solely on typical AP provision (Bovell, 2022; Kinsella, 2017; Wilson, 2014). This research allows for comparison between the two groups which has not previously been considered.

The current research will contribute voices from AP within a rural county through the lens of SDT. SDT offers a means of reflecting on the contextual factors shaping student motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2019), which has been called for by researchers in relation to AP (Blyth, 2021; Hart, 2013). This is significant as rural living has been linked to specific challenges such as long commutes to AP (Taylor, 2012) or limited access to support services (Preece & Lessner Lištiaková, 2021). This is in contrast to much previous work in this area which has taken place in urban areas (Bovell, 2022; Kinsella, 2017; Wilson, 2014).

Furthermore, the vast majority of this literature occurs before the Covid 19 pandemic, an event which has increased mental health needs of children and young people (e.g., Kauhanen et al., 2022) as well as gaps in learning (Christakis, 2020). This is especially relevant given children who attend AP may be disproportionally from a disadvantaged background (HM Gov, 2022a; Goudeau et al., 2021), who are likely to have been more negatively impacted by the pandemic (Bayrakdar & Guveli, 2020; Holt & Murray, 2022). While Bovell (2022) did research during the Covid 19 pandemic, the impact of this was not commented upon in analysis. Such a significant event connotes fresh exploration into the conditions which affect motivation within AP.

The following research questions will direct the study:

Research Questions (RQs):

1. What do children in secondary AP perceive as affecting their motivation to learn?
2. What do staff in secondary AP perceive as affecting the motivation to learn of the children they work with?

Chapter 2: Empirical Chapter

Abstract

This study aimed to explore staff and students' views on what affects motivation to engage in learning within secondary Alternative Provision (AP). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff (n=four) and students (n=five) across three APs in a rural county. Interview data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022a). Analysis was conducted through the lens of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Findings emphasised the importance of students' feeling a sense of acceptance within the peer group (relatedness). Students achieved this through negotiation of social norms, which at times could be counter to those endorsed by the AP. Positive staff relationships were linked to less disruptive behaviour and increased engagement in learning (relatedness). At times systemic factors curtailed students experience of volition (e.g., not choosing to attend AP), but staff listening to students' needs and offering choice within lessons was found to be supportive of engagement (autonomy). Tailored differentiation of lesson content was considered to be central to encouraging learning, alongside supporting pupils to build positive perceptions of themselves as learners (competence). The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is touched on across relevant themes, staff reporting it has been difficult for students to reintegrate due to increased academic gaps and periods of unstructured time away from school. Issues related to transport are also discussed, indicating that attending AP in a rural county has unique challenges. Recommendations for future practice are commented upon with regard to the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP). Research limitations and future directions are also considered.

Introduction and Context

This paper seeks to explore the experiences of staff and children in a full-time Alternative Provision (AP), with a focus on motivation in secondary education. While AP can be used as an umbrella term including specialist provision such as hospital schools or

settings which provide part-time placements (Danechi, 2018; DfE, 2013), this research concerns three AP academies, primarily catering for permanently excluded children.

The main route for students to become attendees of AP is via exclusion (DfE, 2018b). School exclusions have been rising in England in comparison to the rest of the United Kingdom (UK; McCluskey et al.,2019). The Timpson review (2019) cites the rate of permanent exclusion as doubling between 2011 and 2018. Permanent exclusions declined in the academic year 2020/2021, with 1000 fewer permanent exclusions being recorded (HM Gov, 2022a). However, it is unclear how the Covid 19 pandemic affected these figures, as the number of students permanently excluded has continued to rise since pupils returned to school full-time (HM Gov, 2022a). High levels of exclusion increase strain on the AP sector (Male, 2022). It is therefore important to note the rate of exclusion in the county in which this research is conducted is over double the national average (HM Gov, 2022a).

Covid 19 Pandemic

Emergent research highlights the impact the Covid 19 pandemic has had on the mental health of children and associated rises in behavioural difficulties (Essler et al., 2021; O'Sullivan et al., 2021; Meherali et al., 2021; Samji et al., 2021; Waller et al., 2021). There are similar concerns regarding increases in learning gaps (Christakis, 2020).

Moreover, it has been argued that the Covid 19 pandemic increased emphasis on digital and at home learning, given the costs associated with tele-learning, authors have argued that this is likely to have increased the social class achievement gap (British Psychological Society; BPS, 2022a; Tarabini, 2022). This is particularly relevant to AP as excluded students are four times more likely to be in receipt of free school meals (FSM; HM Gov, 2022b). FSM are often used as an indicator of socio-economic status (BPS, 2022a). This is a concern given the poorer outcomes for students in AP prior to the pandemic. The white paper "*Education Excellence Everywhere*" published in 2016 described children who

have been educated in AP as achieving worse than peers by "every objective measure" (HM Gov, 2016 p.102).

Previous Research

Pupils attending AP are often characterised as disengaged and have poorer outcomes than their mainstream counterparts (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; McCluskey et al., 2015; Mills & Thomson, 2018; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015; Smyth & McInerney, 2013). The literature review chapter cites studies which explore the views of children and staff in AP, highlighting a particular focus on the importance of relationships (particularly with staff) in supporting engagement for children in AP (e.g., Hart, 2013; Malcolm, 2021;Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). Alongside this, curricula tailored to student need (e.g., Malcolm, 2019; Mills & Thomson, 2018) and being offered choice in learning (e.g., Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Thomson & Pennacchia, 2016) were viewed as supportive for engagement. Research detailed in the literature review as impacting engagement in learning within AP is summarised below in table 2.

Table 2.

Supportive factor influencing engagement	Impact	Supporting reference
	NB: only detailed if research notes more specific or different outcome to improved engagement in learning	
Positive student-staff relationships	• Improved academic outcomes	• Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson (2016)

	• Improved social-emotional outcomes	• Cockerill (2019)
	• Increased sense of belonging	• Hart (2013)
		• Jalali & Morgan (2018)
		• Michael & Frederickson (2013)
Positive student-student relationships	• Management of stress	• Hart (2013)
Positive staff-parent relationship	• Greater encouragement to attend AP	• Hart (2013)
Curriculum design (perceived relevancy to students' lives and future hopes)		• Hart (2013)
		• Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson (2016)
		• Michael & Frederickson (2013)
		• Mills & Thompson, (2018)
		• Thomson & Pennacchia (2016)
Differentiation (learning appropriately tailored to needs of students)		• Hart (2013)
		• Jalali & Morgan (2018)
		• Malcolm (2019)
		• Michael & Frederickson (2013)
		• Nicholson & Putwain, (2015)

		• Putwain et al. (2016)
Extracurricular activities		• Michael & Frederickson (2013) • Thomson & Pennacchia (2016)
Interaction with wider community		• Mills & Thompson (2018)
Choice (having views valued and autonomy in learning)	• Improved behaviour	• Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson (2016) • Malcolm (2019) • Michael & Frederickson (2013) • Mills & Thomson, (2018) • Thomson & Pennacchia (2016)
Lack of choice (due to placement in AP)	• Frustration voiced by students and families • Barrier to engagement in learning	• Mills & Thompson (2018) • Michael & Frederickson (2013)
Perceptions around learning (viewing AP as a "fresh start")		• Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson (2016)

		• Thomson & Pennacchia (2016)
Perceptions around learning (external attribution bias for behaviours)	• Difficulty maintaining behavioural change	• Jalali & Morgan (2018)
Smaller classes		• Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson (2016) • Hart (2013) • Michael & Frederickson (2013) • Mills and Thompson (2018) • Nicholson & Putwain (2015)
Calm structured environment		• Jalali & Morgan (2018) • Michael & Frederickson (2013), • Nicholson & Putwain (2015).
Consistent behavioural expectations		• Hart (2013) • Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson (2016) • Michael & Frederickson (2013)

Motivation is thought of as the internal process behind engagement (An, 2015; Hidi & Renninger, 2019). Recent published research in the area of motivation within AP is limited and summarised below.

Mainwaring & Hallam (2010) compared "possible selves" (Markus & Nurius, 1986) of secondary students in a Pupil Referral Unit (type of AP; PRU) in London compared to a mainstream school. All pupils in mainstream school were able to create positive future selves, compared to 68% of those in the PRU. Markus & Nurius (1986) proposed positive selves act to engender motivation, therefore indicating difficulties in this area for students in PRU. Similar explorations of possible selves in PRUs with students were conducted in doctoral theses by Thacker (2017) and Cosma (2020). Positively, all students in Thacker and Cosma's research reported positive possible future selves. However, Thacker reported concerns about a lack of subgoals or strategies to achieve aims. Cosma noted positive staff relationships as an enabling factor to achieving goals, but highlighted low levels of motivation generally. Neither study considered staff views.

More current research has touched upon motivation in analysis and indicates challenges. Jalali & Morgan (2018) conducted interviews with students in AP and found pupils tended to experience an external locus of control for behaviour, negatively impacting their motivation. Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson (2016) interviewed students who had been excluded or were at risk of exclusion exploring factors linked to disengagement from learning. Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson proposed the motivation of the young people in AP may be negatively impacted by their home circumstances. Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson asserted this was as parents were typically less likely to be able to help with school work or offer careers guidance. Despite these challenges, statutory guidance places a duty on AP to improve motivation and engagement in learning for their students (DfE, 2013). The challenges noted in research alongside the context of a statutory responsibility to support motivation in AP make this a pertinent area to study.

Critique of Literature

The studies cited above provide a wealth of useful information for supporting children in AP. However, gaps remain. No research was conducted in a rural county, this may limit access to support services (Black et al., 2019; Preece & Lessner Lištiaková, 2021) and increase commute times to AP (Taylor, 2012).

Much of the research on student experience in AP comes from the field of education or sociology, therefore it is often not analysed with reflection on psychological theory (Mills & Thomson, 2018; Malcolm, 2019; Martin-Denham, 2020, McClusky, 2015; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Thomson & Pennacchia, 2016). The consideration of theory in analysis could help provide a deeper exploration of motivating factors with regards to engagement in education.

The literature emphasises the protective nature of positive relationships with staff for this group (e.g., Malcolm, 2019, 2020; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Student-staff relationships are described as more emphasized in AP given the smaller number of students (Farouk, 2014). Farouk asserts that as teaching staff are directly involved in teaching, it is not feasible to direct pedagogical improvements without their consultation. There has been a minimal amount of research exploring the voice of staff in AP (Malcolm, 2020). As such this is pertinent to include within the current project.

Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT) proposes that humans are naturally inclined towards curiosity and learning, but that this propensity is either supported or stifled by the conditions individuals exist within (Ryan & Deci, 2020). SDT is comprised of six mini theories which are discussed in detail in the literature review chapter. The fulfilment of basic psychological needs (BPN) is central to supporting motivation and well-being (Cook & Artino, 2016; Ryan et al., 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2020). BPN are as follows: *competence* (feeling efficacious and able to develop capabilities), *relatedness* (feeling cared for and connected to others), and

autonomy (experiencing own behaviour as volitional).

Within SDT the more internally perceived the locus of control for an activity is, the more motivating it is thought to be (Ryan et al., 2019). SDT proposes people have a natural predisposition to integrate social rules, the internalisation of these rules is supported by experiencing relatedness to those who are endorsing the behaviour (Ryan & Deci, 2019).

See Table 3 for overview of levels of regulated motivation. Based upon taxonomy of motivation within Ryan & Deci (2020).

Table 3.

Intrinsic motivation (Most autonomous)	Activity is engaged with for the "sake of it". Perceived locus of control is with the student.
Integrated regulation	When an activity is in line with an endorsed aspect of the self (e.g., "I am training for this sports day", becomes an extension of "I'm an athlete"). Internally perceived locus of control.
Identified regulation	Value is seen in the external request, and it becomes internalised, becoming part of the individuals sense of self (e.g., a school ethos of not littering). Internally perceived locus of control.
Introjected regulation	Student obeys external requests to maintain self-esteem (e.g., studying for a

	test to avoid shame linked to failure). External locus of control.
External regulation (Most controlled)	Least autonomous/lowest personal value seen in task. Behaviour is engaged in to gain a reward or avoid a punishment (e.g., a student wears uniform correctly to avoid detention). External locus of control.

SDT has been frequently used to explore motivation to engage in education (Cheon & Reeve, 2015; Deci & Ryan, 2016; Reeve, 2012; Jang et al., 2016; Saeed & Zyngier, 2012). SDT in the specific context of AP has been considered within doctoral theses (Bovell, 2022; Kinsella, 2017; Wilson, 2014). These papers will be described below.

Kinsella (2017) explored learner engagement during a visual arts initiative in a PRU in the North-West of England. Interviews, questionnaires and observations were considered in a case-study design exploring staff and student experience of typical AP in comparison to the art initiative. SDT was used alongside Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT; Engeström, 2001) to explore data.

Staff were interviewed, exploring what they considered supported student engagement. Staff reported finding it easier to build relationships in vocational subjects as these provided concrete evidence of success which could be shared with families. Student choice in learning was limited by practicalities (e.g., class sizes, timetabling). Concerns were raised about supporting students to develop positive views of themselves as learners. The autonomy of staff was viewed as constrained by school wide initiatives, pressure from senior leadership and wider systemic demands (e.g., national curriculum). It was felt these tensions placed upon staff impacted their ability to provide competence and autonomy supportive teaching.

Verbal interactions were observed and analysed using Rainio's (2008) framework to explore agency across lessons (art, ICT and engineering). Art and engineering showed high levels of collective action and interaction which was construed as expressing agency. This section of the study went on to be published (Kinsella et al., 2019). Observations were conducted in art, ICT and engineering classes using a schedule which explored student BPN fulfilment and BPN supportive teaching. Kinsella (2017, p.197) describes a "substantial difference" in the "socio-contextual" properties of classroom spaces, different emphasis being placed upon each need in subjects. Unfortunately this did not include observation in a core lesson, which would have been interesting given the different pressures within these subjects (Francis et al, 2017).

Questionnaire and interview data was gathered from students to explore their perception of need fulfilment with a specific focus on a visual arts initiative. Student perceptions were found to be diverse across pupils and BPN.

Kinsella comments on systemic pressures affecting need supportive teaching. This research took place in a LA maintained AP, and may have somewhat different external demands than an AP academy (the setting in which the current research took place). Academies are described as affording more agency to individual settings (Gill & Janmaat, 2019). This is important to consider given the political objective for complete academisation remains (DfE, 2016). A strength of Kinsella's study is the multiple sources of data from which to triangulate. However, Kinsella did not gather qualitative data from students in relation to typical AP learning. This means greater depth and nuance could be added to the picture of student experience of BPN within AP Bovell (2022) interviewed four students in a PRU in London exploring their experiences of mainstream school and permanent exclusion. Bovell aimed to build a picture of the lived experience of excluded children using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith et al., 2009). Six overarching themes were identified, three of which reflected negative experiences students had in mainstream school (poor relationships, emotional consequences of unmet academic needs and behaviours adopted in

self-protection following difficult experiences i.e. avoiding challenges). A further theme concerned student perception of education, referring to learning as too difficult or dull. The final two themes concerned students' experience of permanent exclusion, "exclusion: a sense of relief" and "the evolving self". Permanent exclusion was reported by some students as leading to a greater sense of control over their behaviour as it changed their perception of education.

SDT is reflected upon in analysis. Bovell highlighted that relationships with staff which were underpinned by respect, care and security supported a student's experience of relatedness. However, Bovell described student accounts of permanent exclusion as characterised by relational disruption. Interestingly, Bovell reported students' experienced increases in their perception of autonomy following exclusion as they felt energised to "take control" of their lives. Bovell linked disengaged behaviour reported by students in mainstream school to a deficit in competence fulfilment.

The IPA approach allowed for in-depth exploration of students' experience of permanent exclusion offering valuable insights for how this may continue to affect pupils in AP (e.g., self-protective behaviours). However, it did not consider perspectives from staff within AP, which is key to informing pedagogical recommendations (Farouk, 2014). Likewise it did not offer the opportunity for students in AP to reflect on the provision they currently receive.

Wilson (2014) conducted semi-structured interviews with seven secondary age children who had experienced permanent exclusion and were now attending a PRU in London. Wilson used a mixture of inductive and deductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to compare how BPN were supported in the PRU, compared to their lives outside of school and (retrospectively) to mainstream. Overall the PRU context was found to be more supportive of BPN than mainstream school. Wilson asserted that greater fulfilment of competence and relatedness in the PRU lead to students internalising the settings social

expectations and as a result of this students experienced their behaviour as more autonomous.

Small class sizes and more vocational options for learning within the PRU were proposed by Wilson as competence supportive. Wilson described that students' permanent exclusion had contributed to negative self-concept for pupils. Students reported strong connections with staff, supporting relatedness. However, challenges with peer relationships were reported as occurring in both mainstream and the PRU. Student accounts indicated a perceived distance between themselves and peers within PRU. Wilson proposed this served to be protective against negative tropes which may be associated with this group. Social media was central to friendships outside of school.

Wilson's study generated useful insights, particularly details around peer relationships and the importance of social media for secondary age children. Similar to Bovell (2022) it did not include the voice of staff and was conducted in inner London. The experience of students may be different in a rural location

The relatively limited use of SDT in AP is interesting given the unique pressures which may be placed on BPN for these students. The fulfilment of autonomy may face challenges as attendance to AP is seldom a choice actively taken by students (Malcolm, 2018; Thomson & Pennachia, 2016), alongside subject options often being more limited in these settings (Lanskey, 2015; Mills & Thomson, 2018; Thomson & Pennachia, 2016). SDT's exploration of relatedness and what maintains quality connections to others (Knee & Browne, 2023) is particularly important given the high value placed on relationships in supporting engagement in AP which has been found in previous research (e.g., Hart, 2013; Michael & Fredrickson, 2013; Mills & Thomson, 2018; Jalali & Morgan, 2018). Transferring to AP involves removal from familiar peers and adults and has been described as social marginalisation (Arnez & Condry, 2021), which may impact relatedness. Furthermore, children who attend AP often have poorer attainment than peers (Mills & Thomson, 2018;

Timpson, 2019), potentially influencing feelings of competence which can be shaped by positive school experiences (Cook & Artino, 2016).

SDT is an appropriate theoretical framework to consider in analysis as this study centres on motivation, moreover the experience of learning in an AP presents distinctive pressures on basic psychological needs (noted above).

Kahu (2013) emphasised the need for qualitative research to explore the subtleties of experience for young people who are disengaged from education. Ryan & Deci (2020) considered that more qualitative research is necessary to develop the picture of what supports BPN in schools. Building on this Bovell (2022) advocated for more research using SDT with excluded children. The current project addressed these concerns through applying an SDT lens to qualitative data from a group often construed as disengaged (e.g., Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Malcolm, 2019). Importantly, previous research using SDT has not considered qualitative data from both staff and students focusing on typical learning within AP (Bovell, 2022; Kinsella, 2017; Wilson, 2014). Therefore, this research allowed for comparisons between the experience of the two groups which had not previously been consider.

A further consideration is that the bulk of literature was generated prior to the Covid 19 pandemic. While Bovell (2022) conducted their research during the pandemic they did not comment on how this impacted the lives of students in AP. It is important to consider as the pandemic has been linked to increased mental health needs (Kauhanen et al., 2022), challenging behaviour (Schaffer et al., 2021), alongside increased gaps in learning (Christakis, 2020). All of these factors are thought to more significantly impact disadvantaged children (Bayrakdar & Guveli, 2020; Holt & Murray, 2022). This is relevant for AP settings, the populations of which may be disproportionally from lower socio-economic backgrounds (HM Gov, 2022b).

Aims of Present Study

The study sought to alleviate concerns around the lack of staff voice in AP research (Malcolm, 2020). It is hoped that it will develop understanding of the challenges experienced by students in an AP in a rural county. The research aimed to explore what affects motivation to engage in education for secondary age pupils in AP.

The following research questions directed the study:

Research Questions (RQs)

1. What do children in secondary alternative provision perceive as affecting their motivation to learn?
2. What do staff in secondary alternative provision perceive as affecting the motivation to learn of the children they work with?

Design

A qualitative methodology is appropriate to address the above research questions as they are concerned with individuals' perception of their experiences (Willig, 2008). Critical realism (CR) was both the ontological and epistemological stance that this research was conducted from. Ontology refers to assumptions made about the world, and therefore what can be known about it (Ormston et al., 2014). Epistemology describes assumptions that are made about how it is possible to learn about the world (Ormston et al., 2014).

CR affirms a realist ontological position, that of an objective world which exists independent of human interpretation (Gorski, 2013; Pilgrim, 2019). Specifically CR asserts that reality exists across three stratospheres: the empirical (which can be experienced), the actual (events and phenomena which may or may not be experienced) and the real (unobservable causal mechanisms; Booker, 2021; Buch-Hansen & Nielsen, 2020). CR employs epistemological relativism, acknowledging that all knowledge is discursively bound

and that humans have their own interpretations based upon individual belief systems, which lead to actions (Archer et al., 1999; Vincent & O'Mahoney, 2018). This paradigm mirrored the researcher's view that any knowledge is moulded through the eyes of the investigator. Likewise, CR is interested in generating information which works in the best interests of others, hoping to engage in "social movements to change structures" (Buch-Hansen & Nielsen, 2020, p.79). This aligns with the aim of the study.

As the above RQs aim to capture perceptions and accounts of practice, Braun and Clarke (2013) advised either focus groups or interviews as appropriate methods to facilitate this, interviews being particularly well suited to perception type questions. Previous research in the area has used a range of methodologies including: case study (Thomson & Pennachia, 2016; Thomson & Pennachia, 2014; Kinsella, 2017), mixed methods including survey data (Malcolm, 2020), semi-structured interviews (Cockerill, 2019; Hart, 2013; Jalali & Morgan, 2018; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). In line with dominantly used methodology, this research utilised semi-structured interviews. This allowed for responsive researcher-participant interactions, which is associated with quality interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Method of Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was chosen to explore the perceptions of what supports motivation to engage in secondary AP education. RTA is described as a flexible method without the theoretical commitments of contemporary analyses such as Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) or interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Braun and Clarke, 2021a). It was important that taking part in the project was useful to the settings in which the research was conducted. This was something discussed in initial contracting as well as being personally significant to the researcher. It was felt that RTA would yield more accessible data to be communicated to stakeholders than for example FDA or IPA. Accessibility of RTA for yielding "actionable outcomes" is emphasised as a strength of the

approach by Braun & Clarke (2021a, p.42). RTA aligns with big Q methodology as it acknowledges the researcher's interpretation of coding as a fundamentally subjective process, rejecting the notion that there are 'true' codes waiting to be found (Braun & Clarke, 2022a;2023). This aligned with the project's chosen ontological and epistemological stand point of CR (Braun & Clarke, 2022a, 2022b).

The process of RTA involves collating patterns of shared meaning that occur throughout the data and shaping themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022a). A principally inductive approach was taken as data was open-coded (there was no use of a coding framework), instead analysis aimed to represent meanings important to participants. Nevertheless, Braun and Clarke (2022a) recognise that following procedure does not guarantee good quality TA. Researchers must also report which theoretical underpinnings have informed analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022a). Therefore it is important to make transparent that the researcher conducted the project with SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2019), in mind as a theoretical lens for analysis.

Stages of Thematic Analysis

The six phases of RTA as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022a) were used to explore data and generate themes related to supporting motivation in learning within secondary AP.

1. Familiarisation with dataset. This involved engaging and immersing oneself within the data. The quality of coding in RTA is devised from deep engagement with data accompanied by reflexive analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) This involved the researcher transcribing the data, listening to audio recordings several times as well as noting ideas that related to analysis. Example transcript in appendix 1.
2. Coding. This meant systematically working through data in a detailed way, identifying data relevant to research questions and applying descriptors to them (called code labels). Coding occurred at different levels, initially more semantic and close to the

meaning of the data, alongside developing more conceptual (latent) codes. Coding was supported using Nvivo 12 software which helped to organise codes. Example codes and related data are in appendix 2. Memos were made to note down emergent ideas (examples in appendix 3).

3. Generating initial themes. Patterns of meaning are identified at this stage and clustered from across the data. Themes are only viable if there are occurrences across datasets. Codes were grouped using NVivo. Initial candidate themes were formed and sectioned (where relevant) into subcategories. Handwritten draft thematic maps were used to aid this process, see appendix 4 for examples.

4. Reviewing and developing themes. This stage ensures themes make sense in relation to the full dataset, with regard to the research questions. Some candidate themes were dissolved entirely (e.g., aspects of comments on "school identity" were recoded into "negotiating self within peer group" and "perception of education").

5. Refining, defining and naming themes. This phase involves making sure themes are distinct and centred on strong core concepts. This stage involved the generation of definitions for themes and subthemes, ensuring the meaning and boundaries of each theme. At this stage some themes were reviewed to be 'topic summaries' rather than describing shared meaning. This meant that "Choice and control affecting learning" was changed to an overarching theme and subdivided into "Individual provision in response to choice" and "Systemic influences on choice and control". Example theme in appendix 5. Hand written thematic maps continued to be developed and added to. See appendix 6 for examples.

6. Writing up. Final themes are represented in a thematic map, which notes relationships between themes. Analytic narrative and data extracts are combined to generate a "story" from the data. This involved selecting data extracts which evidence themes from across data sets. Reflective analysis was written and linked to research. Theme boundaries continued to be solidified and shift at this point. For example how staff managed shifting hierarchies of fluctuating peer groups moved

from "Staff management of challenging behaviour" (theme boundary was around behaviour management and impact of other students' challenging behaviour) to "negotiating self in peer group" (theme boundary was around the power of peer dynamics).

While some papers call for strategies such as "inter-rater reliability" to help guard against bias in analysis, Braun and Clarke (2022a; 2023) have argued it is inappropriate to apply this to RTA. This is because within RTA the researchers' subjective interaction with the data is a resource to build upon in analysis, rather than a hinderance to reliable research. Furthermore, from a CR point of view it is not feasible to "discover truth" without the lens of subjective experience, therefore a secondary coder would not ensure "accurate" data but rather just mean that data was subjectively interacted with twice.

The decision was taken to analyse data from both participant groups together (e.g., search for shared meaning across all data sets). It was felt that this would allow for a more refined exploration of how motivating factors were viewed by different participant groups (e.g., considering subtleties in how the same pattern of meaning may be viewed by staff/students). Thereby allowing for greater "crystallisation" of themes e.g., developing nuanced and multifaceted themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.449).

Sample Size and Participants

The sample size was influenced by pragmatic factors such as a lack of returned parental consent forms or settings having competing priorities and therefore struggling to facilitate sending consent forms out, alongside time constraints. How this impacted the project is explored within the reflective chapter.

Purposive sampling was undertaken with a large education trust in the East of England acting as gate keeper. The trust provides provision for a range of mainstream and specialist settings. All secondary age pupils were invited to take part. Student participants were offered a £5 "love to shop" voucher as recompense for taking part. The decision to

include compensation is discussed in the reflective chapter. They were also given a certificate recognising their contribution. Blank example in appendix 7.

Initially, recruitment was planned from two of the three possible schools (one in a city, one in a small village), however due to challenges recruiting the research project was extended to the final school (in a large town). Participants were drawn from all three AP secondary schools.

Inclusion criteria for student participants was as follows:

- Full time student at the school (e.g., not on roll elsewhere)
- Secondary age
- Have attended the setting for at least half a term

Inclusion criteria for staff participants was as follows:

- Teacher or teaching assistant
- Have worked at the setting for at least half a term

The criteria around attending the setting for at least half a term was so that participants would have a clear understanding of the culture of the school and learning within it.

Staff were purposively recruited through discussion with the researcher presenting the idea in person whilst being on individual AP sites (including presenting the project at a staff meeting at Woodside), as well as the head teacher of each establishment emailing round the staff information and consent form (see appendix 8 for staff information and consent form). Figure 1 describes the in person route for staff recruitment. Figure 2 depicts staff recruitment via email. Student recruitment is explained in the "Research with Vulnerable Participants" section.

Figure 1.

In Person Staff Recruitment
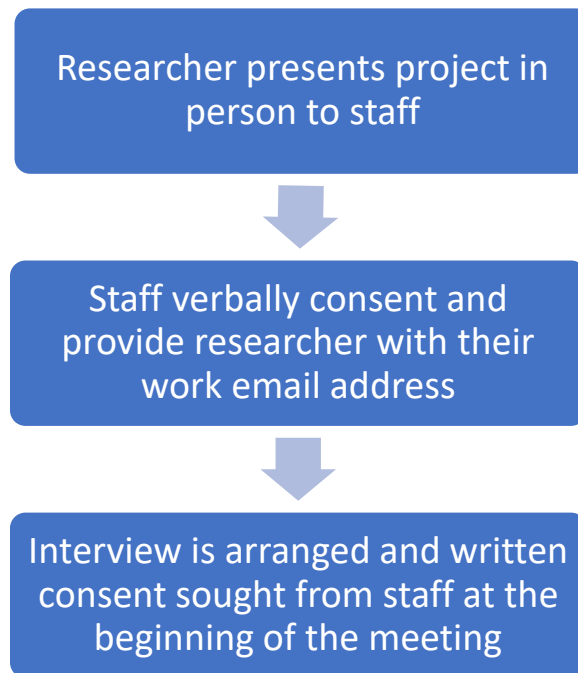
Figure 2.

Email Recruitment of Staff
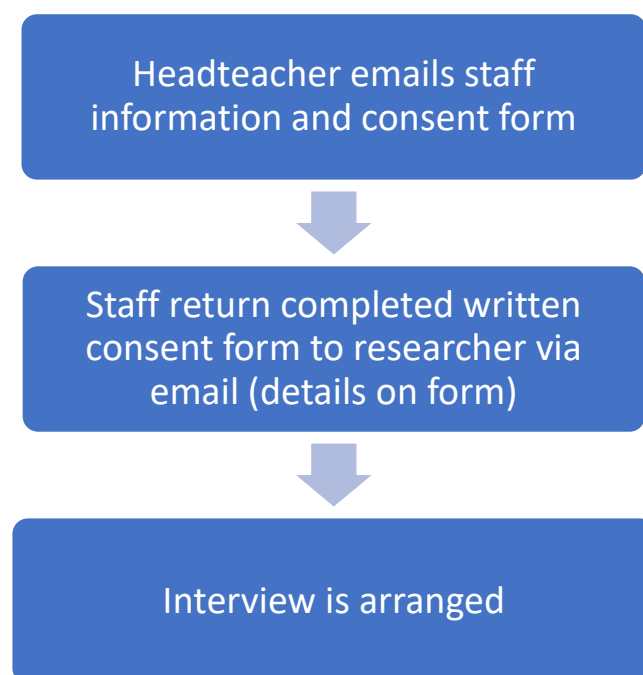
Research with Vulnerable Participants

Students who attend AP have typically been excluded from mainstream school. The litany of vulnerabilities that exclusion is linked to has been outlined in research, (HM Gov, 2022a; Graham et al., 2019). Braun and Clarke (2013) describe "hidden" groups in research as those whose membership maybe stigmatised. Participant groups may be "hard to reach" when (amongst other reasons) taking part may be risky in some way (e.g., social risk such as loss of status; Ellard-Grey et al., 2015). It was felt that children in AP could be described as belonging to both groups. The researcher acknowledged the need to proceed with caution due to the potential vulnerabilities of the participant group. Nevertheless, members of such groups can experience taking part in research as empowering or therapeutic (Liamputtong, 2007).

In line with Liamputtong's (2007) recommendations, procedural considerations were undertaken to make taking part a safe and positive experience for participants through research decisions such as choosing not to ask about events leading up to exclusion or home/school relationships. In line with other researchers who have worked with "hard to reach" populations (Shedlin et al., 2011; Sutherland & Collins-Fantasia, 2012) key terminology was changed in the hopes of making the project more accessible i.e. interview was changed to conversation. Ellard-Grey (2015) advocates for rapport building with potential participants before attempting to recruit. Unfortunately this was not feasible given the nature of my role within the local authority (LA) and time pressures. However, recruitment was first attempted via spending a full school day in each setting speaking to students and staff about the project. The researcher spoke to students in small groups, with the aim of building trust and rapport as advised by Liamputtong (2007). In addition, form tutors were asked to discuss the project with their tutees if I had not been able to speak to them (some students attended on part-time timetables despite only being on roll in the AP),

using the student information and consent form (appendix 9) as a prompt. If student participants verbally consented to taking part, a parent/carer consent form was sent home via email or a paper copy (whatever the setting thought would be most suitable). Once this was returned to the AP, an interview was arranged. Written consent from the student was sought at the beginning of this meeting. This process is described in figure 3. See appendix 10 for parent/carer information and consent form.

Figure 3.

Student Recruitment Process

Researcher or form tutor presents idea to student

If student gives verbal consent a consent form is sent home to parents/carers either via email or letter

Once that is returned, an interview is arranged and written consent is sought from the student at the beginning of the interview
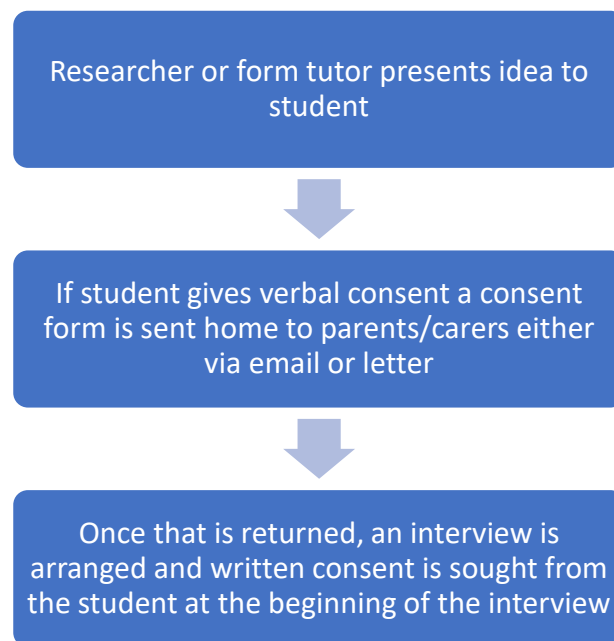
Data collection

Interviews were conducted in person in the setting of the child or staff member, with the exception of one staff interview which took place via voice call (using Microsoft teams), audio recordings were made with participants' consent to enable transcription. Transcription was verbatim and completed by the researcher using Express Scribe software to manipulate speed and loop audio. Student participants were offered the chance to play an ice breaker game (e.g., uno) at the start of the interview. Participants were sent their completed transcripts to review for member checking and for the opportunity to change their pseudonym.

To work in conjunction with the safeguarding policy of the trust which runs the three AP settings, a member of staff was present for each interview. The researcher did not have control over who this member of staff was but did note their role. Confidentiality was discussed at the start of each interview with the staff member. Wherever possible it was requested that the staff member be unobtrusive i.e. sitting at a desk in the room, appearing engaged in other work. Participants were offered the choice of defining their gender and ethnicity on the consent form before each interview. Student participant details are listed in table 4, staff participant details are in table 5. All names (including settings) are pseudonyms.

Table 4.

Student participant table

Name	Setting	Year	Gender	Ethnicity	Staff member present
Dave	Valley Park (Nurture)	9	Male	White British	Head teacher
Joseph	Valley Park (Nurture)	10	Prefer not to say	Prefer not to say	Head teacher
Paul	St Margaret's	11	Male	Prefer not to say	PE teacher
Kieran	Woodside	8	Male	Prefer not to say	Cooking teacher
Daniella	Woodside	10	Female	White	Maths teacher

Table 5.

Staff participant table

Name	Setting	Role
Theresa	Valley Park	Core subject teacher
Peter	Woodside	TA (primarily in 'the zone' area of Woodside which delivers vocational courses).
Lily	Woodside	Core subject teacher
Lucy	Woodside	TA (primarily in nurture)

Analysis of Research Data

An integrated approach was taken to interweave traditional "results" and "discussion" sections, as "analysis". This is suggested by Braun and Clarke (2022a). It was deemed to be appropriate for this project as it offers a cohesive means of presenting themes (including the richness of quotations) alongside links to existing research, avoiding unnecessary repetitions. Inductive RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2022a) is discussed alongside consideration of previous relevant research and SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2019). A thematic map is presented below in Figure 4.

Research questions are commented upon throughout in relation to themes.

Figure 4.

Thematic map.

Themes are represented in blue, subthemes in orange. Black arrows indicate relationships between themes.
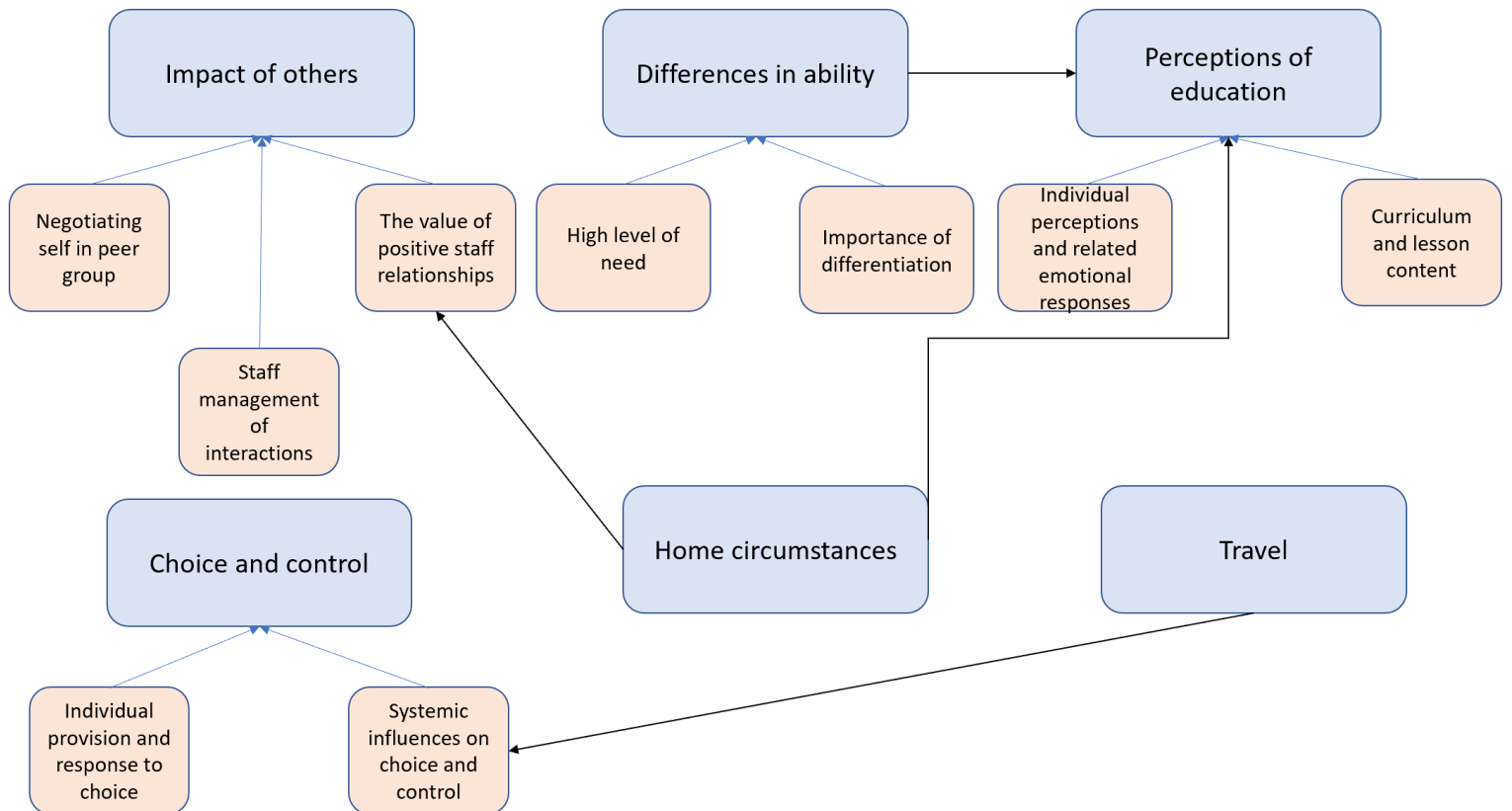
Theme 1: Impact of Others

This theme captures the significant role relationships with staff and other students played in affecting the experience of learning in an AP school.

Subtheme: Negotiating Self in the Peer Group

This subtheme captures the dominant role the wider student group (and associated norms) played within the lives of students and how this shaped their ability to engage in learning. Students and staff spoke about the management of negotiating the self in the peer

group being an intentional activity which required the employment of a range of different skills. The peer group was considered as being almost inescapable given the rise of social media and interweaved lives of students in the community.

All but one interviewee commented on the need for students to negotiate peer dynamics within the school. The powerful drive to be accepted by the group is captured by the quotes below.

Lily (teacher): I think a lot of them are…a sort of sheep culture really as soon as we've got a strong alpha female or male some of them will just follow because they need to feel wanted

Daniella (student): Cause like it's the only way you can really make friends now to make fun of people and to act mean because… It does sound a bit funny but it's also mean but…it's just really weird

Both Lily and Daniella describe adherence to social norms within the school, Daniella expressly describes how it affects interactions encouraging a hostile environment. The extracts above tap into a presumed underlying need for acceptance shaping student behaviour. Group norms for initiating friendships are dominant to the extent that making fun of others and acting mean is viewed as the "only" way to gain acceptance from peers. Students who attend the AP school have experienced social exclusion in the form of removal from their previous school. The want to feel accepted is considered to be one of the most basic needs for humans across many models of psychology (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Maslow, 1987). The perception of peers on an individual's own evaluation of their self-worth becomes especially dominant during adolescence (Foulkes &

Blakemore, 2016). Adolescence is a time when students experience increased sensitivity to social exclusion (Sebastian et al., 2010). It is possible that this is particularly meaningful for these students as they have already experienced exclusion at least once (Dishion, Piehler & Myers, 2008). To gain acceptance, students are more reluctant to take social risks or act in ways which go against dominant peer group norms (Blakemore, 2018; Tomova et al., 2021).

All staff spoke about relationships with other pupils as something that needed to be carefully considered by students. Participants across both groups described students managing how they are perceived by others through: how they dress, reluctance in showing positive engagement in school activities or relationships with teachers and how students speak. The importance of this is such that even if a student is perceived as feeling safe by staff, they are unable to show it.

Peter (TA): yeah yeah cause most the kids they feel safe here but they don't want to admit it

Researcher: Mhmm

Peter (TA): erm because they're like street cred and how big they are

Lily (teacher): And again part of that I think is the social element that that's what they think they've come to school for and who's got the nicest tracksuit and all the rest of that is part of that social hierarchy

Lucy (TA): … we've got a kid in our class who thinks he's a big man… (laughter) He comes in sunglasses on... But he's only 12, puffer jacket on and a massive vape. So you know and he thinks like pret- he's, he's is a little boy.

Ideas about the identity of those attending AP schools and the associated cultural norms are summarised by Daniella (student) noting "*they built this school to literally grow up a load of road men".* Road men being slang for gang members. Daniella goes further to describe the school as "*literally a prison school*". Paul (student) describes how students "*obviously*" do the opposite of what staff tell them, because *"…it's a AP school. It's full of sp*st*cs*". Both Daniella and Paul link attending the AP to negative labels. The labels are associated with behavioural norms which are in conflict with expectations for behaviour and engagement held by staff within the AP (e.g., Paul describing students will "*obviously*" do the opposite of what staff tell them).

The creation of a "code" (a set of informal norms which direct behaviour) by which to live is particularly associated with marginalised communities or with those who lack access to resources (Bell et al., 2022). As engaging in education has the potential to lead to a more powerful position within society (e.g., increased access to resources), adhering to a "code" carries the risk of a cyclical lack of access to capital particularly when the cultural code is one which engenders being hostile to behavioural norms endorsed by the AP. Bell et al described codes as often existing in prisons, marginalised community groups and schools. Daniella references a cultural trope about AP, which is the idea of AP being a one-way route to prison, the so-called 'PRU to prison pipeline' (Howell, 2022). Given that prisons are a place for those who have failed to meet the standards set by society, it is telling that such a comparison is invoked.

Notably two students who learn within the Nurture provision of Valley Park reported positive relationships with their peer group. Joseph described his preference for being in Nurture, describing the main AP as more "*chaotic*", he noted "*I'd probably get up to shenanigans"* if he was placed there*.* This is another example of the wider peer culture having the power to shape individual behaviour (encouraging "*shenanigans*"). However, Joseph is protected by virtue of his Nurture group providing a level of separation and its own "mini culture" within the school. This effect is echoed by Lucy (teaching assistant) who

expressly names the "*slightly different culture*" of Nurture which means that students more readily hand work in and follow behavioural expectations, because pupils want to "*be the same as the rest of them*". Dave (Nurture student) described that he would like to be able to help other students more. Nevertheless, there exists an element of hesitancy in engaging in interactions in Dave's account as he goes on to say he does not want to be forced to sit with other students, indicating that perhaps maintaining some distance still feels protective. This is reminiscent of Wilson (2014) who found students distanced themselves through their accounts from other PRU students, this is reflected in Dave's speech however he would like to make this distance physical rather than merely conceptual.

Harrison (2016) found students in a Nurture group experienced higher levels of belonging than when they were in mainstream classes. Feelings of belonging are linked to the experience of 'relatedness' within SDT (Hill & Pettit, 2013; La Guardia & Patrick, 2008). Organismic Integration Theory (OIT), one aspect of SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2019), asserts that humans are naturally motivated to internalise rules and values held by significant others (Pelletier & Rocchi, 2023). OIT proposes relatedness plays a key role in shaping the internalisation of social rules, as we pay more attention to those persons we value (Pelletier & Rocchi, 2023). It could be that students in the Nurture provision feel increased levels of relatedness with their peers/teacher and are therefore more inclined to internalise conventional expectations. This may be influenced by a more stable cohort (not changing from lesson to lesson) and individual teacher model of Nurture (in comparison to a traditional secondary model used in the rest of the AP).

Both staff and students recognised benefits of maintaining individuality and some separation from the social group. Staff members wanted students to be their own person. Students demonstrated their agency through recounting times they have resisted being drawn into disengaged behaviour.

Peter (TA):...don't follow ya mates be your own person and do what <u>you</u> want a do like if you want to be a brick layer

Researcher: Mm

Peter (TA): <u>do</u> the brick laying course not do an engineering course <u>just</u> to be with ya mates

Lily (teacher): And we will do the best for you but actually just choose your friendship group carefully

Researcher: Mhm

Lily (teacher): And be yourself don't be a sheep

Daniella (student): If somebody pressured me I'm gonna pressure them to do something that they don't wanna do. It's as simple as that. I'm not gonna do something cause somebody else tells me cause I've got my own choices.

Dave (student): Both. Most of the students aren't. They're very rude to the staff. I'm not. I'm not one of them. I'm never rude to anyone unless they're mean or rude to anyone else.

While preserving individuality was touched upon as important for students, there was a tension with needing to maintain or manage interactions with peers. There was a sense of the power the peer group held alongside the high risks associated with failure to manage this successfully. This involved competent use of interpersonal skills which are discussed below.

Daniella (student): It's more a fact that I most likely get along with all of the kids. It's just that I wouldn't join into what anything that they're doing. It's like we're calm. Like not friendly but alright.

Paul (student): I'm just cal- I'm mates with everyone I don't beef like I don't like fight nothing like that. so I'm literally calm with everyone

Researcher: [..] is that like a really important thing if you're going to be in an AP school to get on with people, do you think?

Paul (student): Yeah. cause if you get on with people, you're gonna get on in school. if you don't get on with eve-anyone. then you're just gonna get bullied cause yeah. everyone is just mates with everyone.

Daniella in the above extract typifies walking the tightrope of not being drawn into behaviour whilst maintaining functional relationships. In other extracts Daniella goes on to describe the consequences for her friend who does not manage this position which is being the victim of bullying. Paul goes further than Daniella in that he is both calm and friends with "*everyone*". To maintain this, he manages his emotions and behaviour. In other extracts Paul noted the importance of not being "*cocky*" or "*racist*" for students first arriving at the AP. The self-controlling of behaviour takes effort which can lessen the energy available for learning and attention (Baumeister & Vohs, 2016). It is possible this process occurs as a result of the management of behaviour and appearance needed to act in line with the "code" of AP. From a SDT perspective those motives which involve conflict (one aspect of personality having to be stifled or elevated to adhere to non-internalised social norms) are particularly energy consuming (Ryan & Deci, 2019).

The consequences of not being able to maintain good relations with peers are described by Paul as bullying, alongside being linked more broadly to "getting on" in school. The dominance of the peer group is exemplified within the final line "*everyone is just mates with everyone*". Other students are presented as a cohesive group, to be in conflict with the group would be a vulnerable position to hold. This is in line with research which notes deviance from fitting in with social norms as justification for bullying (Thornberg, 2015). Likewise, persons who have had social ties cut (i.e., school exclusion) are more motivated to avoid harmful evaluations by others (Park & Baumeister, 2015). This adds further power to the social norms of the peer group for children in an AP school.

> *Daniella (student): Unfortunately… Which I do see that point why he does get bullied cause he is one- somebody that you could instantly bully cause he he takes it. He also just doesn't want to get into a fight or anything like that so he takes it and walks off. But at the end of the day he moans about it all the time and it's really annoying to hear it.*
>
> *Researcher: Mm*
>
> *Daniella (student): It's like just deal with it*

Here Daniella outlines how walking away (a strategy adults may well advocate) is perceived as having negative consequences for a friend of hers. Without challenging bullies (including risking getting into a fight) he becomes a target for further bullying. Previous research in AP found that students and staff felt pupils exerted dominance to gain status within the setting (Lee, 2018). Daniella expresses frustration at her friend's approach. This may again be reflective of an antagonistic "code" of social norms which exist within the setting. Students in the AP must be able to assert themselves or risk being perceived as weak and therefore at risk of being bullied. Students must also be able to manage their

behaviour, not get into fights and remain "calm", or also be at risk of being bullied.

To further raise the stakes of this balancing act, technology and social media adds an inescapable quality to peer dynamics. As does students knowing each other outside of school, which was frequently commented upon across both staff and student extracts. Social media use has been positively related to more intense in person interactions with friends (Su et al., 2022). This appears to be reflected in accounts by staff, but was not mentioned by students. This may reflect the ubiquitous nature of technology and social media in the lives of "digitally native" students (Gentina & Chen, 2019), in comparison to staff who may have seen changes in use over their working life.

Lucy (TA): they have like erm a group chat that they're all part of even if they didn't know each other. they get added to this group chat by other- cause they all know each other somehow

Lily (teacher): And the social media culture. They all know everybody. They all know each other before they arrive

Researcher: Mm

Lily (teacher): It's as if they're all- some sort of gravity pull of… The cohort of students that we have and where they are in their social setting actually they seem to…gravitate towards the bases

Both extracts indicate the intensity of peer group cohesion. Students are aware of each other before attending school. A group chat which all students are added to epitomises the sense of group identity which students are thrust into. While there is limited research conducted in the UK, there is international research which indicates rural communities may

often experience concentrated disadvantage (Elder & Conger, 2000; Simes, 2018). This could be reflected in Lily's account of students in their "*social setting*" being attracted to the AP. Bell et al (2022) asserted that there can be a bidirectional relationship between schools and "the street" i.e. conflict which occurs in the community is likely to spill over into school and vice versa. There is potential that this risk could be increased given students who attend the AP appear to know each other in the community. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of research exploring the experiences of young people in AP in rural communities against which to contextualise the experiences of these students.

While it could be viewed as pressurising, there is an element of automatic group membership to which students in the AP are invited. This is also reflected in Paul's earlier comment "*everyone is just mates with everyone".* It's as though being excluded from mainstream school affords membership to a new group, that of AP students. Collective identities can support feelings of belonging (Hunt & Benford, 2004), and therefore may serve as a means of supporting relatedness for students.

Staff demonstrated an awareness of the power and fragility of peer group dynamics within their talk.

> **Lily (teacher):** *The dynamics can change so quickly even in one classroom. Depending on which students are in... Can be a completely different class to the day before*

> **Lucy (TA):** *But once they get involved in the other kids. that's when we have our issues of…other… other children is a massive barrier because if you've got a child. we've got a child in our group who <u>if</u> there are certain characters that aren't in he has a <u>fabulous</u> day*

The above quotes capture the fluctuating nature of peer interactions and the impact that has on learning. This paints a picture of schooling which is not predictable for either teachers or students. The AP setting adds increased difficulty as a student can arrive to the school at any time, therefore managing dynamics is an ongoing task. This presents a challenge for staff hoping to create a stable base for students who may struggle to manage their behaviour (Lee, 2018).

This management of student interaction was a particular challenge for one setting (Woodside) which provides vocational provision (called "The Zone") for the three sites, meaning students from the other two provisions would attend regularly.

Peter (TA): … the zone where more of the trouble is the older lot

Researcher: mm

Peter (TA): but it's just the zone for some reason there all the kids are attracted to it

Lily (teacher): Situation of lots of students we get all the secondary students the year 10s and 11s from the other bases come to visit this site and therefore the dynamics and the mix is... Toxic sometimes.

Theresa (teacher): [speaking in reference to the zone] They are still, they're probably facing challenges with numbers as well so you're putting very challenging pupils together.

It could be that high levels of different students moving through "The Zone" and by extension Woodside destabilises students' peer groups. Furthermore, there are implicit

groupings of students who are from different AP school settings, creating readymade "in groups" which may lead to preference and bias towards "out group" members (Rutland et al., 2010). Established peer group hierarchies are argued to limit intragroup conflict, evidenced by decreases in aggression throughout the school year (Pellegrini & Long, 2002). Peer group hierarchies are continually shifting in the AP and even more so at Woodside where students from the other two settings attend. Destabilisation may heighten feelings of being unsafe for pupils, therefore students can behave in a more dominant manner either as a form of protection or to increase social status (Lee, 2018; Waasdorp et al., 2013). If norms are present within the school which align to the identity of being a "*road man*" or "*big man*" then enacting relevant behaviours would be a means of gaining status in shifting social circles (Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2016). Norms associated with being a "road man" may be aggressive therefore creating a potentially violent cycle to behaviour.

Subtheme: Staff Management of Challenging Behaviour.

This subtheme reflects the dominant impact the behaviour of other students has on learning, how staff manage this and how students perceive this management.

> **Joseph (student):** *Yeah I guess just, nor- a bunch of kids just kids coming in, coming into the class at anytime and disrupting the lesson. Can be <u>very</u> annoying*

> **Paul (student):** *So like in PE we need more cues and stuff sir [referring to teacher present] they're it's always getting broken by little dickheads (laughter)*

> **Daniella (student):** *It's a bit distracting sometimes cause I mean when somebody is bashing the door every single second of their life. It gets a bit annoying. Somebody is literally drumming into your head*

Kieran (student): [on provision he would like] A school that the fire alarm don't go off every day

All students made some mention of their learning as being disrupted by the behaviour of other pupils. Students highlighted this as impacting lesson time and as causing damage to resources. While emotions are touched on in relation to this disruptive behaviour of others is generally presented as a nuisance. However there is a pervasive nature alluded to by Daniella, Joseph and Kieran. "*Someone literally drumming into your head*" indicates an inescapable quality to challenging behaviour of other pupils.

This echoes Michael and Frederickson (2013) who found disruptive behaviour was the predominant barrier mentioned by students to learning in AP. Calm environments are mentioned in the literature as supporting engagement in learning (Jalali & Morgan, 2018; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). Therefore it is unsurprising that disruptions are mentioned as being frustrating for students.

The majority of staff commented on the distractions of other students as being a barrier to learning.

Researcher: what's the the sort of biggest hinderance to [keeping students in the classroom] that at the moment do you think

Lily (teacher): Each other

Peter (TA):[…] cause yeah some you have some kids that just <u>won't</u> go to lessons and that will literally distract all day just walking round school trying doors, booting doors. It is the distractions which make it challenging for everyone.

The ubiquitous nature of distraction from others which was captured by students is reflected in Peter's account, of some students distracting "*all day*". The significance of the behaviour as distracting is captured in Lily's succinct two word answer. High levels of disruptive behaviour would be construed as interrupting one of the main elements of a supportive school climate; safety (Wang & Degol, 2016). While predominantly the behaviour of others was discussed in terms of inconvenience, there were some mentions of safety.

Daniella (student): Yeah it's more relaxed. Like honestly it's a bit safer. Not in a way. Like the kids. I wouldn't say they're a bit safer but I mean like in if you wanna talk to the teachers they seem a bit more human and stuff

Lily (teacher): We have so many students when we go through transitions as to whose coming and who can't go to this base cause they've got issues with a certain student and they can't go to that base or can't have them on the base at the same time and…

Lily (teacher) : […]there could be a student who lives in Hamsted who actually is going to the base at Brazenfield [names changed approximately a one hour 20 drive] because it's the safest place for them to go

The above quotes and comments about bullying noted in the subtheme of "negotiating self

within the peer group" indicate there is threat within the environment from other pupils. Wang & Degol (2016) described safety as relating to physical and emotional domains, alongside consistent order and discipline. Students who perceive difficulties in school safety are more likely to engage in aggressive behaviour (Elsaesser, et al., 2013). Wang & Degol (2016) highlight the importance of social norms relating to levels of aggression as shaping behaviour. Given the careful consideration of perception maintenance and "*road men*" identity that was noted in "negotiating self in the peer group" subtheme, it could be that norms within the AP are more accepting of confrontational behaviour. This behaviour then may be reinforced by occurrences of feeling unsafe within the AP environment.

With regards to SDT, disruptive behaviour in school could destabilise all three BPN (Burns et al., 2021). Threatening peer dynamics could hinder a student's experience of relatedness to the class group (Oostdam et al., 2019). Disruptive behaviour of others may limit the options available to students (e.g., staff may not feel able to offer certain resources for fear of damage), it may also raise the profile of controlling strategies within the classroom (i.e. praise and punishment) which can frustrate the experience of autonomy (Guay, 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Finally, staff under pressure to manage challenging behaviour are less likely to be able to provide an optimally structured learning environment which is best tailored to the academic stage of students, impacting competence (Ryan & Deci, 2020). This could therefore impact motivation in the classroom.

All staff discussed management strategies in place to control disruptive behaviour. These involved: distracting students from interactions, actively encouraging them to return to work, moving students to different classes or schools (out of 3 AP secondary provisions in the county) and having students in for only certain parts of the day.

Staff commented on how engagement waned over the course of the day, risking "losing" students at unstructured times. Breaks and lunch presented challenges as a greater number of students mixed at a time when staff are more limited in power to contain interactions.

Peter (TA): on a few days yeah, majority of them have come back but then there's that small few that don't come back, and you've lost them, and it's hard to get them back in and once they're back in it's then lunch time and you've lost em again […]

Lucy (TA): But if those characters <u>are</u> in we, if we're not careful we'll lose him right in the morning. So we need to try and catch him and if he doesn't realise they're in. cause he doesn't have a phone, he broke his phone. So he's <u>not</u> going to have them messaging him. So if we can keep him in this room and they're not coming to our door and we're able to keep him in somehow, cause he can leave if he wants. That's his choice. But if we can <u>somehow</u> keep him in here

The physical management of pupil movement is made more challenging by students damaging doors which section off different areas of each AP. The majority of staff and students made mention of conflict or damage occurring in relation to doors. It would seem that doors act as pressure points where staff need to physically manage student behaviour. The impact of challenges managing these pressure points were noted as stopping certain spaces in the school from being "safe". Peter (TA) says the following when referring to a sports room in Woodside.

Peter (TA): Not safe anymore cause there's no door

Lily (teacher): Or even when you personally are having a bad day or you've been hurt by a student from a door or something

Paul (student): *I mean try to but not like too much, like try to block the door or something cause you're just going to end up getting hurt because obviously they're going to do the opposite of what you tell 'em.*

Joseph (student): Maybe get it, at least fix the door every day so it doesn't get broken (laughter) all the time

Researcher: So which door is it

(teacher present remarks it's down the Nurture end of the AP)

Joseph (student): Door down our end is broke so basically the lock doesn't work on it

The frequency of "doors" being mentioned in participants' talk could indicate the importance of having a means to physically separate students. This may be reflective of the threat perceived as present in the wider peer group. The closing and locking of doors is a physical representation of power being exercised, a means of adults manipulating the space to support institutional control (Barker et al., 2010). Hays (2000) argues that architecture allows for the "expansion" or "resistance" of power (p. 428). Both Joseph (student) and Peter (TA) refer to wanting to be able to close space off, whereas Paul (student) and Lily (teacher) speak about aggression resulting from doors. It could be that what is a source of safety for some children represents control engendering resistance for others.

Students spoke about behaviour management at the AP school as more flexible than in previous settings. This was viewed positively, staff focusing less on minor infractions, not getting "*picked on for every single little thing*" (Paul student). The contraposition of this was that all students made some mention of perceiving staff to have limited powers they could employ to manage disruptive behaviour. Leniency by some was viewed as having gone too

far, staff being too flexible, leading to (perceived) increased incidences of disruptive behaviour.

> **Daniella (student):** it's no wonder you get insulted all the time if you smile back and just accept it.

> **Joseph (student):** [in reference to students interrupting lessons] At least in a mainstream school, school. it doesn't usually happen because teachers have protocols for it, for erm much more teachers to handle it.

> **Paul (student):** [on advice for new staff members] Don't get in the way, like every teacher does. So annoying cause you're just, you're more likely to barge through for 'em and like actually hurt them if they're in the way.

Kieran describes a fellow student stepping in to manage the classroom.

> **Kieran (student):** Well she tells everyone to shut up the fuck up

> **Researcher**: Okay. Yeah.

> **Kieran (student):** If they don't listen to the teacher. she tells them that and then they shut up

Daniella's account highlights a staff member trying to maintain a positive relationship whilst being insulted. For Daniella this appears to be linked to making the behaviour more

likely in the future and a sense of staff response being counter to conventional wisdom. Paul's speech beginning with "*don't get in the way*" gives insight into the perceived lack of power attributed to staff. Paul and Kieran reflect on social processes occurring within the student population of the AP in relation to which staff are viewed almost as superfluous. It's the students who are spoken about as enacting power. This passive view of staff is represented in Daniella and Joseph's account..

Staff presented a nuanced approach to behaviour management, reflecting on the importance of relationships and maintaining clear consistent boundaries for behaviour. This is in line with previous literature highlighting the importance of stability and containment for maintaining engagement in AP (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Michael & Frederickson, 2013).

Theresa (teacher): And although I am firm with them erm and they, they know I have high expectations. They don't always follow that but they know I have them

Lily (teacher): Erm and that we do have boundaries, but they're not the same as the mainstreams that they've come from. We have some very basic expectations which we expect them to meet but I mean I personally feel as long as they're in the classroom and they're not being disruptive, they are still learning cause if you, if you're teaching somebody else something's actually going in their listening even if they don't realise it so I'd rather they were here than hanging around outside

Lucy TA: but he came in and did his work, and he had his phone on with music. but he did his work And actually to be honest, <u>that</u> is massive for him because he wasn't doing any work. But actually. if you want to listen to music. some people work better cause they're listening to music. <u>But</u> if he was going in one of the other classes and

down in core, that that's a no, they would have to leave the room and they can't do it

and so it kind of got to pick your battles.

Both Lily and Lucy demonstrate taking a responsive approach to the children they work with in regards to implementing boundaries, with the goal of preserving access to learning. Lucy describes her decision as deviating from what would be allowed in the rest of the AP but tolerating it as it is having a significant positive impact, she is afforded increased flexibility through working in a Nurture group. This illustrates the complicated decisions staff have to make throughout the day. Likewise Lily's account acknowledges that even if students may not be traditionally engaged, her personal belief is that it is still worthwhile for them to be in the classroom. Both Lily and Lucy discuss a more responsive approach to behaviour management than may be typical in mainstream, echoing students who recognised increased flexibility in AP in this regard.

Relationships were spoken about by staff as being key in supporting effective behaviour management.

Researcher: [after Theresa reflecting on students knowing she cares] And you think

that shapes how they behave …when they're with you?

Theresa (teacher): Yeah.. Yeah, I do. I think although I get (laughter) there's plenty

of bad behaviour with me but I think they're it's not always them at their <u>*absolute*</u>

worst

Lucy (TA): But actually I don't - I feel like if in we don't get a lot of children ruining in

our classroom, because they respect me and Trever and it's their, space to do their

work

Peter (TA): So.. that's what we have a laugh with the kids as well and we have a laugh back they know where the line is to stop

Researcher: yeah yeah

Peter (TA): to stop before they cross it…so.. that's why I think they respect us more a little bit, little bit more

Theresa, Peter and Lucy all comment on the relationships they have with children leading to better behaviour, including respect for the environment. Although it is acknowledged this is a piece of the puzzle, it does not solve everything, bad behaviour still happens but using tools like humour leads to a "*little bit more*" respect. Experiences of relatedness with staff should support the internalisation of behaviour rules advocated for by the AP. This is because humans are more likely to internalise values of those who they feel connected to (Ryan & Deci, 2017). It is likely that this is what these accounts demonstrate, students feeling connected to staff and therefore being more motivated to follow behavioural expectations of their own volition.

The challenges of behaviour management in AP as being different from other schools was acknowledged by both staff and students. Comments included recognising that students were unlikely to get excluded from AP. Further to this, as the majority of students travel by prebooked taxis this meant detentions could not be given on the same day as an incident of disruptive behaviour.

Lily (teacher): Erm if there's a late taxi for behaviour or missing lessons or whatever then it has to be the following week by which time the impetus and the impact has

been loss and the chances are they've done something else since then anyway and

they've forgotten what it was for

Paul student: *Well you're not gonna get expelled from this school*

If students do not feel that disruptive behaviour is managed effectively this may impact how safe they feel in school, particularly given the threats of bullying made in other accounts. Feeling unsafe at school is linked to poorer classroom engagement and higher levels of externalising behaviour (Côté-Lussier & Fitzpatrick, 2016). It also damages students' ability to feel connected to their peers (Porter et al., 2021) impacting their experience of relatedness in the setting.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that staff accounts evidence a considered and relational approach to behaviour management. While students' perceptions of behaviour management are concerning, it may be that what students view as non-action by staff is an active decision taken to preserve the relationship with a pupil or choosing to accept one infraction for broader engagement. It may be that the strong evidence for building relationships in supporting learning and behaviour in AP (e.g., Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson, 2013) leads staff in AP to take a more relational approach to shaping behaviour. This may seem unusual to students given that behaviourist approaches are traditionally dominant in schools (Hart, 2010; Harold & Corcoran, 2013).

Subtheme: The Value of Positive Staff Relationships

This subtheme describes the importance of positive staff relationships as shaping student engagement in learning. It also explores what students and staff perceive as helping to build relationships. There is a particular focus on the role of food as a nurturing activity which includes links to theme five "home circumstances".

The power of staff relationships to shape how a student learns was commented upon across interview groups. All staff commented on good relationships with students encouraging learning. Most students commented on having positive relationships with staff which was a valued part of their school experience.

Lily (teacher): […] building up the relationships with them even if it takes some time. Eventually you get it back in the classroom

Lucy (TA): I know we have a good relationship so she would come and she would actually sit and do some work.

Theresa (teacher): […] Erm, but I think they need to feel that you are invested in them and that you <u>genuinely</u> care...

Researcher: For that to then help them with their… feel settled enough to try the learning?

Theresa (teacher): Yeah. Yeah. I think they've got, I think sometimes I've got more chance of them at least attempting something in English because they know they're coming to a, you know erm…

Mirroring the role of positive staff relationships in behaviour management, here having successful relationships with students is presented as an aspect of supporting learning. Theresa comments that students will at least try "*something*" if they feel cared for. There is a sense of relationship building needing to be authentic, Lily describing how this takes time, Theresa emphasising the need to "*genuinely*" care. The above extracts demonstrate how staff feel that having positive relationships with students provides a safe

base for learning. This is in line with previous research in the area, good relationships with staff being particularly linked to learning outcomes (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson, 2013).

The majority of students spoke about good relationships with staff being one of the positive parts of being in the AP. The two students who learn in a Nurture provision were particularly positive (below). It could be that this is a reflection of the Nurture model (students stay with the same teacher throughout the day), thus providing increased opportunities for relationship building.

> **Dave (student):** *Well everyone is always <u>kind</u> and <u>fair</u> and I just think, that in my opinion it's been it's one of the best schools I've ever been to*

> **Researcher:** *Okay erm err and is there anything that really makes you want to come into school*

> **Joseph (student):** *Teachers, and I get to I get to see my friends in Nurture*

Students and staff commented on a range of skills and traits that adults displayed which support these relationships, including: sharing more personal information about themselves, being consistent, being "nice", providing emotional support, offering support in class and using humour.

> **Peter (TA):** *[…] That's the way I feel like I get in with them better and they trust me more if I'm laughy and jokey with them they trust me more*

> **Researcher**: *yeah*

Peter (TA): so that's my way of engaging with the kids

Dave (student): When you need help they give you it. they're always polite and nice and that's pretty much it

Daniella (student): Like they they sometimes they do go into more bit about their person lives so they can kinda give you an aspect of like so like "I was like going through like this"

Consistency in approach is described by Dave (student). Peter reflects on his own personal style supporting interactions, it could be argued that an intentionally jokey approach is counter to some traditional models of staff-pupil dynamics. Similarly, Daniella describes staff sharing more of themselves and this helping with relationship building.

Staff-student relationships are described as being a "crucial component" of fostering belonging at school (Allen et al., 2021, p. 532). The quality of student-staff relationships is one of the key components of a supportive school climate which in turn is predictive of wellbeing and attainment in school (Kutsyuruba et al., 2015; Thapa et al., 2013). This has been found to be particularly supportive for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Berkowitz et al., 2017), therefore being particularly meaningful in AP (Graham et al, 2019). The successful relationships commented upon by both groups appears as a real strength of provision. Both staff and students recount staff engaging in behaviours which are noted by Vasconcellos et al (2020) as supporting relatedness (being consistent, showing caring, showing enjoyment in interactions).

Staff described the nature of the relationships they built with students as personal, perhaps sharing more of their identity than typical in mainstream schools. Research on

building successful relationships in schools advocates for making (appropriate) personal connections so that both staff and students feel known (Pianta, Hamre & Allen, 2012).

> **Lily (teacher):** *we're we're prepared to share a little bit of us to get a little bit of them back sort of thing erm*

> **Peter (TA) […]***Then one person went "yeah that's what we wouldn't expect less of you sir with your silly tattoos" I was like oh cheers …cheers for that*

Lily almost directly mirrors Daniella's earlier account about staff sharing more of themselves. Peter indicates a 'banter-like' relationship with students, being gently teased about his tattoos. This could be considered more common to peer relationships. Below Daniella directly compares relationship building in the AP against her previous school, in which she was actively punished for asking certain questions. This is in line with Wilson's (2014) finding that relationships with staff more effectively supported relatedness in AP in comparison to mainstream school.

> **Daniella (student):** *Unlike my old- my previous teachers you'd ask anything personal and they'd instantly shut you down and you'd get like a demerit which is like a bad thing and then you'd get a second one and that's a detention*

It was noteworthy that the majority of interviewees mentioned the importance of receiving food or hot drinks in AP. Cooking was referred to multiple times as one of the most popular activities within the school. Students remarked about how much they enjoyed food and spoke about receiving food as being part of their favourite lessons (including outside of

catering). Receiving food was cited by most students as one of the strengths of the setting.

> *Researcher: Okay okay so so what's so so good about art and food tech*
>
> *Joseph (student): Well in food tech you get to make food*

> *Researcher: What about ermm what about lunch and play time-break time what's that like*
>
> *Paul (student): It's alright you get food and stuff and you get like you know an opportunity to do PE and stuff. […]*

> *Dave (student) Break time and lunch time my brain cools down. I get to eat. Lunch time my brain cools down I get to eat. And home time I get to see my mum (laughter)*

It could be argued that sharing food or hot drinks is a nurturing activity, which is reminiscent of positive relationships students have at home. Two students directly linked caregivers and food at school.

> *Dave (student): [after discussing eating at school as helping him when he misses his mum] I get reminded of my mum cause she always feeds me*

> *Kieran (student): Have my 63 year old nan be my teacher. She can cook*

The sharing of food is an important forum for relationship building, indeed it is one of the first avenues for child/parent relationship development (Counihan, 1999; Warman, 2016). Warman argues that sharing food supports belonging in foster households. It feels as if it plays a similar role within the AP schools.

Lily (teacher): *But you know that's the way to a lot of them is to feed them*

Researcher: *Yeah*

Lily (teacher): *It calms them down and when you… you understand some of their personal circumstances a hot meal is is all they really want*

Theresa (teacher): *they do <u>lack</u>, love and care and I I think, I think in the past at the AP there was maybe more opportunity for, you know, times out, people would maybe sit with other members of staff and have a cup of tea or…*

Lucy (TA): […] *my mum bought our class a toaster cause one of our children, the only thing we could get him to eat would be toast and he liked to see it made in front of him and stuff*

Staff spoke about food as particularly important for students given the context of their home lives. Food is linked in the above accounts to emotions. It is viewed as offering security and staff go out of their way to facilitate this (buying a toaster so a child felt comfortable to eat). Sharing food is both a physical event and a means of social interaction (Julier, 2013). Julier describes sharing food as a means of constructing close relationships. Participation in food sharing activities is particularly important for those who are experiencing isolation (Marovelli, 2019). It appears that the sharing of food and hot drinks plays a

significant role in the forming and maintenance of relationships between staff and students within the AP. Interestingly, Nurture groups (an intervention for children with SEMH difficulties aimed at developing positive attachments) traditionally should have a kitchen or space to prepare food within the room the intervention runs in (Sloan et al., 2020).

From an SDT perspective students are more likely to internalise values from social groups they feel connected to (Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2020; Wang & Degol, 2016). It could be that while these positive relationships with staff are protective and support engagement with learning (demonstrated by staff accounts), they occur alongside a powerful context of peer relationships with different associated behavioural expectations. Given their age and previous experience of rejection (school exclusion), students are susceptible to seeking the acceptance of their peers over adults in the school (Foulkes & Blakemore, 2016; Park & Baumeister, 2015).

Theme 2 : Differences in Ability

This theme encapsulates the high levels of need students come to the AP with and the importance of appropriate differentiation as a response. It acknowledges a unique challenge of the AP setting, that children can come having had such different experiences of school. The complexity of addressing this from an educator's point of view is summed up concisely by Lily below.

> ***Lily (teacher):*** *every student that comes here has had a different experience so they've come from different schools been…excluded at different times having missed different bits following a scheme of work from a different exam board*

Subtheme: High Level of Need

This subtheme captures the high level of academic need, challenge and gaps which are present within the student population. Covid was touched on by staff as increasing existing challenges in learning.

When discussing difficulties with learning students reflected on their own needs including hypermobility, challenges with understanding spoken language, understanding what is being asked of them and generally finding work difficult. This demonstrates the diversity of need experienced by pupils which can act as barriers to learning. All students commented on finding work difficult.

Paul (student): *[…] but it's just like… hard to concentrate in the lessons*

Researcher: *Okay yeah what…*

Paul (student): *Cause I dunno what I'm doing so I can't*

Kieran (student): *Especially if I've got her as a teacher (referring to teacher present in the room. general laughter). She can't explain anything properly.*

(teacher present asks Kieran how it would be easier to learn)

Kieran (student): *If you could actually speak English*

Dave (student): *Cause my brain hurts a lot after lessons so I have to like stop working so it just like… bit like a heater you know when like a fire or something just goes on and on and on and then it stops to cool itself down that's what my brain does*

A high level of need within AP is reflective of national trends, 4% of students in mainstream currently have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP; legal document offering protection to students with high level of needs impacting education), compared with 28% of students in AP settings (HM Gov, 2022b). Similarly children in AP typically attain at a lower rate, indicative of challenges accessing the curriculum (Timpson, 2019). Likewise, reflective of Kieran's complaint about not understanding what is being said, language needs are often linked to emotional and behavioural regulation difficulties (Yew & O'Kearney, 2013).

Staff members similarly acknowledged the high level of academic needs within the school. Staff tended to use diagnostic labels alongside their descriptions of student's difficulties, noting that at times diagnoses were lacking or that the child's needs were unrecognised in mainstream. This was in contrast to students who spoke to their own personal experience of being in class rather than using medical labels.

Lucy (TA): […] He is quite erm, he's got a, he's very he's autistic ADHD and that, but he is very…acts very differently but he can't cope with loads of and actually it unsettles him when we've got certain other children in the classroom at the time and cause that's his territory.

Theresa (teacher): […]I believe also come from that because if you are 13 or 14 and for whatever reason, whether it's purely behaviour but erm one or two that there's some learning difficulty or special educational needs, or severe dyslexia, things like this […]

Lily (teacher): The system in general we have so many children with EHCPs or misdiagnosis or no diagnosis that hasn't been started by mainstream who has

slipped through the system. You know fallen through the gaps. Erm that needs a complete overhaul and speeding up…Erm…

The effects of diagnostic labels are complex, nuanced and specific to those involved (Werkhoven et al., 2022). Therefore, it is not that the presence of diagnostic labels in staff speech is negative, but rather the difference in use is interesting. It could reflect a wider trend perceived by authors for describing behavioural difficulties in medical terms within education (Allan & Harwood, 2014; Hill & Turner, 2016). It could simply reflect adults having more familiarity with diagnoses than children. Abbey & Valsiner (2005) comment that social systems are more reliant on labelling when there is concern about maintaining order, particularly if the group is in flux. The social group within the AP is continually changing and at times can be unpredictable. One critique of the medical (diagnostic) model is that an internal focus on a child negates deeper exploration of systemic supports within the environment (Gutkin, 2012). Therefore reflecting on indications of preference for this model within the system is valuable.

Covid 19 and lockdowns were mentioned by staff as increasing academic gaps for students. This was not mentioned by students, perhaps reflecting that staff have wider experiences of the AP and have previous cohorts of students to compare to.

Lucy (TA): COVID. I don't think helped matters I think there was a massive issue cause if they weren't in school for such a long time, time and then they've got behind then… that's been quite stressful for children.

Researcher: And you mentioned er that you think like there's been an increase in behaviour and need …and do you, Is there anything you feel like is underpinning that or ?

> ***Theresa (teacher):*** *well, the main thing that people say is Covid.*
>
> ***Researcher:*** *Mhm.*
>
> ***Theresa (teacher):*** *They, they seem to think that Covid obviously that people lost structure students missed school. So there's erm academic gaps.*

> ***Lily (teacher):*** *Struggling to resettle…hoping desperately that something's gonna happen that means they don't actually have to take the exams*

The heterogeneity of children's experience of Covid 19 has been noted in the literature, children from poorer families having less resources and access to support over lockdown (Andrew et al., 2020). This is likely to be reflective of the experiences of children in the AP who may be disproportionately from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Graham et al., 2019). Therefore it is unsurprising that this cohort are having challenges re-integrating following Covid-19 as the gap between themselves and peers has likely widened (Goudeau et al., 2021). From a SDT perspective, competence is supported by structured challenges and informational feedback (Ryan & Deci, 2016,2017). It could be that long periods of time away from face to face contact with teachers lessened the opportunities for felt competence to be supported, this in turn may have stifled motivation to learn upon returning to AP.

Subtheme: Importance of Differentiation

This subtheme considers the importance of work being provided to students which is at the correct skill level. It explores this with regard to the high level of need students have in AP.

Tailoring learning to ensure accessibility to students was described as a tool to try and address the level of need present in the classroom. This was primarily discussed by staff either in regards to classroom provision or curriculum "pathways" which students are

placed upon by the AP. Students did remark on their experience of differentiation but to a lesser extent.

Theresa (teacher): but I am very conscious of that at the moment and particularly in key stage 3 and certain things will be adapted, we have some that are so weak

Lily (teacher): [on students wanting to stay in the AP school over mainstream] they recognise that the quality of the education that they're getting, is £50 an hour one to one tuition. Erm and they're not going to get that in mainstream

Researcher: Mm Mm

Lily (teacher): When there are the learning gaps that they've got erm

Peter (TA): we help em a little bit but they do I'd say we help em 10% to their 90% of their own work we just give em that little kick for them to go ah right this is it

Theresa and Lily (both teachers of core subjects) highlight the need to tailor learning in the context of high need. It is interesting that Peter (who works as a TA primarily in "the zone", a centre for vocational courses) presents a more relaxed picture of differentiation, a "*little kick*" is all that is needed, in comparison to Theresa's account that some are "*so weak*". It is unclear whether this difference is related to the content of the courses, student ability or broader perceptions of core/practical subjects (commented upon in theme 3). Staff acknowledgement of the importance of differentiation is in line with previous literature, which found tailoring lessons to pupils' needs to be supportive of engagement in learning (Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015).

The importance of responsive differentiation is reflected in the two student accounts below.

> **Joseph (student):** *[referring to their class teacher] Erm she knows what to do in situations, situations, and also I guess knows knows our skill levels and what to do, do, do when, when we say go above and beyond*

> **Kieran student:** *Uhuh I'm either halfway through doing something as she starts talking or I'm way ahead and she starts moaning at me as the class is then three, four steps behind… or I'm three, four, steps behind… and the class is ahead.*

Joseph describes work as always being at the right "*skill level*", Joseph also indicates experiencing agency in being able to shape the level of work and have his opinions listened to. His teacher knowing what to do when students ask to go "*above and beyond*". This is supportive of autonomy (Reeve & Cheon, 2021). Conversely Kieran's reported frustration at work not being attuned to his ability is so significant that despite enjoying painting at home and his art teacher telling him he was one of the best students, he went on to report hating the subject in school. Kieran describes a significant gap of "*three, four steps*" between him and the class. While this is a limited comparison (only 2 students), it is noteworthy that Joseph is in Nurture and therefore always taught by the same teacher. It could be that this facilitates staff having better knowledge of pupils' abilities.

Staff members reflected on their ability to tailor learning to the students, noting they were more able to do this than in mainstream settings (although concerns about time being available to do this remained). Nevertheless one staff member spoke about how significantly behind students were and how this can present challenges for teachers as realistically

students were working at a primary level, which was unfamiliar to staff. The same teacher
noted that students are so behind that other staff do not realise how this might present as
disengagement.

> ***Theresa (teacher):*** *Yeah. I think sometimes you know, they'll say they won't even try*
> *this and they won't even try that . and I think…Yeah well that is wrong of the student.*
> *But if you have some students that really you know we're talking major issues of*
> *reading and writing, they they may not be fully understanding what's been put in front*
> *of them.*

For students to experience competence need fulfilment, pupils need to feel effective
and like they can succeed (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Ryan and Deci (2020) note this is supported
by "optimal challenges". If students are being asked to complete work which is beyond their
ability this would thwart students experience of competence, and by extension their
motivation to learn (Waterschoot et al., 2020). Teachers needing to teach at a level they are
not familiar with (primary) could impact staff feelings of competence, which in turn leads to a
less autonomy supportive teaching style (Bennett et al., 2017).

Theme 3: Perceptions of Education

This theme explores perceptions held by students and staff about pupils' ability to
learn as well as broader perceptions about school and the types of learning students engage
in. The link between differences in ability and this theme should be acknowledged. If
students have previously found learning difficult and been placed in unfavourable social
comparisons this may have shaped beliefs about their own competence, and education
more generally (Fang et al., 2018; Nagengast & Marsh, 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Subtheme: Individual Perceptions and Related Emotional Responses

This subtheme captures the perceptions and related emotional responses students have around their own ability to learn. It explores how these responses hinder motivation and engagement within AP.

> ***Daniella (student):*** *You were never taught- you were never taught it. So what's the point of doing it if you don't know it*
>
> ***Researcher:*** *Mm*
>
> ***Daniella (student):*** *And then it's like you walk off. You get a bit angry cause it's frustrating you <u>don't</u> know it and it's kind of on your fault aswell and you <u>know</u> it's your fault but it's rath- it's better to take it out on the teachers and like a door or something*

Daniella eloquently sums up the process of a student being confronted with a learning challenge and holding a belief about their inability to manage the task. This leads to anger, self-blame and externalising behaviour. Although Daniella has in the above extract, students did not typically describe emotional responses to learning in such depth. Instead subjects were described as being "hard", "boring" or students described hating specific subjects. Feelings of frustration, confusion, stress and boredom can engulf students' intrinsic motivation (Reeve & Cheon, 2021). Reeve & Cheon noted it is important for teachers to recognise this and support students to alleviate negative emotions related to learning.

Staff were more able to name the emotional responses to learning and how it influences a student's behaviour in the classroom.

Theresa (teacher): *If you put a text infront of them and they just see a bunch of words and you know that they're not that they'll just play up. Out of embarrassment I s'pose*

Researcher: *…is there is there anything else you think? Erm like in terms of challenges [to learning]*

Lily (teacher): *A lot of them are scared of showing their weaknesses*

Peter (TA): *[…] but then you in some of them in some of them they don't you can't see it. I think they're a bit. not afraid just a little bit wary of doing it just incase they mess up and then all their mates laugh at them and then wind them up*

Staff may find it easier to describe the emotional responses to learning pupils have as it does not open themselves up to vulnerability in the way it does students. It is interesting that in Daniella's account she speaks about "you" instead of referring to her own experiences. Hesitancy to show vulnerability in learning may be reflective of the social norms within the setting, a reluctance to be perceived as weak. It could also indicate fear of having negative ideas about their own self-image as a learner confirmed, both Kinsella (2017) and Wilson (2014) noted concerns around the academic self-concept of children in AP. Strong emotions in response to learning can impact a student's memory, attentional control, flexibility in learning style (Pekrun, 2014). The relationship between anxiety in learning and disengagement is particularly well established (Anson, 2021; Ma, 2022). Consequently, if learning invokes difficult emotions for these students it could impact engagement in the classroom.

Recognition of difficult affective responses to learning was evidenced through staff talk which recognised the need to bolster the self-esteem of students in learning. Avenues to achieve this were discussed as: through delivering direct praise, allowing students to write on desks with pens that can be rubbed out easily (aiming to ease fear of failure), interacting with the community and broadening the learning experiences of the students to include different topics.

> **Theresa (teacher):** *[…]I think it would be good to kind of erm <u>ideally</u> give them a sense of worth doing some of the things that they might be good at[….]*

> **Lily (teacher):** *Just want them in the classroom and to realise that they can do it.*

Most modern theories of motivation include an element of perception of competence (sometimes called self-efficacy or self-concept; Cook & Artino, 2016). How students perceive themselves as learners is linked to academic achievement (Marsh & Martin, 2011). Therefore the desire to support students in developing a positive view of themselves is well founded. The BPN of competence is defined as feeling "capable and effective" (Ryan et al., 2019) akin to having a positive academic self-concept. Self-concept is considered to be domain specific i.e. a student's belief about themselves as a reader may be different from as an artist, leading to different behaviours (Arens et al., 2011). However, situations which threaten one aspect of a person's self-concept can lead to defensive behaviour to protect self-esteem generally (Peixoto & Almeida, 2010). This could mean not trying due to fear of having negative views of themselves confirmed. This may shed light on Lily's comment that students are "*scared of showing their weaknesses*". This "self-handicapping" is linked to low academic self-concept (Gadbois & Sturgeon, 2012). Self-handicapping behaviours allow for failure to be viewed as caused by factors other than a person's ability (Gadbois & Sturgeon,

2011), and has been linked to preserving self-image in front of peers (Török et al., 2018). It is possible self-handicapping is more prominent in the AP given the importance of maintaining a favourable position within the peer group.

Students' broader perception of education was perceived by staff as impacting their motivation in the classroom. This appeared to be influenced by previous experiences in school.

Lucy (TA): I think the biggest barrier [to learning] is um, we, they've come to us after being rejected from

Researcher: Mm

Lucy (TA): The mainstream school

Lily (teacher): They've had a bad experience and been rejected, or most of them we still have some children who are missing education or were at home for different reasons, but the majority of them have felt that rejection and it's it's a matter of trying to rebuild their trust in the whole system

Lily and Lucy highlight the negative experiences the children have had before they reach the school. Both use the term "*rejected*" rather than excluded. This moves away from the procedural process of what happened and towards the emotive experience of students. The rejection students have experienced is conceived as doing damage to their view of school generally. This is in line with previous literature which describes a general lack of trust in the school system following exclusion (Briggs, 2010; Owen, 2022; Pyne, 2019).

Despite not asking questions which specifically addressed the subject, all students referred to difficult experiences they've had with school before attending the AP. The

majority of students offered spontaneous accounts of times in previous schools where they felt they had been treated unfairly or they had not been listened to.

Joseph (student): when I said I needed to sit at the front, they just gave me a detention

Daniella (student): …most of the teachers have probably like in their old school have probably shut them down.

Dave (student): Like there was this one kid picking on my sister and I slammed 'im against the gate. Erm this was in my old school. so in primary. And I nearly got suspended for it but my sister actually butted in and told them the truth that I actually <u>protected</u> her so the other person got suspended and I got let go.

Student and staff accounts seem to mirror each other, the impact of previous school experiences being prominent across both. However staff, perhaps as a result of being more removed are able to name how this affects students interaction with AP now. The fact that all students spoke in comparison to their mainstream school could be a reflection of the "alternative" nature of provision, always constructed against that of mainstream. It could also speak to the power these experiences had on interviewees.

Staff and student accounts create a picture of relatedness and autonomy being stifled prior to attendance to the AP. Relatedness being frustrated as a result of being excluded (or as staff describe, rejected), leading to the loss of social connections (Jacobsen, 2020; Murphy, 2022). Autonomy being frustrated as students recount not being listened to by staff in previous schools (Reeve & Cheon, 2021). Accounts of participants indicate that

AP settings need to recognise the power of previous experiences of education for students and consider how that may be affecting their current presentation.

Subtheme: Curriculum and Lesson Content

This subtheme concerned perceptions around the value of particular subjects and how that shaped student motivation.

Students spoke about whether they perceived what they were being taught as relevant to their lives, often in holistic terms (e.g., viewing ICT as an integral part of modern life or art providing an opportunity to relax). Likewise students spoke about whether learning would be meaningful for them with regards to future aspirations, at times this was frustrated by the limited number of options available within the AP.

Paul (student): [when asked why he likes pe] It's something active so I'm, so I love being active. so that's why I like it.

Daniella (student): [asked what the ideal day at school would be] Err English like the things that I need for GCSEs and stuff. English. Maths.

Joseph (student): Because I really like ict it's one of my favourite lessons

Researcher: Mhm what do you, what do you like about it?

Joseph (student): I guess how you need you and knowing how computers and programming works cause like everyday life, computers phones, technology have been a main part. Erm. Feel like understanding that would be nice, so that I know if something new comes out I know how to use it

Curricula being relevant to the lives of students has been described as a precursor to engagement (Alexander & Armstrong, 2010). From an SDT viewpoint, learning which is related more closely to students' world view is likely to be more intrinsically valuable (Ryan & Deci, 2019). For example, Paul demonstrates PE being linked to a personal interest, therefore something he may engage with for the sake of enjoyment (intrinsic motivation; Ryan & Deci, 2020), Joseph consciously sees value in learning about ICT (identified regulation; Ryan & Deci, 2020). While it could be interpreted that Daniella's comments are extrinsically motivated, it should be noted that Daniella made several mentions of valuing education, indicating identified regulation with academic goals (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

This application of learning to students' lives and future was echoed by staff as being helpful in facilitating motivation. This was achieved by linking academic concepts to real life situations for example using algebra to help understand a shopping receipt. Subjects that were similar to courses at college such as catering and hairdressing were described as garnering better engagement (and by extension more motivating).

Lily (teacher): Sometimes you can get away with "cause you're gonna need it to pass your gcses" but actually if you can give them a real life, tangible, reason of where this maths fits into life you'll you'll get them engaged sooner

Theresa (teacher): Um whereas actually, in the 21st century and with reluctant students, maybe some you know, teaching maths would also work better if they were able to do some sort of games type things on ipad, not, not realise they're learning but they are learning

> *Peter (TA): [on why students prefer the zone] we got like we're sort of getting them*
>
> *ready for like college cause we've got like hair and beauty over there. catering.*
>
> *hair…photography. art.*

Staff providing rationale for teaching which connects the learning activity to something which is personally valuable for students is autonomy supportive (Reeve & Cheon, 2021). Context is drawn on by Theresa and Lily, seeking to ensure learning is related to students' lives rather than solely exams. Peter highlights how courses offered in The Zone are linked to college and therefore more enticing for students. This is perhaps reflective of the type of post 16 education students are presumed to want to explore (practical rather than academic). This division permeated throughout accounts by staff and students, indicating a perceived distinction between core subjects (English, maths, science) and more practical lessons (catering, PE, art). Core subjects were viewed as important and valued by society but difficult whereas practical subjects were thought to be more engaging and preferred by the students. This was both explicitly said and implicitly referred to.

> *Joseph: Because I feel the core lessons are important*
>
> *Researcher: Yeah?*
>
> *Joseph (student): Yeah and also after English, English definitely need a break*

> *Researcher: Okay. okay ermm okay can you and what lesson do you like least… do*
> *you think?*
>
> *Kieran (student): Maths and English*

> **Paul (student):** *I don't really do anything other than P.E to be fair can't lie…oh yeah and art*

The majority of students expressed a preference for either art, cooking or P.E. Staff and students both spoke about this preference being typical. Paul (student) noted *"everyone likes PE"* and Peter (TA) discussed how sports and catering may be full when new students arrive at the school. In contrast the majority of students spoke about maths and English as difficult subjects.

For one site (Woodside) the distinction is made physical by a separate building (The Zone) which provides vocational courses.

> **Daniella (student):** *The Zone's better because it's just way quieter. And nobody really attacks each other. But if you go to the zone it is lesser than Woodside. If you understand? It's like the extracurricular*
>
> **Researcher:** *Mhm*
>
> **Daniella (student):** *Bits so if you are more times in Woodside it kinda seems like you're smarter. On like the timetable. So…*

This division and associated perceptions are described by Daniella above. Daniella notes that it is a calmer environment in The Zone but studying can be viewed as lower than in the main school. A varied curriculum has been described as key for re-engaging students in AP with learning (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016). Broadly students identified practical subjects as enjoyable, and core subjects as necessary but difficult. Daniella's account speaks to a view held particularly in western cultures that vocational/practical courses are less worthwhile than academic learning (Francis et al., 2017). This vocational/academic

divide has been described as synonymous with social class, middle class parents typically encouraging academic subject choices for their children (Tomlinson, 2005). The distinction between academic and vocational pathways have been described as an impediment to cross class equality of esteem (Duckett, 2021). This is captured by Daniella describing the vocational site as "*lesser*".

Staff descriptions of subjects were similar to students'. Staff saw core subjects as unpopular with pupils but important. Practical lessons were associated with better engagement.

Theresa (teacher): *because they, students 100% understand they do maths and English. They moan about it*

Researcher*: Mhm.*

Theresa (teacher):*And they sort of talk about not wanting to do it but I think they get that and I do think they, they understand that that's part of their…you know there is no give or take on that.*

Lily (teacher): *And teaching a core subject we have a tough- maths English science staff have a tougher…gig (general laughter)*

Researcher: *Yeah yeah*

Lily (teacher): *Than say catering and sport where they generally engage better and it's its' a less intimidating environment to go to. Whereas y'know you're judged on your maths English and science a little bit more erm so yeah so it can be a bit of a harder sell*

> ***Theresa (teacher):** […]and the other thing I think there is a misconception that when it's <u>all</u> about the academic, because they do learn some other valuable things in the lessons like I mean cooking would have it quite a lot of maths in it erm and you know music and art are incredibly important to learning about things culturally and sport for their physical wellbeing. And again, sports, sport can get fairly technical if there were any theory to it*

Within Theresa's speech value is added to practical lessons through highlighting traditionally academic elements of subjects. Thereby drawing on the implicit higher cultural value of these subjects (Mills et al., 2016). Lily describes how the societal focus on maths and English, makes them a "tougher sell". Narratives held concerning the worth of education (and/or subjects), can shape the level of intrinsic motivation students experience as learners can become motivated by social approval and wish to avoid appearing foolish (Panisora et al., 2015). As value placed on subjects can be shaped by cultural norms (Komarraju & Dial, 2014). It is valuable to consider the impact social hierarchies of knowledge may have on student motivation. Personally valued (identified regulated) learning is related to higher levels of task persistence and wellbeing (Howard et al., 2021). Therefore, if students have internalised the value of subjects it may lead to increased motivation. However, as Lily suggests it could be that "failing" in a subject which is more socially valued is a greater threat to self-esteem. Thereby invoking *introjected regulation* (motivated to protect self-esteem) as this is informed by critical self-evaluative processes (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Ryan & Deci specifically note this to be influenced by cultural norms about worth (e.g., the value of academic subjects or employment). Therefore students' may experience introjected motivation more readily in subjects which carry high cultural value. Introjected regulation is "less volitional and more energy depleting" than more internalised forms of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p.186). Students may also increase use of self-handicapping behaviours to

protect their self-esteem in more evaluative/academic subjects (del Mar Ferradás et al., 2018).

There was a recognition from staff of the systems that surround the school being more academically focused, perhaps limiting the flexibility within provision.

> **Theresa (teacher):** *and okay yeah academically students aren't the strongest necessarily but they're very much they follow erm <u>essentially</u> the guidelines erm of a, of a normal school if Ofsted come in we follow similar guidelines*

The importance placed on core lessons is echoic of the emphasis placed on such subjects when rating and comparing schools (Maguire et al., 2015). Along with which comes increased pressure within those subjects to achieve certain grades. Grading is linked to performance goals rather than mastery (i.e. aiming to achieve a status rather than subject knowledge), performance goals are thought to be less motivating (Urdan & Kaplan, 2020). From a SDT outlook, placing more pressure on teachers to achieve certain grades for their students is linked to less autonomy supportive teaching, including strategies such as narrowing the curriculum and teaching to the test (Deci & Ryan, 2016), negatively impacting the motivational experiences of students.

The distinction between practical and academic continued when considering the content of lessons regardless of subject. When students were asked about their best times in school, or what they thought would work best to help students learn, they typically discussed practical activities.

> **Kieran (student):** *[after reporting subject preferences of art and P.E] So really. Any lesson. The lessons I like are the ones where you don't have to sit down to do any work*

It is interesting that art and P.E are not viewed by Kieran as work, the concept of work is tied to something you "*sit down to do*". Joseph (student) said his least favourite subject was English. However his favourite lesson had been learning about Macbeth. This was because the lesson had involved making their own version of the witches' rhyme by making a potion (which included ice cream).

Similarly staff discussed including a balance of activities within subjects as best supporting learning.

> **Lucy (TA):** *When does learning work best? Errr when they're, I think if they're doing something that's very engaging we've got a lot of kids, I think if they're doing more practical things.*

> **Theresa (teacher):** *Erm and I think it's easy just to sort of say oh "get this done, get that done". But something's broken down and planned and there's a mix of, I don't know, discussion to start with and also a clip on YouTube or you know that that basic teacher planning is important as well*

> **Researcher:** *Mhm.*

> **Theresa (teacher):** *To at least <u>attempt</u> not to bore them …*

> **Peter (TA):** *I think it's – it's they wanna do – you tell em you get in lesson you do your theory and then you can do your practical for the rest of the lesson, and then when they've been out and then we get em back in and we go "ah it's the end of the lesson now, my life skills", they'll be like "ah what about our practical" "no you haven't done your theory"*

Theresa emphasises the value of a range of activities, this is described as "*basic teacher planning*", indicating an assumption that this is something which should be fundamental to lessons. Lucy indicates it's a large amount of children who benefit from practical activities. This is in line with previous research which found experiential and varied learning as important for engaging students in AP (Thomson & Pennacchia, 2016). Similarly, practical activities in lessons have been described as motivating by groups of students who describe themselves as disengaged (Duffy & Elwood, 2013). Peter highlights how practical activities are preferred by students, but they are contingent on completion of "*theory*", practical activities are viewed almost like rewards. This is interesting to consider with regards to SDT, the conditional facilitation of practical activities (despite being preferred by students) may well be experienced as controlling by students, negatively impacting intrinsic motivation (Ryan et al., 2019).

Theme 4: Choice and Control Affecting Learning

This theme explores how choice and control is important to supporting learning within the AP and how this impacts students' experience.

Subtheme: Individual Provision and Response to Choice

This subtheme explores in class provision and the value students see in being offered choice and control.

Choice as a valued element of learning was shown in students talking about the options they had or would like within lessons. Feedback on content of the lesson being listened to and freedom with what to do on a brain break was viewed as supporting learning.

Daniella (student): *[when asked what would support learning in AP] It's really difficult to say. I don't really know depends. Just ask what the kids want honestly*

Researcher: What what happens in your brain breaks what do you do

Dave (student): <u>Anything </u>sit down play a game. have a drink …or in my case eat something

Joseph (student): Yeah yeah we say this seems a bit complicated on our MMG which is basically saying this is too hard, this is too easy, easy. I normally write just good, I give em a bit of mystery but erm once you write it down they usually either tone it down or yeah make it easier

This is in line with SDT and previous literature that conferring meaningful choice and autonomy in learning is related to improved motivation and engagement (Malcolm, 2019; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Mills & Thomson, 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2020; Thomson & Pennacchia, 2016).

The majority of staff commented on choice and control being exerted by pupils within the learning environment. Staff members primarily spoke about the in lesson examples of when choice supported engagement with learning.

Lily (teacher): But <u>they</u> have to sign up to that cause we have to change their taxis in advance so…erm they have to commit to staying

Researcher: Mmm

Lily (teacher): And therefore they generally do…engage with that session

Peter (TA) spoke about giving students the responsibility of planning their own lesson and subsequently "*losing*" themselves in the task.

Peter (TA): yeah cause they're taking their own responsibility

Peter (TA): so they're planning their session. They're taking responsibility for it so they want to make it good

Peter's speech above references how allowing students to take responsibility for their learning is autonomy supportive, and therefore supports motivation (Reeve, 2016). Autonomy supportive teaching allows for links to student preferences, is pupil focused and flexible (Reeve & Cheon, 2021). Below Lily discusses using students' interests in learning, despite this being autonomy supportive she describes this not being enough to engender motivation. In Lily's account the social aspect of attendance to AP is more valuable for highly disengaged students. This may be reflective of the powerful role peer group acceptance plays for adolescents (Dishion, Piehler & Myers, 2008; Foulkes & Blakemore, 2016; Sebastian et al., 2010). For these students seeking to fulfil feelings of relatedness is a dominant force in shaping behaviour.

Lily (teacher): […]then there are some who are so disengaged. That regardless of how much planning you put in and how many resources you try to, find to engage them around football or cars or whatever it is, they're they're just not interested and it's more of a social club. They get transport into Havenfield. Which is where they wanna be…

It's noteworthy that there were occasions when students' talk indicated taking a more passive outlook. Kieran recounted a stressful period in his life and was asked whether the school did or could have done anything to support him. Kieran's reply below indicates a

taken-for-granted view that life will be difficult, this may have hindered Kieran asking for support. This is echoed by Daniella recounting a group of other students which she reports bullied a friend of hers.

> *Kieran (student): No. I just suffered through it …life's life.*

> *Daniella (student): Yeah… That's just life after all. (laughing)*

Both students' comments assume challenges are a part of life not indicating that there is anything that can be/or could have been done to improve the situation. This could be described as learned helplessness (Seligman & Maier, 1967). This could present a barrier to BPN fulfilment. If students' beliefs inhibit them asking for support this limits opportunities for relationship building with staff. Likewise hesitancy to ask for help could hinder the ability of staff to attune work to the needs of the student. By extension this could frustrate feelings of competence, as competence is supported by learning tasks which are targeted to the ideal level of challenge for each student (Ryan & Deci, 2016).

Subtheme: Systemic Influences on Choice and Control

This subtheme explores systemic influences on student expression of choice and control in AP, and the challenges this creates for the experience of autonomy. The distance students have to travel impeding access to certain courses links this subtheme to theme 6: Travel.

Two students remarked on their ability to do certain courses being curtailed by their attendance to the AP. Paul reflected on how he was unable to complete a construction course and this seemed to be a source of frustration for Paul.

Paul (student): Cause I wanted to do that for two years and they never even put me on it.

Researcher: So you wanted to do construction and the the chance wasn't there, but now it's gonna be or

Paul (student): Nah but I had to, I literally had to wait. They wouldn't, they wouldn't put me on it but like… Another pupil got on it on it before me and then she joined like a bit after me.

Researcher: yeh

Paul (student): […]That's what I wanted to do and they wouldn't put me on it.

Researcher: Mkay

Paul (student): I dunno why.

Daniella was unable to find a school nearby in which she could study psychology when she re-integrates into mainstream (something she was studying in her previous school). Daniella appears unworried by this, perhaps linked to beliefs she touches upon around having a flexible pathway through life.

Daniella (student): Not much it's just like a thing I can do later if I really want to or something like that. Cause there are always options it's not like if you fail you can always come back, re do stuff. Like if you choose a profession you don't like you can also choose another one. It's not that difficult. Something that doesn't stress me out much.

The provision of a rationale supports feelings of autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2020). As such Paul's autonomy could be more frustrated as he does not know why he was unable to study construction, whereas Daniella has the rationale of no school being available locally. One source of frustration for Daniella however was being made to transition school again, reporting that this was a feeling shared by other children. This comment was made in response to being asked if there was anything else Daniella would like to say about learning in an AP school.

> **Daniella (student):** … That's the last thing I will say it's a AP school a lot of kids actually wanna stay here cause it is a bit better and it's a bit unfair that you <u>do</u> move us to a AP school and then instantly progress us to another one cause it's like I I I'm getting put back into mainstream school. I didn't really see a point to it.

Daniella's account places AP as being somewhat preferrable to other schools. However, there is a sense of decisions about Daniella's life being made by others, while she is the one who has to expend effort adapting to these changes.

> **Daniella (student):** And now I'm getting put back into a new school where they're expecting me to make new friends and everything over again
>
> **Researcher:** Yeah yeah
>
> **Daniella (student):** And then new lessons and then going to new places remembering corridors and stuff, doors and that's just just another year of effort.

Autonomy frustration is related to academic disengagement (Buzzai et al., 2021). Ryan & Deci (2020, p.5) describe autonomy supportive teaching as needing to understand the "internal frame of reference" of the learner. To achieve this staff must understand the decisions which have already been taken out of the hands of students (placement/subjects) when they arrive at AP and the frustrations this has caused.

Reflective of student accounts, staff touched on how students' options for subjects to study can be constrained by what is available, this was in relation to what pathway they are placed on, limited resources or distance students would need to travel to access provision (linked to theme 6: travel). Staff recounted the introduction of strategies by the AP to provide a range of options. This included the opening of The Zone (vocational provision) and the introduction of one lesson a week where students study for a qualification of their choosing from the AQA website.

> ***Theresa (teacher):*** *erm well actually yeah we have issues of that because it's so far erm that, yeah The Zone yeah that's a mix. I mean I don't know much about the Zone. I mean I know they go there. But travel getting there is a problem they'll moan about the journey. Um, and some of them just haven't responded to it, that well, I think. And. So yeah, I don't know an awful lot about The Zone. Erm I mean, I suppose yeah they've tried, they're trying that aren't they, cause can do sport - I mean, I've got year 11s actually, and they're not, they're not go really…some of them aren't going there and they could do cooking and sport there.*

> ***Peter (TA):*** *sports and catering because when we have new kids come in I take em round for a tour I have to say to em on certain days sports and catering you can't do cause it's full. There's no more slots for it*

> *Lucy (TA): Yeah. cause I think they get told, you you know this this is you they don't get much choice. I didn't get much by choice at school […]*

Theresa highlights students disliking having to travel to the zone, mentioning that many don't take up the option to study there. Theresa's school is around an hour and a half drive from the Zone, therefore likely more salient as an issue for the students she works with. Lucy describes the students in the AP school as not getting "*much choice*". This is in reference to what pathway of study they are placed upon (the AP has four pathways, one being mostly academic, two being a mix of vocational and academic, three being mostly vocational and four being educated at home due to safety concerns). This presents another choice being made for the students at the AP, with the potential of frustrating autonomy and therefore motivation in learning.

Control over the environment of learning is cited by Lucy (TA) and Kieran (student) as supporting pupils in AP.

> *Kieran (student): Chairs are uncomfy in there*
>
> *Researcher: Yeah?*
>
> *Kieran (student): I could happily sit at home. I've got this little cork board*
>
> *Researcher: Mhm*
>
> *Kieran (student): Four pins in each corner of bit of paper. sit on sofa. easily paintin' the picture.*

Lucy (TA): [discussing another Nurture class in school] So erm we have we erm we we might go over there. So I have worked within that class quite a lot. and err they feel like that's almost like their territory

Researcher: Mhm

Lucy (TA): And they do get quite annoyed if we get people, people coming into their class who aren't part of their class.

Lucy describes the Nurture provision as a student's "*territory*", linking this to control over who is in the environment. It could be that the relative stability of a Nurture class (unchanging group of students/teacher) more readily allows students to feel a sense of ownership in their environment. Similarly, Lucy describes how she feels students work better at home.

Lucy (TA): […]I think again it's that they feel more comfortable in their

Researcher: Mhm

Lucy (TA): Home environment so then and they feel that for that control so then actually you can engage them, More

The home environment could be preferred for some students for many reasons. Less interruptions from others may make it feel safer, or as suggested by Kieran home could be physically more comfortable. The common thread is control, named by Lucy and described by Kieran. This emphasises the support control within the environment can have for students. This is in line with SDT as students experiencing more control over their environment is supportive of autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2020).

Theme 5: Home Circumstances

This theme relates to how experiences at home and in the community can give rise to challenges for students' interaction with schooling (including perceptions of school generally, linking to theme 3: perception of education). This theme touches on economic concerns of families, as well as how different parenting styles may influence students' behaviour.

> ***Peter (TA):*** *it's it's weird it's just the minds that the kids when they come in really if they've had a good evening or a bad evening then that like just comes over to the next day*

All staff spoke about how the lives of students at home affect them in school. This was spoken about in terms of stability of environment, with reference to the pandemic allowing for long periods of time with less boundaries. This was viewed as linked to increased incidents of disruptive behaviour from students.

> ***Lily (teacher):*** *We've got a cohort at the moment who are very disengaged and very defiant*
>
> ***Researcher:*** *mhm*
>
> ***Lily (teacher):*** *Erm who if they were missing it or if they were difficult at school before the pandemic then they had two years basically..no no boundaries at all.*

> ***Theresa (teacher):*** *Erm and then the other thing… with our students is that presumably if they've been off school they've also spent more time in environments*

aren't always particularly suitable, if they're home isn't very good, their family life isn't

very stable, that's where they spent more time so erm I mean, I'm <u>assuming</u> Covid's

got a link to it, but I'm I'm not one that 100% sure on that.

Researcher*: And you, you mentioned the cohort of children getting more difficult*

why why do you think that is

Lucy (TA)*: But it is that. It's probably Covid it is probably parents. Parents who*

aren't erm setting boundaries and consistency at home and so we have kids who

have that issue

These quotes emphasise the challenges families of pupils experienced over the

Covid 19 pandemic. The pandemic has led to a context of increased anxiety around school

attendance generally (Rae, 2020). Disadvantaged families bearing the brunt of difficulties

during Covid 19 has been well documented (Blundell et al., 2022; Goudeau et al., 2021; Holt

& Murray, 2022). Not only did the pandemic limit access to learning due to technological

inequalities (Goudeau et al., 2021), it also left children in challenging family circumstances

without reprieve (Holt & Murray, 2022). Routines can be more likely to be disrupted in

families where economic resources are stretched often due to the need to take shift-work,

overtime, or reliance on public transport for example. Disruption to routines can lead to

challenges in social-emotional functioning for children (Fiese & Winter, 2010).

The extracts above indicate a perception of boundaries which are high in freedom

and low in responsiveness to students' behaviour. It could be that learning took place in

environments over lockdown where there was less structured support available, less tailoring

of learning to students' needs, less provision of clear targets and stability of rules which

combined negatively impacted feelings of competence and autonomy for students (Deci &

Ryan, 2020) thereby hindering motivation and increasing disengagement upon returning to

formalised learning. This in turn increased the learning gap between students and their peers (Damody et al., 2021), increasing anxiety and frustrating feelings of competence upon return to school. Emerging research shows that general competency beliefs did not change as a result of the pandemic (Smith et al., 2021). However, this research was not conducted with students in AP, who arguably may have had a different experience of lockdown than mainstream peers.

Previous research has found that parenting style can impact students' motivation in learning at school (Farkas & Grolnick, 2010). Parenting styles which are high freedom and low responsiveness to the child's behaviour has been linked to increased reliance on extrinsic motivators (Alt, 2015; although this research explores the perspective of college students from an international paper, caveating the relevancy). Such importance placed on extrinsic motivators and related low levels of motivation are reflected in the below quote.

>*Lily (teacher): When there are the learning gaps that they've got erm and then we have others who <u>really </u>have become so disengaged with the entire education system that they are literally some of them literally turn up just to stop the parents getting the fine. Erm and they tell you that.*
>
>*Researcher: Mm Mm*
>
>*Lily (teacher): We have students who we see once a fortnight cause they've had their 10 day letter and then they appear again and then the disappear again. Erm…*

Practical barriers families experienced to working with the school were also discussed.

Lily (teacher): We have a lot of parents who obviously the catchment is the whole county erm and due to their own social situation a lot of them don't drive, can't drive are are in a job where actually they

Researcher: Yeah

Lily (teacher): Couldn't take the time off because there's a potential that their employer wouldn't be sympathetic to that erm but it could be equally difficult on the staff having to go and see the student in their home environment

Researcher: Mm

Lily (teacher): And realising how. They are actually living

Researcher: Yeah

Lily (teacher): Which gives you again a greater understanding of what they're going through

Lily describes that families may not be able to attend meetings in school for practical reasons and how that can hinder school/family relationships. She also describes how staff having greater context of the students' home environment can encourage empathy.

It is useful to reflect on the concerns raised in this theme from a systems perspective. Dowling and Pound (2003) comment that when there is a "problem" with a child's behaviour, it is common for members of the school system to become frustrated with the family and vice versa. This damages home-school relationships, often negatively impacting students. Positive family involvement with school is linked to better academic outcomes for children (Al-alwan, 2014; Cheung & Pomeranz, 2012). Parent-school relationships can become more strained when the predominant reason for contact is following a negative event concerning the child (Dowling & Pound, 2003). Given that the vast majority of children in AP have been excluded, it is likely parents have had frequent negative interactions with school systems

regarding their child. Dowling & Pound emphasise the importance of facilitating productive communication between the two systems for successful intervention.

Staff spoke about the influence the home culture around education can have, how some parents are disengaged with education due to their own experiences of school and therefore find it difficult to support children. Likewise staff spoke about parents who felt disempowered to shape their child's engagement with school. One interviewee linked that particularly with the rural location.

Lily (teacher): And I think it's partly that within Worthington there's quite an insular approach. That sort of do you need a passport to get out of Worthington, my parents didn't achieve anything. Or not educationally but they were alright there is definitely an element of "I will be alright"

Theresa (teacher): …or maybe their family haven't worked through the generations. But I think that's a real barrier as well. But they don't see the value that it adds to their life.

Lucy (TA): [in response to being asked about barriers to learning] But then he's kind of at the end of his tether so that he's got himself there. So you do have that. And that's not just him. There's lots of parents that are in that situation where they, they don't know what to do

The above accounts offer constructions of families who do not appear to see the value of education or feel unable to offer structure and support. Parent involvement in learning is linked to increased motivation on behalf of students (Al-Alwan, 2014; Cheung &

Pomeranz, 2012). If parents themselves hold negative perceptions around school it may shape how they support their children's education (Miller, 2015). Sturge-Apple et al (2010) posit that children may internalise parental school experiences and respond in similar ways, therefore the beliefs parents have may influence student's perceptions of school.

There is an implicit school based dominance in the accounts above, that is a hope for integration into the ways of the school (McWayne et al., 2022). Yamamoto & Bempechat (2022) argue that parents' educational support for children is beyond classroom learning and linked to skills valued by society. Therefore parents may be engaged in supporting education but in other aspects of learning that are felt to be relevant to the life of the family. Williams-Johnson & Gonzalez-DeHass (2022) highlight the importance for settings of understanding what education means to families and what role parents expect to have within that.

Students also touched on home lives affecting their experience of school.

Daniella (student): And I also know the reality cause I know half these kids if they don't get their gcses they are probably gonna end on the streets…unfortunately. They're probably not gonna be able to get jobs and stuff and they might have money but not like everything they want

Researcher: Mm

Daniella (student): And it's like it's quite sad cause my parents weren't the richest so I kinda don't wanna do that so I kinda want a lot of money so I'm always good. Never have to worry about money

In the extract above Daniella's experience has impressed upon her the need for financial security which is linked to attaining GCSEs. The implications for not passing GCSEs are

significant, likely ending up on the streets. It may also be that her home experiences have informed her beliefs about education being valuable and this motivates Daniella (identified regulation; Ryan & Deci, 2020).

For another student financial constraints lead to a source of frustration with attending the AP school. When asked what was difficult about learning in an AP school, he describes having to buy uniform as limiting his ability to purchase other clothes.

Kieran (student): So me and nan went shopping last night. I said to her. "let's go have a look at the jeans" Found a pair of jeans that fit. She said. "no too expensive". But yet we could have got we could have paid for them trousers with the £17 we got back from the shirts… and pair of trousers and a pack of shirts.

These comments are illustrative of the challenges students in the AP are negotiating and the different outcomes for each student. Daniella is motivated by financial constraints, Kieran experiences frustration.

A further point to consider is the context of austerity, public finance and service provision during the cost of living crisis. Public sector services in the UK are diminishing, particularly since the introduction of austerity measures in 2010 (Lavalette, 2017; Leclercq et al., 2020). Lavalette (2017) argues this has further marginalised vulnerable communities. This links to very real pressures on families including food and fuel insecurity (Jenkins et al., 2021; Khan, 2022). Hence, it is important that AP settings understand present challenges due to the financial climate and are able to reflect on how this may shape the lives of the students they teach.

Theme 6: Travel.

This theme reflects the frustrations participants felt in relation to the journeys made to and from AP.

The majority of students spoke about their taxi ride to school, typically with some exasperation. This was generally due to long journeys but also as a result of the other children in their taxi. Students also spoke about taxis being late or not beeping so they are aware they have arrived.

> ***Researcher:*** *What would your perfect day look like*
>
> ***Dave (student):*** *Having the taxi show up on time, the first thing. Erm Getting to school on time cause they always take a year and a day to turn up*

> ***Researcher:*** *[..] Is there anything that makes it difficult to come into school?*
>
> ***Joseph (student):*** *I guess sometimes kids in my taxi, taxi kids, sometimes also the taxi drivers, always coming <u>late</u>. Like uhh yesterday, or what day, yesterday, he came in at around 9, 9, well it it was already basically the end of first lesson.*

> ***Researcher:*** *[…] So what what is erm what's difficult about being in a AP school?*
>
> ***Kieran (student):*** *The distance*

Daniella describes a long taxi ride to school in the mornings.

Daniella (student): Err an in the morning it takes like an hour and 30 minutes but after school it takes like 30 minutes. Cause we're picking up kids on the way to school

Nevertheless, instead of being frustrated by this she describes it as "*the best part of the day*" noting the main difficulty is with the journey home, despite it being a third of the time.

Daniella (student): Cause most of the kids that <u>are</u> the worst have got their hours cut so they get to go home like after. So in the morning they don't come in like they can come in later. So that means they get the taxi with us back.

Daniella describes some of the behaviour which takes place in the taxis below.

Daniella (student): Taxi rides aren't always the funnest

Researcher: Oh yeah yeah

Daniella (student): Cause I mean the seats can also be pulled backwards. When you're sitting so the seat just comes backwards

Daniella (student): So you know where some of them are closed over. So somebody sitting behind you they just pull the seat backwards and it goes inwards. It's really annoying if you're the person sitting

The above extracts taken together indicate taxi journeys as having a significant impact on the day to day lives of students. Daniella describes the behaviour of other students in her taxi as an inconvenience rather than expressing concerns about her safety.

However, being in a car with others who are "*the worst*" in the school and behave unpredictably is likely an unsettling end to the school day. Adverse events which occur during commutes are documented as impacting other domains in the lives of adults (Gerpott et al., 2023), it is likely that this is experienced more acutely for children who are still developing their emotional regulation skills (Cole, 2014).

Staff showed an awareness of the difficulties that exist with transport to and from the schools, including travel to the specialist provision 'The Zone'. This is a half hour drive from St Margaret's, and an hour from Valley Park (discussed in theme 4, subtheme: systemic influences on choice and control).

Lily (teacher): Cause some of the students are are in a taxi for an hour and a half before they get to school

Researcher: Mm Mm. And as a setting you don't really have any control –

Lily (teacher): We don't have any control over that but we do recognise that's not an ideal way to start the day

Reasons for the long journeys were discussed including the size of the county, transport being provided by the LA (therefore the school having no ability to control the routes taken or timings), students being unable to attend a school nearer to their home due to difficulties with peers. Travel was a more prominent feature in the student accounts, likely reflecting the greater impact travel to and from school has on the pupils' lives.

Students have no control over the route their taxi takes, when they arrive or which children share the journey with them. This is on top of up to an hour and a half commute. This lack of control over different aspects of their journey is another means by which autonomy can be frustrated (Gerpott et al., 2023) before the student even arrives in the

school.

Travel to AP in rural counties was outlined as an issue over 10 years ago in the Taylor report (2012). Since then however, this has not been commented upon in the literature with regards to AP in depth. Perhaps reflective of a relative dearth of research from rural areas and the specificity of this challenge to rural locations. A more cynical reflection would be that the people these journeys are a problem for have limited power in the system to voice challenges. It is important to consider that while students are the recipients of the taxi service, they are not the customer. Journeys are commissioned by the LA at the request of the school. It is the customers who have power, and customers with more capital have more power (Crouch, 2012; Smerecnik & Renegar, 2010). Students are not in a position to easily challenge taxi firms, or indeed the location of provision relative to their home. Student choices are additionally limited by restricted public transport which is typical of rural areas (Wang et al., 2015). This means that they are unlikely to have an alternative means of getting to school, constraining their choices further.

LA budgets are strained following repeated real terms budget cuts from central government (Lowndes & Gardner, 2016), exacerbated by pressures from COVID-19 and Brexit (Ahrens & Ferry, 2020). This may be impacting individual students as the LA seeks to get the best value for money (one long taxi journey is likely cheaper than three shorter journeys). It has been shown by research from the international community that long school commutes negatively impact performance and wellbeing (Ding et al., 2023; Tigre et al., 2017), as well as having health implications (Voulgaris et al., 2019). The potential effects of requiring some of the most vulnerable students in the county to take long sometimes unpredictable journeys each day must be considered.

Summary of Findings

This project aimed to explore the views of staff and students in relation to supporting motivation within secondary AP. SDT was chosen as a theoretical lens (Ryan & Deci, 2019).

SDT was chosen given the focus on relatedness and the quality of relationships (Knee & Browne, 2023), alongside the importance of positive relationships for students in AP which is highlighted in the literature (e.g., Michael & Fredrickson, 2013; Mills & Thomson, 2018). It is also possible that the context of AP may lead to unique pressures on BPN (e.g., removed from previous setting through exclusion may negatively impact autonomy and relatedness). Analysis was inductive, allowing for novel themes to be generated through open coding.

Following reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022a), six themes were constructed as impacting students' motivation. While themes were derived from accounts from both participant groups, significant similarities or differences are commented upon below.

Themes:

- Impact of others (with subthemes of "negotiating self within the peer group", "staff management of challenging behaviour" and "value of positive staff relationships").
- Differences in ability (with subthemes of "high level of need" and "importance of differentiation").
- Perception of education (with subthemes of "individual perceptions and related emotional response", "curriculum and lesson content").
- Choice and control affecting learning (with subthemes of "Individual provision and response to choice", and "systemic influences on choice and control").
- Home circumstances.
- Travel.

Negotiating self within the peer group, value of positive staff relationships and staff management of challenging behaviour were viewed as important by both staff and students (RQ1, RQ2). A high level of academic need and the benefits of differentiation were commented upon by both groups (RQ1, RQ2). Broader curriculum perceptions were

commented upon as important by both groups (RQ1, RQ2). Choice and control (both individual and systemic influences) were viewed as affecting motivation to engage in learning by both groups (RQ1, RQ2). Home circumstances were viewed particularly by staff as impacting motivation in school (RQ2). Individual perceptions of academic ability and emotional responses were predominantly commented upon by staff (RQ2). Transport was voiced by students as a particular frustration (RQ1).

Conclusions

Themes generated through analysis reflected the importance of relationships in shaping motivation within AP, akin to ideas highlighted in previous research (Cockerill, 2019; Hart, 2013; Malcolm, 2021; Malcolm, 2019; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Mills & Thomson, 2018; Thomson & Pennacchia, 2016). Analysis particularly emphasised the powerful role peer group acceptance has within AP and the tools used at times by students to maintain an acceptable position within social hierarchies. Images of "road men" or being a "big man" and related social norms were commented upon by participants as influencing students to shape their behaviour in ways which are counter to what is endorsed by the AP. Perhaps linked to the associated norms, the behaviour of other students was considered a dominant barrier to learning by the majority of staff and students, reflecting similar accounts within Michael & Frederickson's (2013) research. Staff often generated accounts in which behaviour management could be perceived as nuanced and relational. Likewise, there were examples of staff linking positive relationships with better engagement in the classroom, and of students perceiving value in staff relationships. This presents a complex picture with regards to the fulfilment of relatedness. Despite accounts of relatedness being supported by relationships with teaching staff. It could be construed that students may also attempt to meet this need through adhering to the norms of the wider peer group, which may inhibit internalisation of expectations endorsed by the AP (Pelletier & Rocchi, 2023). The unpredictability of the environment is indicated in the threat of bullying voiced at times by students, alongside accounts from some students around the efficacy of behaviour

management within the AP. Students feelings of safety and belongingness can be viewed as interlinked (Porter et al., 2021). Therefore if students feel unsafe in school, this may limit their experience of relatedness and by extension their innate tendency towards growth and learning (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Generally, staff and students reflected on high levels of need in learning present within the AP and commented on the importance of appropriate differentiation. This theme is reminiscent of ideas from previous research (Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). The model of AP means children can join at any point in the year, from any school, and have a range of attainment gaps, some staff commented upon this as presenting a unique task for staff in tailoring learning effectively. This is meaningful as previous research notes appropriately differentiated work as supporting feelings of competence (Guay et al., 2017).

Students' individual perceptions of education and related emotional responses were commented upon (particularly by staff) as shaping motivation. Staff often spoke about strategies to improve self-esteem particularly with regards to academics. All students described previous unpleasant incidents at school (prior to AP). Some staff hypothesised the impact of these experiences as affecting their current learning, at times describing needing to rebuild trust with students. This holds similarity with previous literature on exclusion as damaging trust between students and teaching staff (Briggs, 2010; Owen, 2022; Pyne, 2019). Student accounts indicated higher perceived motivation in learning when they viewed activities as relevant to their lives and interests. This thematic trend is representative of previous SDT literature (Reeve & Cheon, 2021).

A distinction between core and practical learning could be constructed across participant groups. Core subjects (maths/English, sometimes science) were often viewed as valuable, essential and difficult. Practical subjects (art, PE, food technology) were typically described as fun and engaging by both staff and students. Decisions about the curriculum balance (integration of practical/academic activities) were commented upon by staff. This

can be viewed as reflecting broader debates about the nature of curriculum within AP, practical subjects previously being construed as enabling and re-engaging (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Other authors critique the replacement of academic subjects as disempowering and reproducing class differences (Francis et al., 2017; Thomson & Pennachia, 2016). Societal constructions of different subjects may shape the value students hold for lessons, thereby affecting motivation (Komarraju & Dial, 2014). Likewise, it could increase anxiety in socially valued subjects, which may raise the likelihood of academic "handicapping" (del Mar Ferradás et al., 2018; Gadbois et al., 2011).

Patterns of shared meaning across data sets indicated that providing meaningful choice over learning, and feeling listened to was viewed as supportive for motivation. This links theoretically to ideas voiced in previous research (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; McCluskey, 2015; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Staff at times discussed constraints in offering choices to students as being related to short staffing, the subjects available at the AP alongside pressures from wider systems (e.g., Ofsted inspections), as well as the behaviour of other students. Difficulties facilitating choice in AP as a result of the complex needs of pupils has previously been noted (Kinsella et al., 2019). It may be useful to also consider how the BPN of teachers are supported or frustrated by the environment around them, not just because it may impact staff wellbeing (Ebersold et al., 2019) but also because it has potential to impact student academic outcomes (Collie & Martin, 2017; Marshik et al., 2017). There were accounts of students describing being unable to choose particular subjects, and a lack of agency over placement in the AP. This highlights how the need for autonomy may be frustrated before students are even in the classroom.

Particular staff accounts indicated a view that some students may benefit from more boundaries within their lives outside of school. There were some staff perceptions that this was particularly so after the Covid 19 pandemic. Staff at times referred to this as making it more difficult for students to re-integrate into school routines.

Limited familial resources were discussed as hindering engaging with school (due to lack of transport or inflexible working hours), particularly by staff. To the researcher's knowledge, this is not something which has been commented upon in previously. This may reflect wider societal changes with the reduction of public services (Lavalette, 2017; Leclercq et al., 2020). The consideration of this is particularly important given the context of a cost of living crisis (Patrick & Pybus, 2022). It raises questions about what can be done to support families as well as improve cross system communication and understanding.

Transport to and from the AP was frequently mentioned in interviews, primarily by students as a source of frustration. Again this is not something which has been (to the researcher's knowledge) noted in the literature before (beyond Taylor, 2012), indicating how the setting of a large rural county potentially impacts the provision of AP. Transport represented another forum in which autonomy may be constrained for students (Gerpott et al., 2023). Taxis are arranged by the LA meaning students and the school have limited control over timings, routes or who else shares the taxi. This frustration may be more so in a county with limited public transport, common to rural settings (Wang et al., 2015).

Implications

Implications will be described with a focus on Educational Psychology involvement but also considering other professionals who work with children in AP. The following sections will provide structure, implications for:

- EPs working within AP

- AP settings

- Wider systems e.g. LA

EPs Working Within AP

The research has supported the findings from previous studies on the importance of relationships for this group of students (e.g., Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Mills &

Thomson, 2018; Thomson & Pennacchia, 2016). It has added emphasis on the need for acceptance from the dominant peer group within this. The time, energy and skills utilised in gaining acceptance from peers in this setting should be a consideration for EPs conducting assessment work within AP. It may also mean that there is a role for EPs in delivering intervention work which helps a young person explore the meaning they attach to their own identities (Stets & Serpe, 2013), and how to manage competing demands from peers, teaching staff and family members.

Bell et al. (2022) asserted that social-codes of behaviour occur in marginalised communities. There are already often narratives of deficit and rejection present in students' lives when they arrive at AP. It is important for EPs (and professionals generally) working with students to consider how psycho-educational assessments add to students' self-image, and perceptions around education (Climie & Henley, 2016). The inclusion of strengths-based assessment is advocated for both EPs and other professionals working with students in AP. Strengths-based approaches form a more well-rounded picture of students as well as building feelings of efficacy and competency (Clime & Mastoras, 2015; Jilk & Erickson, 2017).

In line with previous research in AP providing meaningful choice was found to be supportive in increasing motivation to engage (e.g., Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; McCluskey, 2015). Nevertheless, there remained constraints placed on their learning by limited resources, availability of subjects in AP and placement into the setting. Furthermore students' broader perceptions about education were thought to influence engagement. For teaching to be autonomy supportive it must take into account and respond to student perspectives (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) explores how individuals construct the world around them, asserting that an individual's constructs of the world around them impact their behaviour (Walker & Winter, 2007). Although there is a need to improve the evidence base for PCP tools in education (Gray & Woods, 2022), there is a burgeoning picture of PCP being successfully used within AP and with children with social,

emotional, mental health (SEMH) needs (Bristow, 2013; Cumming & Strnadova, 2017; Gray et al., 2022). The psychological skills EPs have mean they would be well placed to utilise PCP tools to gain a fuller understanding of what pupils' constructs are around education (Smillie & Newton, 2020). This knowledge could then be communicated to AP settings to ensure learning is as relevant to students' constructs as possible.

Implications for AP Settings

Student-staff relationships, in line with previous research, were valued by students and recognised as supporting learning by staff. Food was consistently mentioned by participants as an enjoyable part of schooling. Opportunities for staff and students to cook and eat together should be encouraged within AP. Food sharing goes beyond addressing hunger to encouraging relationship building (Julier, 2013; Marovelli, 2019). Thus, providing an avenue to nurture students and build feelings of connection to others (Neely et al, 2014). Food insecurity is a continuing problem in the UK (Jenkins et al., 2021; Loopstra et al., 2019; Pool & Dooris, 2022), and as such the importance of addressing hunger should not be discounted, particularly as food insecurity affects those on lower incomes meaning that students in AP may be more vulnerable (Graham et al., 2019; Loopstra et al., 2019).

The need for students to portray themselves in a particular manner to gain acceptance from others (e.g. as 'roadmen') is powerful, likely strengthened by adolescence and school exclusion (Dishion, Piehler & Myers, 2008; Foulkes & Blakemore, 2016). Students seek acceptance from one another by adhering to social rules which are sometimes counter to the desires of the AP. To foster internalisation of practices endorsed by the setting, relatedness with staff should be a continual focus (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The students in Nurture reported particularly positive relationships with their teacher. This could be due to the stability of that relationship. Therefore avenues for stable connections with staff should be considered, for example having a key member of staff who holds particular students in mind and makes this clear to those students through regular checking-in

meetings for example.

Provision of curriculum within AP is complex, practical subjects were valued by staff and students although traditional subjects were viewed as most important in line with dominant societal discourses (Duckett, 2021). Duckett (2021) advocates for a curriculum design which is holistic and personalised. Students should be provided with a broad curriculum which allows them to exercise choice and (beyond studying core subjects) follow their interests as far as is possible. This should include the option to study arts and humanities which help shape active and critical citizens (Duckett, 2021; Mills & Thomson, 2018).

Parent involvement in school is linked to positive outcomes for students, including attainment and motivation in learning (Al-awan, 2014; Cheung & Pomeranz, 2012). Bespoke, flexible and individualised means for engagement with vulnerable families is proposed (Day, 2013). Day asserts that practicalities, the organisational culture of the school, types of communication, psychological facilitators and barriers should all be considered to support communication. Settings in rural locations must negotiate distances with poor transport links which may be impacting parents coming to the school. Settings should consider the unique populations they work with and explore creative solutions to encourage involvement. One avenue for consideration would be staff offering informal opportunities to meet families outside of the school for example using community centres to offer coffee mornings. This may help address travel difficulties and create a less intimidating environment for families who may have had difficult experiences at school.

It is important for all professionals working with AP settings to be mindful of the cost of living crisis and the impact this may be having on the lives of families. Increases in living costs are linked to declines in physical and mental health (Broadbent et al., 2023). This has the potential to increase stress and decrease support available to children via their family as parental resources are taken up elsewhere (Masarik & Conger, 2017).

Implications for Wider Systems

Staff commented upon the impact of students' home circumstances on school experience, in particular they reflected that more boundaries at home would be helpful. Staff also thought that parental perceptions of education influenced students' engagement in school. A dual systems approach seeks to focus on how a problem occurs (rather than why) by increasing communication between the school and the family (Dowling & Osborne, 2003). One avenue would be to echo newer short term SEMH specialist provision within the LA (for children who have not been excluded) which has family support practitioners (low level social care professionals) attached to them. This would offer a means to build cross system communication and a potential avenue for support for families who may be struggling. Alternatively it is proposed that EPs could utilise their knowledge of systems and consultation skills (Birch et al., 2015), to draw together the two systems through joint consultation.

Professionals such as linked EPs and SLT within AP should ensure that the LA are aware of journey lengths children travel to school. Professionals should be prepared to challenge where it is clearly having a detrimental impact on children's education and wellbeing (e.g., when the taxi picks up many students meaning the journey takes significantly longer).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There are several limitations to this study. Firstly, challenges with language ability are associated with behavioural dysregulation and exclusion (Cole et al., 2019; Chow & Wehby, 2018; Paget et al., 2018). The interview process relied solely on verbal communication. Some students may not have felt comfortable communicating verbally and therefore been reluctant to take part, likewise richer data may have been gathered if another tool had been combined with semi-structured interviews such as a card sort activity. This would be a be useful avenue for future research to explore.

Due to recruitment challenges and a purposive sampling strategy the pool of participants was somewhat heterogeneous. Recruitment occurred across three sites and included participants from Nurture groups thus questions could be raised about generalisability. Conducted from a big Q methodological standpoint this research recognises the context dependent subjective nature of knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2023), therefore it is not intended to be transferable. Nevertheless, this research would have been strengthened by a greater number of participants across the provision.

Parental experiences were not explored. The research sought to include the views of children and staff, rationales for which are discussed. However given the importance of the family system in the lives of students, alongside the impact of home circumstances on students' experience and perception of education this would be a pertinent area to explore in future research. Particularly as previous research indicates families of excluded children often feel stigmatised (Mills & Thomson, 2018; Jalali & Morgan, 2018). It could also provide a forum to explore how communication with schools would be best supported from the families point of view.

On occasion the participants who were in Nurture (either as a student or staff member) appeared to have different experiences to other participants. Nurture as an intervention is designed to address SEMH needs by providing positive attachments alongside social learning and emotional literacy development (Sloan et al., 2020). The provision of Nurture groups within AP has been explored at a primary level (Warin & Hibbin, 2016), no similar explorations could be found at a secondary level. This would be an interesting area for future research.

Final Comments

This project sought to explore the motivation of secondary age children with regards to learning in an AP. Novel contributions to the literature were facilitated by virtue of: the use of SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2019) to explore qualitative data on the experiences of staff and

students in AP. Six key themes were identified to address research questions. The current study has added emphasis on the importance of relationships for this group whilst adding depth to the literature through exploring the power the peer group holds. It has explored the particular setting of the AP in a rural location illuminating issues such as travel. Implications for future research and practice were discussed.

Chapter 3: Critically Reflective Account

Introduction

The British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics (2021a) asserts that researchers must "be self-reflective", questioning the value psychological learning gives society (p.8). In line with this responsibility, this chapter will consist of "reflection-on-action" which took place during the research process. It will include reflexive positioning of oneself as the researcher in personal contexts and consider how this shaped decision making.

This research was conducted from a "big Q" qualitative standpoint, meaning data was interrogated subjectively (Braun & Clarke, 2022a). Therefore, it is important to explore any underlying assumptions which may have influenced analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Jankowski et al (2017) described use of the third person as "the objective and dispassionate voice of mainstream psychology" (p.5). Lazard & McAvoy (2020) asserted that the point of reflexivity is to illuminate what personally influenced research decisions and conclusions. Therefore,to support the personal nature of this chapter I have written in first person.

Through exploration of my own positioning in relation to how research was constructed I hope that transparency will be supported, as this is key to quality reflexive thematic analysis (RTA; Braun & Clarke, 2022a). This chapter will provide a reflective account of my research "journey", including the consideration of research topic, design of

study and participant group. There will be a focus on ethics, issues of power, and my own ontological and epistemological positioning.

My Own Positioning

I came to educational psychology from (amongst other roles) working as an assistant psychologist in a prison. My time working within the prison shaped my professional identity in a significant way. One of my overriding take aways was that often the people I had worked with would engage (sharing their views, joining with groups or activities) if given the opportunity, but that they were often denied this chance as it was assumed they would choose not to take part. As I got to know the residents on the wing, I saw a persistent pattern of social exclusion which was present throughout their lives. Residents often had a story of being in care and being excluded from school before prison. It was a continual reminder of my own privilege, and a time in my life I am grateful for. This experience underpins principles core to my identity as a psychologist in training and researcher, namely seeking to address social inequalities within education through social justice (Francis et al., 2017). As a result of this, I wished to conduct research which offered an opportunity for marginalised individuals to share their story, and for that opportunity to be of benefit to them.

I had hoped to explore motivation to engage in education for children working with youth justice teams. In my year 1 trainee placement the service had link Educational Psychologists (EPs) who worked with youth justice teams. No such links existed in my current local authority. I found this strange given the poor educational outcomes for students who have had contact with youth justice teams (Ministry of Justice & Department for Education, 2016) and government advice which asserted education should be the primary response to youth offending (Taylor, 2016). This is particularly so as multi-agency working is a key skill of EPs (Greenhouse, 2013). I felt that amongst other benefits, a research project would be an opportunity to connect the two services.

Unfortunately, the local youth offending team in my placement authority were experiencing a period of pressure and did not feel able to support a research project. This perhaps reflects systemic pressures on youth justice services which authors argue have been building under public spending cuts (Haines & Case, 2018). Other youth offending teams were contacted and either did not respond or responded that they did not feel able to support. I then considered recruitment of children working with youth justice directly from schools. Through contacting schools as part of this process, I had conversations with the trust special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) for the alternative provision (AP) in the county. These conversations indicated a perception of increased need particularly around mental health and disruptive behaviour following the pandemic. This is in line with emerging research which indicated increased difficulties in these areas (e.g., Essler et al., 2021; O'Sullivan et al., 2021). Following these conversations, I decided to pivot away from research with children working alongside youth justice to students in the AP. This seemed to fulfil a practical need within my local community and therefore an appropriate area of research (EPs being described as "well placed" to research locally; Toland & Carrigan, 2011, p.103). Alongside which, this participant group continued to fulfil my desire of wanting to work with students who may be marginalised (Deakin et al., 2022).

A further factor shaping this decision was my own experience living and working in the area. I was aware of the high exclusion rate within the county (double the national average; HM Gov, 2022a) and I wondered how that affected provision. I grew up locally and was familiar with the challenges of country life (poor bus routes, lack of activities, and opportunities; Black et al., 2019; Velega et al., 2012). I was curious how these factors affected settings whose catchment was the entire county.

In line with my social justice positioning, I wanted my research to be empowering and practically useful for the AP and participants (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). This aligns with my ontological and epistemological standpoint of Critical Realism. Critical realism asserts an ontological position of realism, whilst also contending reality is complex, and continuously

subjectively constructed by those experiencing it (Vincent & O'Mahoney, 2018; Willig, 2013). Kelly et al. (2018) described critical realism as emancipatory. The relativist epistemology allowing for questioning of power structures and individuals' interpretations of these (Botha, 2021). Critical realism aligns broadly with how I see the world, this combined with the emancipatory underpinning and flexible relationship with research methods (Botha, 2021) made it an appropriate choice.

Issues of Power

Power differentials are present in any research dynamic, but as an outsider to the groups being studied particular consideration of power was necessary (Dodgson, 2019). I was mindful of the status my affiliation with the university and local authority carried. Likewise, the power of labels attributed to myself of "trainee psychologist" and "researcher". Reflection upon the SOCIAL GRRRAAACCEEESSS (Burnham, 2018), led me to consider a range of other privileges (socio-economic, racial, age and education). Power was a frequent consideration in supervision, continually endeavouring to challenge unwitting complicity in harmful stereotypes. Critically oriented research supervision was an important tool to name and consider these issues, as recommended in literature (Dodgson, 2019).

Conversely, there were occasions where my agency was limited. I arranged the project with the trust SENCo. The AP senior leadership agreed for the research to go ahead on the condition a staff member was present for interviews. Similarly, practical arrangements were organised with individual settings. This meant liaising with different head-teachers who were under their own systemic pressures. The settings were helpful, but I had limited control over who the accompanying staff member was. This meant I was unaware of the quality of relationship between the student and staff member. The power associated with the staff member (e.g., seniority of role) is another factor which may have shaped data. While confidentiality was discussed with the staff member, their presence risked damaging the experience of anonymity, which Ellard-Grey et al (2015) noted heightens the social risks of

participation. Given the findings of this study (the importance of peer approval) this could have been a significant factor in recruitment. Moreover, if participants had strained relationships with the AP or staff member present this could have increased distrust of the research process. Mistrust of researchers is one of the primary barriers to "hidden" (sometimes called "vulnerable" or "hard to reach") groups participating in research (Bonevski et al., 2014). However, the contracting of the project required the presence of a staff member. This meant all that could be done was to ensure students knew a staff member would be present beforehand, reminding them participation was voluntary and of their right to withdraw.

When one student became aware the project would be audio recorded, they became suspicious (echoing Bonevski et al., 2014) and concerned that I would misrepresent what they said. I reminded them the study was voluntary and they declined taking part. I reflected on the experience of power within that interaction as shifting, dispersed and enacted (I enacted power by inviting the student to take part, it shifted when the student enacted their right to decline). This is reminiscent of a Foucauldian understanding of power (Gallagher, 2008). I went on to consider power from a critical realist standpoint, exploring the causal powers available to members of the systems involved in this project. Causal powers are possessed by different entities due to their properties (Vincent & O'Mahoney, 2018), for example as a researcher I have the power to choose a topic of study. I may choose whether or not to exercise this power, and external forces may stop it being actualised (e.g., youth offending services felt unable to support my initial project). Mechanisms support the potential enactment of power (Vincent & O'Mahoney, 2018). Participants could enact power through providing consent, but also through how they chose to answer questions during the interview. Parents or carers could enact power by not consenting for their child to take part, but beyond this their options were limited. As such, families of children in AP felt disempowered in the context of this project. This led to recommendations for this as an area for future research to explore.

Ethics and Accessibility

The BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2021b) states that psychologists must act in a responsible manner, considering: professional accountability and respect for the welfare of humans. To fulfil this, relevant ethical guidelines were observed (e.g., BPS, 2021a, British Educational Research Association; BERA, 2018). The vulnerable nature of the participant group meant care needed to be taken, particularly around consent. For consent to be valid it must be "given from an informed perspective" (BPS, 2021a, 4.1). Information about the study needed to be communicated in a manner which was engaging and understandable. I was mindful that gaining consent from children would be an ongoing process (Dockett & Perry, 2011). I spent a school day in each setting talking to eligible children informally about the research. If a child provided verbal consent to take part, an information and consent form was sent for parents/carers to sign (in line with BPS; 2021a). Once caregiver consent was given, an interview was arranged. At the beginning of which, I aimed to allow as much space as possible to talk through the information and consent form with students. Through this process written consent from pupils was sought.

Given exclusion disproportionately affects certain groups (see Graham et al., 2019) I chose to include an option on the consent form for participants to self-identify their gender and ethnicity. I was concerned tick boxes would be too prescriptive, some authors argue they privilege certain identities (Woolverton & Marks, 2021). However, many of the young people were confused by the term ethnicity, or alternatively wrote they would prefer not to say. This made me wonder if a checklist would have been more accessible. I tried to use simple language on forms and in conversation. Forms were always read out given the difficulties with literacy indicated in the literature for this group (The National Literacy Trust, 2020). However, I feel that this research would have been enriched by using some kind of visual or interactive activity. A one-on-one conversation could have been intimidating for pupils or reminded them of negative experiences (one student mentioned being interviewed in court). The link between communication difficulties and challenges regulating behaviour

has been documented (e.g., Cole et al., 2019). It follows that students in the AP may struggle with communication (one participant described his teacher as "not speaking English"). In future I wonder about the utility of Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) tools such as "drawing the ideal self/school" as a means of gaining the voices of these children (Moran, 2012). PCP techniques utilising drawing may be an appropriate tool to use in future research, as a means of exploring the world view of students who may struggle with verbal communication.

Participants were sent transcripts following interviews to review. I am aware students may have had difficulties with literacy (Timpson, 2019). It would have been ideal to have read the transcripts through with each student to check for understanding. However, the trust requested I always be accompanied by a staff member whilst speaking to students. I could not control who this would be, risking confidentiality for the student. I chose to prioritise preserving students' confidentiality. For the majority of students, I sent a large envelope to my contact at the school, within which were individual envelopes containing their transcripts and a certificate thanking them for taking part. When my contact was the member of school staff who was present in the interview, I emailed the transcripts and certificates over. Breaches of confidentiality are recognised as contributing to mistrust of the research process for marginalised groups (Ellard-Gray et al., 2015), and I did not want to add to that.

Challenges with Recruitment

I was aware that working with a "hidden" group would likely make recruitment challenging. This has been documented in research previously (Bonevski et al., 2014; Ellard-Gray et al., 2015). Furthermore, my association with the local authority could have been counterproductive, for example if families had negative experiences with social care. Whilst I anticipated some difficulties in recruitment, I had not appreciated how challenging it would be. The primary barrier I believe was a lack of pre-existing relationship between myself and students. I thought because I had successful experience working with "hidden" populations

in my career, this would continue to be the case. On reflection this seems arrogant. In my previous roles I worked full-time with the same client group, whereas with this research I was a visitor to systems. I took steps to make myself familiar (e.g., whole days were spent on site). In retrospect recruitment would have benefited from me getting to know potential participants and the system in greater depth beforehand (Savard & Kilpatrick, 2022). However, pragmatically opportunities to do so were constrained by other demands present in my role as a trainee educational psychologist.

Another challenge was that children would verbally agree to taking part but would not return caregiver consent forms. I was reliant on the AP settings to guide me with how best to gain consent (e.g., email or letter). On one occasion two participants were facilitated because the head teacher (independently) had rung home to talk about the project. This further demonstrated the importance of having 'buy in' from members of the system who know the families they work with. While my contact details were given out (via information/ consent forms) no parents got in touch. I feel it would be beneficial in future to offer face to face meetings or have a co-researcher who was embedded within the setting with pre-existing relationships (Ellard-Gray et al., 2015).

Consideration of Incentives

Given my reading around self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2019) I initially did not want to use incentives in recruitment. SDT demonstrates extrinsic motivators can decrease or lead to more superficial engagement (Ryan et al., 2019). I wanted to offer the children a chance to have their voices heard and felt like this would be enough. However, as noted above I did not have pre-existing relationships with the children. When it was clear that interest from students was limited, I became concerned and applied to change my ethics to allow for a £5 gift certificate as an incentive for taking part. For context the AP uses the same amount and gift certificate to reward students. The use of an incentive was suggested by staff within the AP. It is possible that an "undermining effect" was occurring,

where previous use of extrinsic reinforcement undermines motivation to engage when reinforcement is removed (Ryan et al., 2019). However, there is no way of knowing whether students would have been motivated to take part without the presence of previous extrinsic reinforcement.

My two concerns with incentives were how this would shape the quality of data and ethical implications. I reviewed the BPS (2021a) guidelines, which advises that incentives can be ethical as long as they are not large enough to impact participants freely made decision to take part. BERA (2018) guidance asserts similar principles. Nevertheless what amount shapes an individual's participation is subjective. To my mind £5 was a reasonable amount that acknowledged their contribution but would not impact their freedom to choose whether to participate. I do not think it is wrong that students were reimbursed for their time, indeed if it did encourage a broader range of pupils to consider taking part then I believe it could be viewed as positive.

Overall, I found it interesting that even though I had done significant reading about the effects of extrinsic motivators, when I was very anxious I retreated to behaviourist ideas. I wonder whether this reflects a dominance of behaviourism within society, which has been commented upon in research (Hoedemaekers, 2019).

Sample Concerns

As recruitment grew more challenging, my anxiety around the number of participants I had increased. I found myself searching for a number which if achieved would ensure successful research. There are various suggested minimum numbers in the literature, Sim et al (2018) summarised 16 papers purporting the ideal number of participants as a "rule of thumb" for qualitative research. Sim et al critiqued these numbers for lacking rationale, moreover it did not consider the "richness" of different accounts. Some argue that sample size should be informed by saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). "Saturation" is described as no new information being collected from participant interviews and is sometimes considered to

be the "gold standard" in guiding sample size (Guest et al., 2006; 60). Braun & Clarke (2022a) consistently emphasise the constructed nature of codes. To hold data saturation as an aim, implies that meaning resides within the data to be discovered by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2021a). This project was conducted from a big Q methodological standpoint, understanding theme generation as an interpretive act. With this in mind, the goal of data saturation became untenable (Braun & Clarke, 2021a).

A further concern was the heterogeneity of the sample. I had hoped to recruit from two settings (one in the city and one in a very rural location), however it became clear I would need to open it up to the third secondary AP in the county. Each setting had its own unique identity and I was worried about what I would be able to say about attending AP generally. Upon reflection I wonder whether this is indicative of "positivistic creep" (Braun & Clarke, 2022), that is when positivistic assumptions infiltrate big Q qualitative projects. I did not begin my research hoping to speak to the experiences of all students in AP, but rather reflect and interpret the experiences of the participants I spoke to.

In an ideal world I would have liked a more even number of participants from the three sites. In practice my sample was primarily shaped by pragmatic concerns such as the purposive strategy, the availability of volunteers and the time available for recruitment. In some ways I am grateful for the diversity of the sample, having two students and a staff member who worked in Nurture led to interesting comparisons that it would not have been possible to make otherwise.

Analysis

Starting coding was a daunting prospect. I wanted to do my participants justice which increased my anxiety and made it difficult to start. Another more practical barrier was the lengths of transcripts and concerns about my organisational skills. I was worried that if I coded by printing out and sectioning up paper, I would become overwhelmed. I spoke to recently qualified EPs in my placement authority who had used Nvivo to code and found it

helpful. I found it fairly intuitive to use and it suited my style of working. I was planning to use SDT as a theoretical lens. This no doubt guided my thinking somewhat in both interviews and coding. For example, during an interview when a participant spoke about students taking responsibility for their learning I was aware of thinking "autonomy!". Despite this, it was important for me to make space and be open to nuance and allow non-SDT related subjects to come to the fore. This was reflected in research questions which were broader than confirming or challenging tenets of SDT. Therefore analysis was inductive, built from the data up (Braun & Clarke, 2013). However, Braun & Clarke (2021b) emphasised the importance of acknowledging conceptual underpinnings. In this case analysis is grounded in critical realism, a theoretical consideration of SDT and previous experiences in psychological research (commented upon below).

I had previous experience at master's and undergraduate level conducting research from a relativist position using discourse analysis (Wetherell & Potter, 1988). At times, it was difficult to let go of considering the meaning making done through language associated with more critical approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2022). While I find discourse analysis an interesting way to explore data, at times it was uncomfortable unpicking the language used. I felt this may be markedly so with a group about whom often there are negative tropes (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018). Therefore, I endeavoured to conduct research from a more balanced hermeneutic standpoint, ensuring inclusion of an empathic position (centring on meaning making, closely derived from text; Langdridge, 2004) alongside more suspicious interpretations (uncovering latent meaning; Willig, 2017). The flexibility of thematic analysis was beneficial as it is able to be underpinned by both positions (Willig, 2017).

I tried to direct criticality in analysis towards a systems level (e.g., wider perception of students in AP). Langdridge (2008) emphasises the inescapable nature of ideology, asserting that the politically infused nature of experience must be "interrogated" (p.1136). It is possible my critical leanings and previous experience working in a prison made topics

such as social systems and power more prominent within analysis. However I continually returned to participants account and meaning, hoping to portray their views with an eye for balanced criticality.

A further consideration was the association between exclusion and prison which exists within the cultural narrative, sometimes spoken about as the PRU to prison pipeline (e.g., Education Not Exclusion, 2018; Howell, 2022, Mamon, 2020). There is some evidence that association with 'risky' identities (e.g., justice system) has been linked to damaging wider social involvement (Deakin et al., 2022). With this in mind, I was concerned that highlighting perceived connections between the two spaces (AP and justice system) may have negative consequences and only serve to strengthen this conceptual relationship. Likewise, I did not want my own personal interest in the justice system to unduly impact analysis. Nevertheless, the stereotype does exist in society, one participant referred to the AP as "literally a prison school". Similarly, the place of doors as physical barriers to movement which was described by participants could be considered akin to systems of incarceration. Moreover, one of the AP sites is built less than half a mile from a prison, both sites were opened at the same time as part of re-development (although the AP has since transferred from the local authority to an academy trust). The concept of place identity as discussed within environmental psychology, asserts that our identity is tied to "where we are" (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). It is important to note, the location of the AP as near to a prison was not commented upon by students or staff. The student who described AP as being like a prison attended a different setting. However, I do think it is interesting to consider what the placement of those two establishments says to students. All of these thoughts were in my mind when analysing data, however I aimed to keep comparisons to a minimum as I felt even to critically comment on associations was to implicitly link the identities of AP and prison.

I set out to explore the provision within AP to support my local community along with previous authors calling for increased focus on what happens within AP (e.g., Kinsella et al.,

2019; Taylor, 2012). This meant I focused solely on provision within the AP, rather than events prior to exclusion. The decision was made not to ask about previous schooling primarily because this was not the focus of the research, but also to avoid bringing up topics which may be distressing for students. However, all students and most staff brought up the students' time in previous schools. I wondered if these comments were reflective of the "alternate" nature of AP and that this naturally elicited comparison. This is perhaps reminiscent of a more critical discourse analysis approach. Moreover, tied into speech about previous schools were terms like "rejected", and accounts of being treated unfairly. I wonder if the experience of school exclusion is so significant that it was foolish to try and explore provision in AP without acknowledging what happened to them before. It was interesting to consider how these experiences shaped their perceptions and learning within AP. This may be an area which could be explored in more depth for future research.

Ethics in Interpretation

The analysis of data is fraught with ethical challenges through the very nature of interpreting another's words (Willig, 2017). I was concerned that my analysis did not come across as blaming, paternalistic or patronising. As an outsider in many ways, I had a responsibility to acknowledge where I may have limited understanding (Wigginton & Setchell, 2016). The understanding of my report by the AP and families has been a consideration throughout research. Braun & Clarke (2022a) emphasise the guiding principle of "do no harm". When this related to sensitive topics, such as home school relations I discussed this in research supervision. My research supervisor impressed upon me the need to be sensitive but represent what it is I understand participants to be saying. This touches on the layers of representational ethics describe by Braun & Clarke (2022a). I have a responsibility to protect the wider community but also, I have a responsibility to participants and their accounts. To that end I did my utmost to respectfully report interpretation acknowledging social contexts and critiquing where appropriate.

Sedgwick & Stothard (2021) noted that stakeholders will benefit from dissemination tailored to their position, this is important as I am keen to ensure feedback of the research is meaningful to recipients. I will offer meetings to participants and feedback to families via email or telephone (caregivers were offered the choice) with the aim of building awareness and understanding (as outlined by Harmsworth et al., 2000). As part of the feedback process, participants will be offered the chance to contribute to a document translating themes into suggested practical recommendations for the setting.

Alongside which I will offer meetings with senior leadership team (SLT) of the AP and present my research within my local authority psychology service team to share findings with other EPs and professionals who will go on to work in these settings. As these audiences already have relevant skills and knowledge, dissemination will be more focused on action and implications from research, as recommended by Harmsworth et al (2000).

Experiential Reflections on the Research Process

Overall, I found the research process challenging. I struggled with the disappointment of having to change topic, the frustration at feeling like time had been wasted and anxiety induced by the enormity of the task. However, I do feel some skills have developed as a result. I am more aware now that when I feel anxious I can focus on looking for tangible signs of progress (i.e. word count). Reflecting on my own experience in light of research I had immersed myself within, it appeared that stress led to focus on performance goals (e.g. writing X amount of words today). This was done to assuage my own ego involvement (to not feel behind in comparison to colleagues). As Ryan and Deci (2020) predict, this led to declines in motivation and engagement. I may hit my target amount of words but the content was often tangential and lacking critical reflection. This in turn led to me feeling more anxious and had time implications as I had to re-write sections. It is still difficult to resist feelings of pressure but I have developed tools to re-orientate myself to a more intrinsic style

of motivation, for example I remove the word count on documents, or try to commit to deeply reading a related paper I find interesting.

I also feel that my own self-concept has developed. I found having to liaise with individuals who have power in their systems (head teachers, members of trust senior leadership) quite stressful andexposing of my imposter syndrome. Supervision on placement and at university has offered me space to reflect on this. Likewise engagement in research has offered me a space to trial different aspects of a more confident professional identity, which is advocated for as a means of challenging "imposter syndrome" (Burford et al., 2022). Despite the difficult times I had during research, it was a real privilege to get to know the AP systems in greater depth. I witnessed excellent practice and got to spend time with insightful students.

Closing Remarks

One event which was particularly sustaining in the research journey, occurred during recruitment. I was in one setting talking to pupils who had previously expressed an interest in taking part. There was a period of 5 minutes when I was left alone in the room. At this point a group of four unaccompanied students appeared. They were curious why I was there so I spoke to them about the project, handing out information and consent forms. The energy in the room became somewhat fractious. The students began to blockade the door. I cleared the door way and left the room. The students then barricaded themselves in. I left feeling foolish, dejected and a burden to the AP. They had more problems when I left that day than when I arrived. However, a week later one of the students returned their parental consent form. To me this validated what I personally had set out to do, that is to offer a chance to those who would appear resistant. It was a bonus that this child was particularly insightful.

While I worked at the prison I felt like I was continually confronted with my privilege, always feeling like I understood one day and then not the next. This is how I felt during the research process. Although at times uncomfortable, it is my hope this continues throughout

my working life so that at times I am taken to a place of "conscious-incompetence" (Curtis &

Warren, 1973). This will remind me of my privilege and the importance of centring the voices

of others.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Example of Transcript

Transcription key

R: researcher

P: Paul (participant pseudonym)

Underline: Emphasis in speech

(o): overlapping speech

…: prolonged pause

,: short pause

(laughter): speaker laughing

(general laughter): both speakers laughing

R: Cool. So err to begin with, can you just tell me a little bit about what it's like err being in school at the moment? Being in an AP school.

P: Erm don't know. It's like better than being in the mainstream school init

R: Oh yeah?

P: Yeah

R: What what makes it better?

P: Cause you don't get told off. Like you don't get picked on for every single little thing

R: Yeah?

P: And like you don't, you can, realistically you get more freedom and that.

R: Okay. that's interesting. So what ermm like. what freedoms do you get here that you don't get at a errm at a mainstream school?

P: Well. I mean. you're not gonna get excluded for talking in classroom

R: Mhm. here?

P: Well you're not gonna get expelled from this school

R: Mhm so that sounds, that sounds like errr the teachers are maybe a bit more flexible?

P: Mm

R: Mhm Mhm is there. Is there anything else that's better about being in an AP school?

P: Erm erm. Yeah wearing this

R: yeah

P: Non uniform

R: Yeah

P: I mean you you gotta wear uniform but I mean like you can wear your clothes you just gotta be colour colour co-ordinated

R: Okay So they just have to be like black. is it?

P: I dunno. sure

K: So you get a bit. a bit more freedom with what you wear?

P: Yeah

R: That's cool. that's cool. errm How long have you been here?

P: like since year 9

R: Since year 9 and what year are you now?

P: 11

R: Okay. cool. errrm

P: So I've.prob. I've pretty much been here the longest now. Init sir I've been here the longest now (referring to teacher in room)

(Teacher present recounts remembering Paul from previous AP setting)

R: So and you were at Woodside before and then you came here

P: Yeah. I've met you before.

R: Yeah. yeah. yeah. yeah I met you here and then did I meet you at Woodside as well?

P: No you met me at Woodside. oh yeah you met me here and Woodside. yeah.

R: Okay. so how does it, how -what are the differences? And I think that's really interesting like

P: I mean like the difference here compared to Woodside is like. it's smaller here and there's less people here

R: Mhm

P: It's just like a bit more like…a bit more like …I dunno it's less stuff to do here than it is at Woodside

R: Mhm

P: But like this is school. There's not really to do anything that both schools to be fair. it's about the same

R: Mhm

P: In my opinion

R: When you say stuff to do. what do you. what do you mean?

P: Just like general. like. the places to go and stuff

R: Yeah just like in the school?

P: Here it's just more compact. Much more compact than Woodside.

R: Mhm yeah It's bigger at Woodside. So what do. what do you prefer? Do you think. do you prefer it being compact or like where it's bigger at Woodside?

P: No. I prefer Woodside but that's only cause it's not as like dead

R: Mm

P: Not as boring

R: Yeah. so what's boring about St Margret's?

P: It's not boring. it's just like I dunno the stuff with you. It's just a bit…

R: In in lessons?

P: Yeah

R: Mm Okay. so what's what about the lessons is-isn't good here?

P: I dunno I can't lie

(teacher enters to get something from room)

R: What what's was your favourite lesson when you hear what's like the best. the best one?

P: Erm probably P.E. Erm

R: Yeah

P: I don't really do anything other than P.E to be fair can't lie…oh yeah and art

R: Okay. so art and PE are the ones you go to.

(teacher remarks what a talented drawer P is)

P: If you want to see my drawings you can

R: Oh yeah I'd love to. So they're your favourite things to do here? Why do you think erm why do you like p.e and art?

P: Well. PE is just-physic- everyone likes P.E though.

R: I hated P.E (laughter)

P: Yeah. but p.e is you get to do what you like. You just get to do what you enjoy

R: Yeah. okay

P: It's something active. so I'm, I love being active. so that's why I like it.

R: Okay erm and do you get to pick what you actually do in the lesson in P.E?

P: Nah

R: Okay. that's cool

P: You can get basketball. Or like you can do like some boxing on like the punchbag or something. You can do basketball, football, rugby and that

R: And what about, like what's good about art?

P: Erm I guess I dunno like you like, you just learn, what you draw. Because Miss obviously is a good art teacher.

R: Yeah. Okay. that's good. What makes her a good teacher?

P: Cause she's good at art

R: Okay

P: If you're good at art I guess you can teach it

R: Yeah. I don't know

P: If you're good at anything, then you can teach it

R: You think? …Is there anything else that makes Miss a good. a good art teacher?

P: Hm hm I dunno

R: Fair…

P: I mean she's just nice to peoples and stuff

R: Yeah? So everyone likes her. So what kind of stuff does she do that erm makes her nice?

P: I don't know. Art is just easy to get along with so just like everyone just gets along with her.

R: Mhm okay

P: Same with, same with like,I don't know. Sir is it easier to be a PE teacher than an English teacher or maths teacher (addressing teacher in room)

(teacher says it would be easier to be English teacher. but he can't compare but it's intense to be a PE teacher in the school)

R: How often do you get to do PE?

P: Like twice. once a week.

R: Uhuh and art. is it the same?

P: Erm yeah. but I'll go Woodside as well so I'll do art and PE there as well.

R: Okay so how come you do…oh are you at the Zone in Woodside?

P: Yeah.

R: Okay. cool. What do you, how do you find that at the Zone compared to being here?

P: I mean. It's better. Kinda. cause like you only do two lessons

R: Mhm

P: And it's the same lessons every time you go there

R: Yeah So what's good about it like. the same the same lessons is good because? Because cause it's subjects you like

P: You've got P.E for longer (yawn) longer time there

R: Yeah

P: And you've got art for longer time as well

R: Okay. okay that's cool. Errmm if you could like. like if you were gonna to make a school. like if you were gonna make a change to the AP school. what would you do to change it?

P: Allow vaping outside the school gate

R: You would what sorry?

P: Allow vaping for people who are16 outside the school gate.

R: Yeah. so Vaping is there anything else?

P: Not really. I guess ermm more school equipment maybe?

R: Yeah

P: So like in PE we need more cues and stuff sir. they're it's always getting broken by little dickheads (laughter)

R: Yeah. so like new equipment would be good. Okay. Ermm is there anything else? I'm interested because so you go to Art and PE? I'm interested like why you don't go to the other lessons

P: No. I do. but it's just like. hard to concentrate in the lessons

R: Okay yeah what

P: Cause I dunno what I'm doing so I can't

R: Mhm so the like topic. like what you're learning. is hard?

P: Yeah or just boring

R: Yeah?

P. Yeah. it doesn't and keep me entertained

R: Yeah? So what kind of stuff would you like to do? What would make you

P: I have no idea to be fair

R: Yeah… what erm yeah hang on let me just (checks interview schedule)

(teacher notes using interactive boards)

R: Can you think do any lesson stand out that you've had here? Paul as being really good.

P: Huh What is going on about bruv? (Paul noticed sticky notes on desk with staff member notes on which were then removed)

R: Okay so what what would you if you could tell the teachers here anything. if you could give them any advice. like what would your advice be?

P: Don't get in the way, like every teacher does. So annoying cause you're just, you're more likely to barge through for 'em and like actually hurt them if they're in the way.

R: Don't get in the way

P: I mean try to but not like too much, like try to block the door or something cause you're just going to end up getting hurt because obviously they're going to do the opposite of what you tell 'em.

R: Mhm

P: Cause like it's a AP school. It's full of sp*st*cs

R: So you you like people are going to do the opposite of what staff say?

P: Well currently. yeah. But it's not going to be like. go through there and their gonna do the opposite of that. I mean like teachers that makes sense. If you get in the way of like the door or something and they're just gonna barge through you. then you're going to complain about getting hurt. when that's your fault cause you got in the way

R: Mm

P: So if you didn't get in the way. no-ones gonna get hurt

R: Mhm and

P: (o) It is like. it is obviously their fault as well.Like it is the students fault as well but like I dunno how to explain it.

R: Mm so when you're in like erm a English lesson or whatever

P: Mm

R: And it's difficult or boring. is there anything that the teacher does like. has there ever been a time the teacher has done something that's helped with that

P: With that.

R: Like helped make a difficult lesson better?

R: I dunno I can't remember to be fair

(teacher comes into the office to get something and has a brief conversation with Paul)

R: So how is it with the other the other students here? What's that like. having been here a long time?...(no response) Yeah Paul. What is it like with the other students? What's it like with the other students in class?

P: Mm I dunno it's like. its like…what are you on about

R: So if youre in an English lesson what's it like with the other students does it help or does it make it more difficult?

P: Nah nah like not really you just do your own thing

R: Mhm so you have to do your own thing?

P: Mm

R: Is that what helps you do so well in art. do you think?

P: Mhm

R: What about ermm what about lunch and play time-break time what's that like

P: It's alright you get food and stuff and you get like you know an opportunity to do PE and stuff. Not pe. but like activities at lunch like basketball and stuff like that

R: That sounds cool

P: Mhm

R: So it's like good to be able to do lots of active stuff.

P: Mhm

R: Yeah if you could create like, if you were coming here and you could plan the day yourself. like so you could plan whatever you wanted? What would the day look like? like what would you have in the day?

P: Art lunch. P.E

R: Yeah?

P: Or P.E lunch and art

R: Mhm what about is there anything else you'd like to do? Like have different people come in. go out. like different subjects?

P: Well yeah if you would be able to go like. I dunno to be fair I can't lie to you. I'm too tired for this.

R: Yeah.

P: I've not had enough sleep for this.

R: Oh I'm sorry. We can call it, we can finish that if you'd like. Is there anything else you'd like to say or do you have any questions?

P: Not really ermm

R: Is there anything you think I really like should? If I wanted to know one thing about being in an AP school. what's the most important thing to know? What it's like

P: Just don't get too big for yourself init.

R: Mhm

P: I mean. I've been there for ages so I know everything really. it's not really too hard. You you settle in here a quick. it's not hard to settle here in cause you just get drawn into the crowd. So you just get in there with everyone

R: Do you just get on with everyone and try not to yeah

P: If you're not like racist but or like something we've done in the past. then yeah. If you don't if When you join there. if you just chill and get on calm at first and when you get to know people. then you can like show yourself and that

R: Yea yeah yea? So you that's like

P: It doesn't work with me though because I just I'm just myself around everyone.

R: Yeah?

P: And that doesn't get me far.

R: No? (general laughter) Do you think that's because you've been here a while. though. do you feel

P: Nah. No one's really going to say anything to me though cause I've been here time.

R: Mhm mhm

P: I'm not worried about that

R: Yeah. But like that seems--

P: (o) I'm just cal- I'm mates with everyone I don't beef like I don't like fight nothing like that. so I'm literally calm with everyone

R: Yeah yeah erm is that like a really important thing if you're going to be in a AP school to get on with people. do you think?

P: Yeah. cause if you get on with people, you're gonna get on in school. if you don't get on with eve-anyone. then you're just gonna get bullied cause yeah. everyone is just mates with everyone. cause yeah

R: Yeah so what like to help someone get on with everyone. you reckon they need to do what?

P: Erm be chill.

R: Be chill.

P: Didn't get too full of yourself.

R: Mhm That's interesting. When like get too full of yourself? As in. like what do you mean by that?

P: As in don't be cocky

R: Okay. okay that was really helpful to know. Thank you. I feel like you've got loads of knowledge (general laughter) especially because you've been at the Zone and then you're here

P: Mm

R: So yeah. I feel like you're a really good person to have spoken to… so thank you.

P: I didn't say a lot but

R: No. I think that thing about needing to get on with everyone otherwise you're not going to do well in the school. that's really important.

P: Nah what I do need though is obviously I'm leaving it a bit. but for peoples who want to do that construction and stuff. if they are want to get on like a site. \you should actually look into it as soon as possible and that

R: Yeah. yeah

P: Cause I wanted to do that for two years and they never even put me on it.

R: So you wanted to do construction and the the chance wasn't there. but now it's gonna be or

P: Nah but I had to, I literally had to wait. They wouldn't, they wouldn't put me on it but like...Another pupil got on it on it before me and then she joined like a bit after me.

R: Yeh

P: So was was waiting for like. two years to get on that course and or like a site. You know. when they teach you but they just teach you for the sake you know what I mean? so that they actually teach you how to do it and stuff. That's what I wanted to do and they wouldn't put me on it.

R: Mkay

P: I dunno why.

R: Is it something they do at the Zone or no?

P: Cause it's my main base here. They're meant to do it from here.

R: Okay.

P: Where they won't do it.

R: So making sure that stuff you want to do, all that stuff the students want to do is really supported

P: Mm

R:. I think that's really really helpful and really important.

Appendix 2: Examples of Codes from Nvivo

Code: Better relationships = more respectful to environment

NVIVO✕✕
save 13.30.nvp

📌 Quick Access

IMPORT

🗄 Data ⌄

    Files

    File Classifications

    Externals

ORGANIZE

☰ Coding ⌄

    Codes

    Relationships

    Relationship Types

💼 Cases ❯

📓 Notes ⌄

    Memos

    Framework Matrices

    Annotations

    See-Also Links

👁 Sets ❯

EXPLORE

🔍 Queries ❯

✳ Visualizations ⌄

    Maps

📑 Reports ❯

File   Home   Import   Create   Explore   Share   Modules   Code

Memo Link   See-Also Link   Content   🔍 Zoom   ☰ Quick Coding   ▦ Layout   ☐ Annotations   ☐ See-Also Links   ☐ Relationships   Coding Stripes   Highlight   Code   Uncode This Co

○ better relationships = more respectful to environme ✕

<Files\\Lilly transcript> - § 1 reference coded [1.38% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.38% Coverage

L: And their not gonna beat me. That way. Erm say it's instant erm…but I know my

room is probably the nicest room in the school

R: Mm Mm

L: But then I spend a lot of time in here as well so erm…yeah the plant over there I

inherited when I arrived in 2016 cause

R: Ah it's still going

L: It's probably the only living thing in the school but it's still here (general laughter)

as am I but yeah but it it's like anything a nice environment you respect it

R: Mm Mm

L: And generally they do

<Files\\lucy complete> - § 1 reference coded [2.24% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.24% Coverage

L: D'ya know what I mean so actually their like "Oh well because it is. my school"
(laughter)

R: Yeah. yeah

L: I mean. I can break it and whatever.

R: (o) Yeah yeah

L: But actually I don't - I feel like if in we don't get a lot of children ruining in our
classroom. because they respect me and Trever and it's their. space to do their work
or whatever in so they are a bit- I have to say we have had to put our toaster- my
mum bought our class a toaster cause one of our children. he the only thing we
could get would be toast and he liked to see it made in front of him and stuff

In   Codes   …   Code to   Enter

👤 MP   299 Items   Files: 2   References: 2   ⊽ Unfiltered

Code: Importance of food

NVIVO
save 13.30.nvp

Quick Access

IMPORT

Data
- Files
- File Classifications
- Externals

ORGANIZE

Coding
- Codes
- Relationships
- Relationship Types

Cases

Notes
- Memos
- Framework Matrices
- Annotations
- See-Also Links

Sets

EXPLORE

Queries

Visualizations
- Maps

Reports

File   Home   Import   Create   Explore   Share   Modules   Code

Memo Link   See-Also Link   Content   Zoom   Quick Coding   Layout   Annotations   See-Also Links   Relationships   Coding Stripes   Highlight   Code   Un

○ Importance of food ✕

<u><Files\\Kieran student></u> - § 3 references coded [4.53% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.10% Coverage

K: Yep. Never liked school

R: ..Yeah?

K: Other than cooking.

R: Okay

K: That's the one lesson that I do actually like.

R: Okay

K: All the schools I've been to. I've been to every single cooking lesson

R: (o) Mhm

Reference 2 - 0.68% Coverage

R: So what else aside from that? What do you like about cooking?

K: Erm nothing.

R: Yeah?

K: Just the yummy food I can make.

R:Yeah

In   Codes   ...   Code to

MP   299 Items   Files: 7   References: 16   Unfiltered

Code: Flexibility in boundaries = engagement

Appendix 3: Example Memos

NVIVO

save 13.30.nvp

Quick Access

IMPORT

Data

Files

File Classifications

Externals

ORGANIZE

Coding

Codes

Relationships

Relationship Types

Cases

Notes

Memos

Framework Matrices

Annotations

See-Also Links

Sets

EXPLORE

Queries

Visualizations

Maps

Reports

File   Home   Import   Create   Explore   Share   Modules   Men

Memo Link   See-Also Link   Zoom   Quick Coding   Layout   Annotations   See-Also Links   Relationships   Coding Stripes   Highlight   Code

Nurturing

Edit   Code Panel

hot drinks, sweets + food all providing nurturing

In   Codes

MP   6 Items   Codes: 0   References: 0   Read-Only   Lir

Appendix 4: Initial Handwritten Thematic Maps

Belongingness

Power of Peers
Peer group dominant force in shaping individual learning

Negotiating Self in Peer group
takes time + energy

Management of fe Student Dynamics
from staff perspective
takes time + energy

behaviour management – safety in relationships?

Supportive Staff relationship
make learning in SSS easier

What having relat...

What effects good relationship w/ Staff
Topic summary?
Needing Nurture

Competence

Previous experiences of school

academic gaps

Vulnerability

Appendix 5: Example Theme

Travel.

<u><Files\\Daniella student></u> - § 3 references coded [5.35% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.15% Coverage

D: Ermm like to do GCSE psychology. Cause the school I was in. Even the teacher that was doing our gcse for it. He said it was like a new thing and it hasn't really been done before so it's really difficult if I <u>do</u> want to do gcses it is out, it is out of reach from where I live cause I like Hamsted so it's quite far away

R: Okay okay

D: I'm not gonna take like a 3 2 hour taxi drive every morning to get there

Reference 2 - 2.62% Coverage

D: Taxi rides aren't always the funnest

R: Oh yeah yeah

D: Cause I mean the seats can also be pulled backwards. When you're sitting so the seat just comes backwards

R: (o) Okay

D: So you know where some of them are closed over. So somebody sitting behind you they just pull the seat backwards and it goes inwards. It's really annoying if you're the person sitting

R: So how long is your taxi

D: Err an in the morning it takes like an hour and 30 minutes but after school it takes like 30 minutes. Cause we're picking up kids on the way to school

R: (o) Oh okay

D: But like it takes quite a lot of time to get back cause we're not really doing much just going back home after all

R: Okay okay so it's an hour and a half to get here?

D: Yeah cause he comes round at like 7:40 at mine, and we come here at 8:48

R: And how how is that? How is having a long taxi ride in the morning?

D: Oh that's fine that's like the <u>best</u> part of the day

Reference 3 - 1.59% Coverage

D: Not really much except for when really annoying people. The morning ride is fine it's more like the afternoon taxi

R: Why do you think that?

D: Cause most of the kids that <u>are</u> the worst have got their hours cut so they get to go home like after. So in the morning they don't come in like they can come in later. So that means they get the taxi with us back

R: Oh okay so it's more who you're in the taxi with rather than the time?

D: Yeah cause most of them aren't that bad it's just like one or two or three sometimes that can come in and are just like really annoying

<Files\\Dave student> - § 1 reference coded [3.16% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.16% Coverage

R: Okay so if you planned your dream day at school. so you could change anything? You've got magical powers. you can do. you've like an unlimited budget so you could make there be different subjects or loads of staff or not as many or whatever? You could change anything about it. What would your perfect day look like

D: Having the taxi show up on time. the first thing. Erm Getting to school on time cause they always take a year and a day to turn up

R: How long is the drive

D: About 55 minutes from Davington to here. Imagine what it's like from being in Leytonsfield

R: So an on time taxi. get here on time

<Files\\Joseph student> - § 1 reference coded [3.55% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.55% Coverage

R: Yeah, yeah. See, I see that. Is there anything that makes it difficult to come into school?

J: I guess sometimes kids in my taxi taxi kids, sometimes also the taxi drivers, always coming <u>late</u>. Like uhh yesterday, or what day, yesterday he came in at around 9, 9, well it it was already basically the end of first lesson.

R: Really?

J: Yes

R: Do you come from far

J: I come from Weston

R:So how long is that in a taxi? About like 40 minutes

J: Erm around an hour, it's cause we have to pick up other people.

<u><Files\\Kieran student></u> - § 2 references coded [3.80% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.77% Coverage

R: Yeah? oh okay. So what what is erm what's difficult about being in a AP school?

K: The distance

R: Mhm…

K: The only good thing about comin here. is you finish at two

R: Mhm

K: But unlike my brother's school. they finish at three.

R:Okay.

K: So by the time I get back to Hamsted. they've only then got half an hour till they finish school

Reference 2 - 2.03% Coverage

K: If my taxi ain't there by. 15 past 8. then I will be late

R: Mhm Mhm

K: that rhymed (general laughter)

R: Maybe you're a poet

K: A poet and I didn't even know it.

R: (general laughing) Can't stop yourself. So the distance is difficult.

K: Yep

R: So. what what is it about the distance that makes it ..

K: Boring

R:Boring… And what about the journey? Like. who are you how do you get here?

K: Taxi

<Files\\Lilly transcript> - § 2 references coded [4.72% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.53% Coverage

L: We have so many students when we go through transitions as to whose coming and who can't go to this base cause they've got issues with a certain student and they can't go to that base or can't have them on the base at the same time and…

R: (o) Mmmm and then that makes it very difficult to sort of. <u>Plan</u> I imagine. So what- is that. From the setting's point of view is that kind of all you c- the main tool for managing it is just trying to be aware of those dynamics

L: Yeah

R: And erm…and

L: And limiting access to cert- so the main secondary bases where they've- there could be a student who lives in Hamsted who actually is going to the base at Brazenfield (names changed approx. 1hr 20 drive) because it's the safest place for them to go

R: Mm

L: Be that for everybody else or be that for themselves that in order to keep certain people apart. They've got quite a journey to go to school

Reference 2 - 2.19% Coverage

L: We <u>try</u> to put them within a catchment for where- hence we've got the base over in Brazenfield we recognised that the west side of the county has to be

R: (o) Catered for

L: Staffed as well sort of thing. <u>But</u>…we are governed by county for transport we don't arrange our taxis it all goes through county hall so they have the contracts with the taxi firms

R: I see

L: And <u>they</u> decide whose being picked up by which firm and I guess the

R: Oh I see

L: Taxi firms decide what route they're taking

R: Yeah Yeah

L: Cause some of the students are are in a taxi for an hour and a half before they get to school

R: Mmm Mmm. And as a setting you don't really have any control –

L: (o) We don't have any control over that but we do recognise that's not an ideal way to start the day

<Files\\Theresa transcript> - § 2 references coded [3.04% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.39% Coverage

T: *erm* well actually yeah we have issues of that because it's so far erm that, yeah The Zone yeah that's a mix. I mean I don't know much about the Zone. I mean I know they go there. But travel getting there is a problem they'll moan about journey. Um, and some of them just haven't responded to it, that well, I think. And. So yeah, I don't know an awful lot about The Zone. Erm I mean, I suppose yeah they've tried, they're trying that aren't they, cause can do sport - I mean, I've got year 11s actually, and they're not, they're not go really…some of them aren't going there and they could do cooking and sport there

Reference 2 - 0.65% Coverage

T: yeh I know what can we do. I mean and uhh everyone's needs are are so different but I think I think having, I think them having access to it closer to home would help

Appendix 6: Developed Handwritten Thematic Map
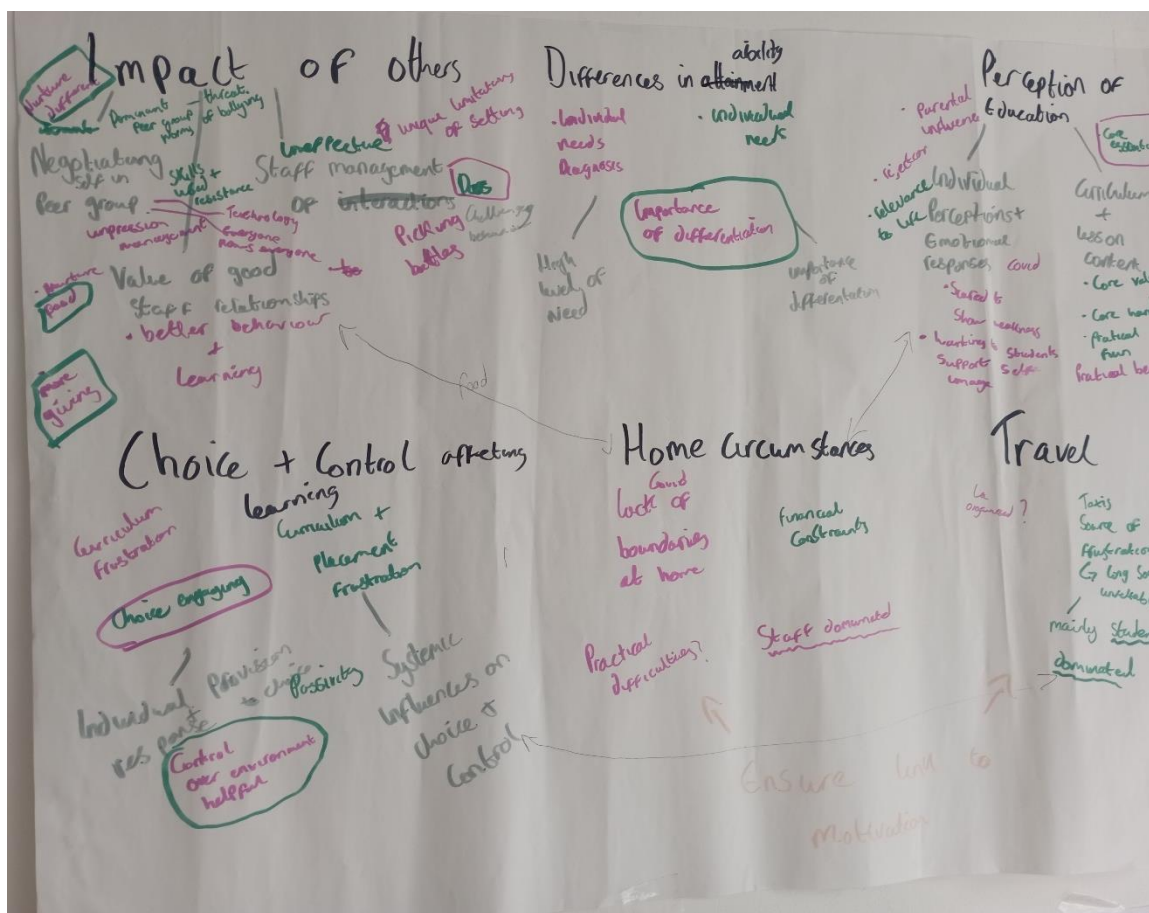
Appendix 7: Blank Student Participation Certificate

CERTIFICATE
OF RECOGNITION

THIS CERTIFICATE IS AWARDED TO

In recognition of contribution and efforts towards supporting learning in
REDACTED Schools. Thank you.

MEGAN PURDY
Researcher
(University of East
Anglia)

Appendix 8: Staff Information and Consent form

Dear staff member,

You are being invited to take part in a study about what motivates young people in REDACTED Schools to engage with learning. You have been invited because you are either a teacher or a teaching assistant who has worked in a Redacted School for at least half a term.

I'd like to hear your views on what helps young people you work with feel motivated in their learning.

The study is being carried out by myself: Megan Purdy (m.purdy@uea.ac.uk, 01603 306420). I'm a Trainee Educational Psychologist. I work with young people to help them think about what supports them in school.

Please email or call me if you would like to chat about the research 😊

What will the study involve for me?

- A conversation about your perception of working in a redacted school, what helps young people engage with learning and what doesn't. This will be audio recorded. It will last no longer than hour.

- You can stop or take a break at anytime. You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to.

- These meetings will take place in school (preferably in person but if you would like to meet remotely that can be arranged). These will **not** be at break or lunch.

- I will use the recordings from your conversation and others (including students) to write a report for my training on how best to engage students learning in Redacted Schools. All identifying details will be removed (names, locations, specific details), however given the nature of the study there is still a chance you may be identified.

- There is a chance I may publish this work which means more people would see it. Anonymised data will be stored in an online repository for ten years, this is incase anyone would like to check my work.

Good things about being in the study

- You can share valuable thoughts and opinions on what helps motivate children
- You can contribute to something which might make school better for future attendees

You don't have to answer any questions they don't want to
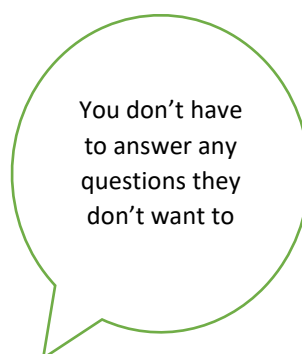
Bad things about being in the study

- Will take around 1 hour of your time.
- If working in school has been difficult, it could be hard to talk about.

- You do not have to take part. Not joining the study will have no negative consequences for your relationship with UEA, Norfolk county council or the Unity Education Trust.

- You can stop taking part at any point and can have your data removed until analysis is finalised on 01.04.23.

- You can withdraw by emailing myself m.purdy@uea.ac.uk or my supervisor Imogen Gorman i.gorman@uea.ac.uk.

- Your identity and information will be kept confidential, except if I have concerns about yours or others safety. Data will be held in line with GDPR guidance. For further information, you can contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk, further information can be found here: https://ico.org.uk/

- You will be able to see my write up of our conversation and the final report if you would like.

- For concerns or questions you can contact myself (m.purdy@uea.ac.uk), my supervisor (I.Gorman@uea.ac.uk) or the head of school (who is independent from the study) (Yann Lebeau Y.Lebeau@uea.ac.uk)

If you are happy for to take part please sign below and return to myself via email.

CONSENT FORM

I, ...[PRINT NAME], consent to participating in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that I understand:

- the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, including the risks/benefits involved.

- the information sheet and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researcher if I wished to do so (via email/tel provided).

- that being in this study is completely voluntary and my decision whether to join in the study will not affect my relationship with University of East Anglia, Norfolk County Council or Unity Education Trust.

- that I can withdraw from the study at any time (i.e stop the interview or have my data removed up until 01.04.23).

- that information about me will be anonymised and only told to others with permission, except as required by law.

- One on One conversations will be audio-recorded (file stored in a password protected folder). the results of this study will be used for a thesis assessment and may be published. The thesis and any publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

- that personal information collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to.

- I am required to inform you that the legal basis for processing your data as listed in Article 6(1) of the UK GDPR, this is because it allows me to process personal data when it is necessary to perform public tasks as a University. UEA is the data controller.

Signature ....

Date...

Contact   details   (to   provide   feedback   for   the study)……………………………………………………………………………

I would define my gender as…………………....../prefer not to say

I would define my ethnicity as……………….…/prefer not to say

Appendix 9: Student information and consent form

Hello, My name is Megan

I'm a trainee educational psychologist. I help young people think about what makes school better.

I am doing a project to find out about how young people feel about learning in **NAME REDACTED** schools.

I'M INVITING YOU

I am asking you to take part because you are in a secondary **REDACTED** school and have been for over half a term.

I'm interested in what makes you want to go to school and what don't you like.

I want to hear what's important to you.

What will happen if I say that I want to be in the study?

- Your parents/carers will be asked to sign a consent form and return it the school. If they do, I will arrange a time for us to chat with the school (**not in break or lunch**).

- The chat will be about school (what you like/what you don't like). There are no right or wrong answers, I am interested in your opinions. I would prefer to do this in person but if you are worried about that let your teachers know. There will be a member of school staff in the room, but not part of the conversation.

- You will receive a £5 "love to shop voucher" for taking part in our conversation. You still don't have to answer any questions you don't want to, and you can still stop at anytime 😊

- I will go through a consent form (a form which explains the research process) with you before we start, you will have a chance to ask questions. You can stop/take a break at anytime. We can play a game to start our meeting if you would like.

- A few months later you will be invited to attend an **optional** group discussion with other young people who have taken part, to work together on writing practical tips for the school. If you don't want to join, that's fine 😊

Will anyone else know what I say in the study?

During our one on one chat, I won't tell anyone else what you say, except if I'm worried anyone is at risk of getting hurt (including you). Then I would need to tell someone.

I will audio record and write up our chat for my university work. Your name and anything that could identify you will be taken out. I might try to publish the work which means more people

would see it. Anonymised (no names) data will be stored online afterwards for ten years, in case anyone wants to double check what I've said in the report.

How long will the study take?

Our chat will probably take 30 minutes to an hour, but remember you can stop at any time.

Good things about being in the study

- You get to share your valuable thoughts and opinions
- You can contribute to something which might make school better for others
- You will receive a £5 "love to shop" voucher.

You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to

Bad things about being in the study

- Will take at 30 minutes to an hour of your time.
- If you've found school difficult, it could be hard to talk about.

Will you tell me what you learned in the study at the end?

Yes, I will if you want me to. We can talk about that during our chat.

What if I am not happy with the study or the people doing the study?

If you have questions or are worried about anything then you **or the person who looks after you** can:

- Email me on *m.purdy@uea.ac.uk* or call me on 01603 306420

- Contact my supervisor Imogen Gorman on *I.gorman@uea.ac.uk*

    - Write an **email** to my Head of School Yann Lebeau

        Y.Lebeau@uea.ac.uk , Yann is separate from the study team.

If you decide you want to be in the study and then you change your mind later, that's ok. All you need to do is tell me that you don't want to be in the study anymore, this can be via email or you can get an adult to do it for you 😊

THANKS

Tick here and hand it to your teacher or tell your simply tell them you'd like to take part

Young Person Consent Form

You should only say 'yes' to being in the study if you know what it is about and you want to be in it. If you don't want to be in the study, don't sign the form.

I, ...[PRINT NAME], am happy to be in this research study.

In saying yes to being in the study, I am saying that:

✓ I know what the study is about.

✓ I know what I will be asked to do (chat about school with Megan)

✓ Someone has talked to me about the study.

✓ My questions have been answered.

✓ I know that I don't have to be in the study if I don't want to.

✓ I know that I don't have to answer any questions that I don't want to answer

✓ I know I can leave at any time.

✓ I know that Megan won't tell anyone what I say, unless there is a concern someone is at risk of getting hurt.

✓ I know that Megan will write up the ideas from one to one chats with students and staff and use it for a university assessment. All names, places or things which might identify me will be removed, but there is still a small chance people might work out who I am.

✓ I know that Megan might try and publish the report which means more people might see it. Anonymised (no names or places) write ups of conversations will be stored online for ten years, this is so people can double check the report.

✓ I know that I can ask Megan to remove my data (recording of our conversation) until 01.04.23.
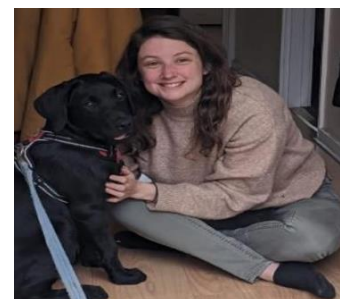
Please circle 'Yes' or 'No' to tell me what you would like.

Are you happy for me to **audio record** your voice?   **Yes**   **No**

Do you want me to tell you what I **learned** in the study?   **Yes**   **No**

Signature……………………………………Date………………………….

I would define my gender as…………………..…/prefer not to say

I would define my ethnicity as…………………../prefer not to say

**Appendix 10: Parent/carer information and consent form**

Dear parent or carer,

Your child is invited to take part in a study about how young people experience learning in **SITE NAME REDACTED**. They have been asked to take part because they are in a secondary **REDACTED** school and have been for at least half a term.

I'd like to hear what they think motivates them in school.

The study is being carried out by myself: Megan Purdy (m.purdy@uea.ac.uk, tel: 01603 306420) I'm a Trainee Educational Psychologist. I work with young people to help them think about what supports them in school.

Please email or call me if you would like to chat about the research 😊
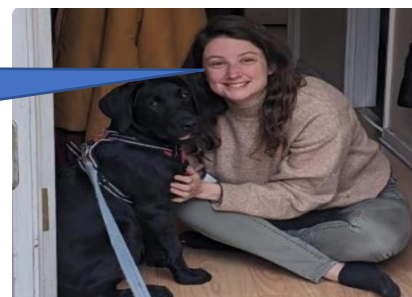
**What will the study involve for my child?**

- A conversation about school (what they like/what they don't like) which will be audio recorded. Your child can stop or take a break at anytime. It will last 30 minutes to an hour.

This will ideally be in person, but if you and your child would prefer a remote conversation could be facilitated.

- Your child will receive a £5 "love to shop" voucher for taking part.

- These meetings will take place with a member of school staff present. These will **not** be at break or lunch.

- I will use the recordings from your child and others to write a report for my training on how schools can engage students working in REDACTED Schools. All identifying details of participants will be removed.

- A few months later they will be **invited** to a group meeting to create a 'top tips' document on how to engage students, to share with the school. This is **optional** and this will not be written up in any report.

Good things about being in the study

- Your child can share valuable thoughts and opinions
- Your child can contribute to something which might make school better for others
- They will receive a £5 love to shop voucher.

> Your child doesn't have to answer any questions they don't want to
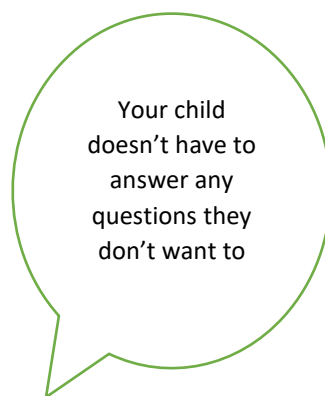
Bad things about being in the study

- Will take at least 30 minutes to 1 hour of your child's time.
- If you're child has found school difficult, it could be hard to talk about.

- Your child does not have to take part. Not joining the study will have no negative consequences for your family's relationships with UEA, Norfolk county council or their school.

- Your child can stop taking part at any point and can have their data removed until data is analysed on 01.04.23.

- You can withdraw by emailing myself m.purdy@uea.ac.uk or my supervisor Imogen Gorman i.gorman@uea.ac.uk.

- Your child's identity and information will be kept confidential, except if I have concerns about their safety or others. Data will be held in line with GDPR guidance.

- You and your child will be able to see my write up of our conversation if they would like. You and your child can see the final report .

- For concerns or queries you can contact myself (m.purdy@uea.ac.uk), my supervision (I.Gorman@uea.ac.uk) or the head of school (who is independent from the study) (School Yann Lebeau Y.Lebeau@uea.ac.uk)

If you are happy for your child to take part please sign below and return either to school or myself via email.

CONSENT FORM

I, ...[PRINT NAME], consent to my child

………………………………………………………………… [PRINT CHILD'S NAME] participating

in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that I understand:

- the purpose of the study, what my child will be asked to do, including the risks/benefits involved.

- the information sheet and have been able to discuss my child's involvement in the study with the researcher if I wished to do so (via tel/email address given).

- that being in this study is completely voluntary and whether my child takes part in the study will not affect our relationship with University of East Anglia, Norfolk County Council or the school.

- that my child can withdraw from the study at any time (i.e stop the interview or have their data remove up until 01.04.23).

- that personal information about my child that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to.

- that information about my child will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

- One on One conversations will be audio-recorded. The results of this study will be used for a thesis assessment and may be published, every effort will be made to protect your child's identity but there is a risk they could be identified due to the nature of the study. Anonymised study data will be kept in a repository (stored online) for scholarly purposes for 10 years after the completion of this project.

- We are required to inform you that the legal basis for processing your data as listed in Article 6(1) of the UK GDPR is because this allows us to process personal data when it is necessary to perform our public tasks as a University. UEA is the data controller.

- For further information, you can contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk. You can also find out more about your data protection rights at https://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/.

Signature ....

Contact details …………………………………………………………

I would like to read the final report on this study……Yes/No…..(Delete as appropriate)

Appendix 11: Ethical approval from University of East Anglia

Ethics approval

University of East Anglia

Norwich Research Park

University of East Anglia

Norwich. NR4 7TJ

Email: ethicsapproval@uea.ac.uk

Web:

www.uea.ac.uk

Study title: Exploring motivation to engage in **NAME REDACTED** Schools; staff and student views.

Application ID: ETH2122-1222

Dear Megan,

Your application was considered on 17th October 2022 by the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research   Ethics Subcommittee).

The decision is: **approved**.

You are therefore able to start your project subject to any other necessary approvals being given.

This approval will expire on **31st August 2023**.

Please note that your project is granted ethics approval only for the length of time identified above. Any extension to a project must obtain ethics approval by the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee) before continuing.

It is a requirement of this ethics approval that you should report any adverse events which occur during your project to the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee) as soon as possible. An adverse event is one which was not anticipated in the research design, and which could potentially cause risk or harm to the participants or the researcher, or which reveals potential risks in the treatment under evaluation. For research involving animals, it may be the unintended death of an animal after trapping or carrying out a procedure.

Any amendments to your submitted project in terms of design, sample, data collection, focus etc. should be notified to the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee) in advance to ensure ethical compliance. If the amendments are substantial a new application may be required.

Approval by the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee) should not be taken as evidence that your study is compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. If you need guidance on how to make your study UK GDPR compliant, please contact the UEA Data Protection Officer (dataprotection@uea.ac.uk).

I would like to wish you every success with your project.

On behalf of the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee) Yours sincerely,

Lee Beaumont

Appendix 12: Ethical approval following amendments

Ethics approval after amendment

University of East Anglia

Norwich Research Park

University of East Anglia

Norwich. NR4 7TJ

Email: ethicsapproval@uea.ac.uk

Web:

www.uea.ac.uk

Study title: Exploring motivation to engage in **REDACTED** Schools; staff and student views.

Application ID: ETH2223-1147 (significant amendments)

Dear Megan,

Your application was considered on 19th December 2022 by the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning   Research Ethics Subcommittee).

The decision is: **approved**.

You are therefore able to start your project subject to any other necessary approvals being given.

This approval will expire on **31st August 2023**.

Please note that your project is granted ethics approval only for the length of time identified above. Any extension to a project must obtain ethics approval by the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee) before continuing.

It is a requirement of this ethics approval that you should report any adverse events which occur during your project to the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee) as soon as possible. An adverse event is one which was not anticipated in the research design, and which could potentially cause risk or harm to the participants or the researcher, or which reveals potential risks in the treatment under evaluation. For research involving animals, it may be the unintended death of an animal after trapping or carrying out a procedure.

Any amendments to your submitted project in terms of design, sample, data collection, focus etc. should be notified to the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee) in advance to ensure ethical compliance. If the amendments are substantial a new application may be required.

Approval by the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee) should not be taken as evidence that your study is compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. If you need guidance on how to make your study UK GDPR compliant, please contact the UEA Data Protection Officer (dataprotection@uea.ac.uk).

I would like to wish you every success with your project.

On behalf of the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee) Yours sincerely,

Lee Beaumont

Appendix 13: Staff interview schedule

Preceded by: introductions, opportunity to ask questions, participants requested not to name individuals or specific other settings.

Interview schedule

Why don't we begin by you telling me a bit about how school is at the moment? – *how are lessons/ students/teachers*

Can you tell me about the time you have seen students in this school learn best? – *why is it so good? Who is there? What happens in lessons? When is it?*

Is there anything else you feel supports the children here to learn? – *in lessons? Generally? Emotionally?*

What have you done whilst working in school that you are most proud of? – *what happened? What supported you to achieve that?*

What do you feel is the biggest barrier to the students here succeeding in learning? *particular lessons, trips, times of day, interactions with staff members or peers.*

What lessons are challenging? Can you describe it to me*?- What makes it difficult? Who is there, when is it, what happens in that lesson?*

If you could plan your dream day at school, what would it look like? – *Who would be there, how many people, where, what would you learn, what would the lessons look like?*

Can you tell me a bit about what your relationships are like with the students? *What is the best relationship you have? Why do you think it works well? What is the biggest barrier to building relationships with students?*

Have you noticed any changes in your role over your time working at the redacted schools?

If you could change anything about school what would it be?

If you could give one piece of advice to a new member of staff starting in this school on working with these children, what would it be?

Would you like a copy when I have typed up what we've both said?

Anything else you'd like to say? Anything you would like to talk about more or any questions?

Appendix 14: Student interview schedule

Preceded by: introductions, review of information and consent forms opportunity to ask questions, opportunity to play game, participants requested not to name specific individuals/other schools. Ask what year pupils are in.

Interview schedule

Why don't we begin by you telling me a bit about how school is at the moment? – *how are lessons/other students/teachers*

What's do you think is good about coming to school?- *particular lessons, trips, times of day, interactions with staff members or peers.*

What makes you want to come to school? – *what would make you want to come to school*

Can you tell me about the best lesson you have in this school? – *why is it so good? Who is there? What happens in lessons? When is it?*

What have you done in school that you are most proud of? – *what made it possible?*

Can you tell me about what makes a good teacher?

What is difficult about coming to school? *particular lessons, trips, times of day, interactions with staff members or peers.*

What lesson do you like least? Can you describe it to me *?- What makes it difficult? Who is there, when is it, what happens in that lesson?*

If you could plan your dream day at school, what would it look like? – *Who would be there, how many people, where, what would you learn, what would the lessons look like?*

If you could change anything about school what would it be?

If you could give the adults in school one piece of advice what would it be?

Would you like a copy when I have typed up what we've both said?

Anything else you'd like to say? Anything you would like to talk about more or any questions?