NURTURE SUPPORT FOR socIALLY AND EMOTIONALLY VULNERABLE PUPILS IN THE TRANSITION TO SECONDARY SCHOOL:
A CASE STUDY EXPLORATION

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of
Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities

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SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
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<td>DCSF</td>
<td>Department for Children, Schools and Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DfE</td>
<td>Department for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DfES</td>
<td>Department for Education and Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NG</td>
<td>Nurture group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEBD</td>
<td>Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEN</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENCO</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TaMHS</td>
<td>Targeted Mental Health in Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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ABSTRACT

The University of Manchester
Naomi Parsons
Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

Nurture Support for Socially and Emotionally Vulnerable Pupils in the Transition to Secondary School: A Case Study Exploration

2012

The transition from primary to secondary school is considered to be a challenging process for all pupils, but particularly difficult for those with social and emotional difficulties. Nurture groups aim to develop social and emotional skills and are seen to correspond closely with the recommendations made in transition literature. It is therefore proposed that nurture provision could be an effective means of supporting socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition. Previous literature adds support to this view, but no study as yet has focused specifically upon this topic.

A small-scale case study design was used to explore the ways in which one secondary school applied nurture principles to support vulnerable pupils through the transition process. The research followed an embedded, single case design incorporating contextual and interview data regarding the school's nurture provision. Contextual information was gathered through the research diary and analysed in relation to the identified propositions. In addition, four illustrative case examples surveyed the views of the nurture facilitator and three pupils who received different levels of nurture support: these interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. An integrated case description combines the findings from all data sources and offers a coherent account of the provision.

The findings support the proposition that nurture provision can be an effective means of supporting socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school. In line with nurture literature, the findings suggest that secondary schools need to adapt the primary nurture model to ensure provision meets the needs of their setting and cohort. While this promotes flexibility, secondary schools still need to adhere to a number of core principles to ensure they are delivering a true nurturing approach. A tentative model is presented, which proposes that secondary school nurture provision should aim to support social and emotional development through a range of provision that is firmly grounded in psychological theory. Provision should adhere closely to the six nurture principles, with effective identification of needs informing a personalised approach that is tailored to each individual pupil. The importance of relationships for learning and development is emphasised. The thesis concludes by suggesting that nurture provision can be an effective means of supporting socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school, providing a number of core elements are in place.
DECLARATION

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Here’s to the future...
1. INTRODUCTION

This section explains the development and context of the current study. It begins by outlining the origins of the research and how this relates to the national context, before moving on to outline the key aspects of relevant literature that inform the thesis rationale. A note on terminology is provided, followed by an outline of the research aims and the distinctive contribution that the study hopes to make. Finally, an overview of the thesis is provided as a guide for the reader.

1.1. ORIGIN OF THE STUDY

This piece of research originated from the author’s involvement with a local authority Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS: DCSF, 2008) project during the second year of fieldwork placement for the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology. It was agreed that the author’s doctoral thesis would link in to the TaMHS project, with the broad aim of exploring evidence-based means of promoting emotional health and wellbeing in schools. For this purpose, a collaborative inquiry group was established, which comprised the researcher, a senior educational psychologist (EP), the head teacher of a Primary Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), the head teacher of a Secondary PRU and the deputy head teacher of a mainstream secondary school. The members of this group were keenly aware of the increasing issue of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, both nationally and within the locality, and were considering ways in which to address this. One particular area of concern was the significant difficulties that pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties seemed to experience in the transition to secondary school. In response to this need, one school in the locality was trialling a new approach to supporting vulnerable pupils in the transition. The school had recently appointed a member of
senior management staff as ‘transition manager’, who had devised a method for identifying pupil needs and established a system of support based upon a nurturing approach. After considering a number of options, the collaborative inquiry group agreed that it would be beneficial for the researcher’s doctoral thesis to explore this provision in more detail.

1.2. THESIS RATIONALE

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2005) defines social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) thus:

“Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties cover the full range of ability and continuum of severity. Their behaviours present a barrier to learning and persist despite the implementation of an effective school behaviour policy and personal/social curriculum. They may be withdrawn or isolated, disruptive and disturbing, hyperactive and lack concentration, have immature social skills or present challenging behaviours” (p.8).

The number of pupils experiencing these types of difficulties has increased significantly over recent years, culminating in the category of SEBD recently becoming the type of special educational need with the greatest prevalence in England (Department for Education, 2012). Pupils with SEBD are at risk of poor outcomes (Cooper, 2008) and are the main focus of the TaMHS initiative both nationally, as discussed in the DCSF (2008) document, and locally, as identified by the collaborative inquiry group. Research that considers the needs of this group of pupils and the ways in which they can be supported in school is therefore vitally
A literature review of interventions relevant for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties was recently conducted by Cooper and Jacobs (2011), who identified a wide range of interventions and approaches that can be effective in meeting the needs of these pupils. The current thesis will focus upon one such approach: nurture group provision.

Nurture groups represent a form of therapeutic provision that aims to support pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties within school (Cooper, Arnold and Boyd, 2001). Nurture groups have been widely used in the UK, with interest growing considerably over the last decade (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007). However much of the literature focuses upon nurture groups in primary schools, with only three articles considering nurture group provision in secondary schools (Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes, 2008; Colley, 2009; Garner and Thomas, 2011). Nurture groups are based upon six key principles, which focus upon the need to understand and address pupil needs developmentally and the importance of relationships and communication. The final principle states that: “Transitions are significant in the lives of children” (Nurture Group Network1): perhaps one of the most significant transitions during a child’s school career is the move from primary to secondary school at age eleven (Sirsch, 2003).

The transition from primary to secondary school is a complex process fraught with change (Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm and Splittergerber, 2000), which can have long term impacts upon attainment and wellbeing (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010). The transition process is considered difficult for most pupils (Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006), but especially problematic for those who struggle in relation to

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emotional wellbeing (Gulati and King, 2009). Research suggests that interventions aiming to support vulnerable pupils in the transition should address social and emotional issues first and foremost, as this enables pupils to form relationships, build resilience and engage more effectively in learning (Tobbell, 2003; Ashton, 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008).

The current study synthesises literature relating to primary-secondary transition and literature relating to nurture group provision, culminating in the proposal that nurture provision can be an effective means of supporting vulnerable pupils in the transition. Nurture provision is considered to align closely with the types of intervention recommended in transition literature, as it prioritises emotional wellbeing and supports pupils in building positive relationships with staff and pupils.

1.3. TERMINOLOGY

Swinson, Woof and Melling (2003) highlight some of the controversies regarding the construct of SEBD, in particular that it appears to be context specific and easily influenced by teacher perceptions and attributions. They therefore caution against the use of labels related to SEBD, as this can limit the expectations of pupils, parents and staff. In the current study, the author has adopted the term ‘socially and emotionally vulnerable’, as this seems to capture the characteristics of the pupils most accurately. This terminology was agreed with school staff and the TaMHS collaboratively inquiry group, confirming that it was relevant and meaningful to the context of the research.
1.4. AIMS OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to fulfil the TaMHS objective of exploring means by which schools can promote emotional health and wellbeing, specifically in the transition from primary to secondary school for socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils. The research focused upon the nurture provision set up by one secondary school as a means of supporting pupils identified as causing concern in the transition. This was a new venture within the school for the academic year 2011-2012, where they were introducing a new approach to identifying and supporting needs in the transition. The research constituted a small-scale exploration, utilising a case study design that incorporated contextual information alongside the perspectives of one member of staff (the nurture facilitator) and three pupils who received different levels of nurture provision.

In order to address the identified aims the study focused on two main research questions, as outlined below.

Research Question One:

How can nurture provision in a secondary school support socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition from primary to secondary school?

Research Question Two:

How do pupils who have received nurture support perceive the transition to secondary school and the role of nurture provision within this?

1.5. DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTION

This piece of research offers a distinctive contribution by focusing upon nurture provision in a secondary school aimed specifically at supporting socially and
emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition from primary to secondary school. A small collection of articles have considered nurture support in secondary schools (Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes, 2008; Colley, 2009; Garner and Thomas, 2011) and nurture support has been mentioned as a potential intervention for supporting pupils in the transition to secondary school (Evangelou et al., 2008). However, the researcher is not aware of previous studies that have focused specifically upon this application of nurture support.

1.6. THESIS OVERVIEW

Chapter Two begins with a review of the two relevant bodies of literature: firstly considering the transition from primary to secondary school and secondly considering nurture group provision. A synthesis draws out the core elements of each set of research and combines these to develop the rationale of the current study, culminating in the proposal that nurture provision can be an effective means of supporting socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school. A series of propositions are identified from the literature: these inform the case study approach.

The third chapter considers the methodology of the study, beginning with a description of the process by which the research developed and the stance from which the researcher approached the study. The research design is then explored, including an outline of case study research, a description of the process and consideration of the ways in which the researcher could ensure both quality and rigour in their approach. This is followed by an account of the participants, data collection and data analysis methods. The section finishes with a consideration of the ethics and principles of integrity maintained throughout the research process.
Chapter Four details the findings, which comprise five main elements. The first focuses upon the contextual information gathered through the research diary and how each data source links to the case study propositions. The second explores the nurture facilitator’s perspective of the nurture provision while the following three sections provide pupil and staff perspectives of the transition and nurture provision in relation to three pupils who received different levels of nurture support.

The findings are discussed in Chapter Five where links are made to relevant literature, an integrated case description is provided and the implications are discussed. The thesis concludes by considering the limitations of the study, ideas for further research and reflections on the research process.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores literature that is deemed relevant to the topic of nurture support for socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school. The literature is split into three sections: the first focuses upon the transition from primary to secondary school; the second focuses upon nurture provision; and the third provides a synthesis of the two, demonstrating how the author came to conceptualise the current study.

Two broad literature searches were conducted, one to identify articles that focused on the transition from primary to secondary school, the other to identify articles that focused on nurture groups, both in primary and secondary schools. The details of these searches are provided in Appendix A. Further articles, books and government papers were found by searching three university library catalogues and by harvesting references from previously found sources. Systematic literature searches were conducted for specific topics, as outlined in the relevant sections.

2.2. TRANSITION

2.2.1. Introduction

This section focuses upon the transition from primary to secondary school. It begins by outlining the context of transition and defining the terms used. Further context is then provided through an exploration of the two main psychological frameworks applied in the transition literature. This is followed by three sections that seek to explore the transition process in more detail, focusing upon the significance of the transition process; vulnerability factors that impact upon the transition; and interventions and approaches that have been shown to support pupils in the
transition. The final section summarises the transition literature, asserting that the transition from primary to secondary school is a significant process in which socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils are likely to require support. The section concludes by proposing that there is a strong case for further exploration of interventions that can support these pupils effectively.

2.2.2. Definition and context

In the majority of education systems in Europe and the United States of America (USA), children change schools around the age of eleven (Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006). In the United Kingdom (UK) pupils leave primary school in the July following Year 6, the year in which they turn eleven, and begin secondary school in the following September (Tobbell, 2003; Choi, 2012). This move is commonly referred to as transition from primary to secondary school, often abbreviated to transition to secondary school. The term transfer can also be used to describe the move from primary to secondary school; however this thesis will use the term transition as this seems to be the term used most commonly in the literature. In addition, Stringer and Dunsmuir (2012) adopted the term transition in a recent special edition of the journal Educational and Child Psychology, adding weight to the use of this term in the present thesis. While it is recognised that much of the international literature included in this review refers to elementary school as opposed to primary and middle school instead of secondary, the terms primary and secondary school are the preferred UK terms (Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006). The terms primary school and secondary school will therefore be used throughout this piece of work to avoid confusion.

The transition from primary to secondary school is considered to be a “multidimensional process” (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010, p.45), which is best
understood as a continuing process rather than a distinct ‘episode’ with a start and end point. The transition is characterised by a broad range of experiences and has a diverse impact upon the pupils engaged in the process. Stringer and Dunsmuir (2012) represent transitions as a process of adapting to change, which is “a key task in the process of learning and development” (p.6). They believe that educational transitions can provide opportunities to experience a positive adaptation to change but recognise that successful transitions cannot be taken for granted.

Evangelou and colleagues (Evangelou, Taggart, Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons and Siraj-Blatchford, 2008) provide a definition of successful transition by proposing that pupils will be:

- Developing new friendships;
- Improving self esteem and confidence;
- Settled in so well they are not causing concerns to parents;
- Showing increased interest in school and school work;
- Getting used to new routines and organisation with ease;
- Experiencing curriculum continuity (adapted from p.ii).

In order to achieve these outcomes, pupils are required to successfully navigate a number of complex elements inherent within the transition process (Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm and Splittgerber, 2000; Aikins, Bierman and Parker, 2005). Understanding the transition process therefore requires a theoretical framework that is able to accommodate the complexity of the transition process and the many factors that impact upon it.
2.2.3. Psychological theories of transition

Within the transition literature, two psychological frameworks are commonly drawn upon: Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological framework and Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural framework. These will each be discussed in turn.

2.2.3.1. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological framework

A number of transition authors (Rudolph et al., 2001; Tobbell, 2003; Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; Brewin and Statham, 2011) have drawn upon Bronfenbrenner’s (1979; 1993; 2005) ecological approach, also referred to as a systems theory approach, which focuses on the complex interaction between person and environment and takes into account the context within which human development occurs. The ecological approach encompasses five main systems that make up the child’s context (adapted from Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006): micro (direct interactions, for example with family, peer group or school); meso (the connections between elements of the micro-system); exo (which represent interactions that affect the child indirectly, for example in the community or parents’ workplace); macro (the broader influence of factors such as cultural values or political processes); and chrono (the historical context within which an interaction occurs and the way in which changes occur over time).

Authors adopting this approach highlight the importance of considering the interaction between the individual child and their environment, recognising the many and varied influences that may be acting upon the child at any one time. As a result, school staff and other professionals are encouraged to look beyond within-child factors and to consider changes to their approach and to school systems in order to accommodate pupils effectively in the transition (Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006).
2.2.3.2. A socio-cultural framework

An alternative framework often cited in transition literature is the socio-cultural perspective, pioneered by Vygotsky (1978). This approach values the interaction between an individual and their social context and places great emphasis on the importance of social interaction for learning and development. The socio-cultural framework has been applied by transition authors such as Tobbell (2003), Richards (2011) and Crafter and Maunder (2012), who advocate situating the child and the process of transition within a wider social and cultural context.

From a socio-cultural perspective, children actively construct meanings based on past and present experiences, particularly social interactions: “Individuals bring their own cultural worlds with them and use their previous socio-cultural experiences... to form templates for encountering new situations” (Crafter and Maunder, 2012, p.16). In addition, this perspective considers ways in which an individual’s sense of identity is shaped through their social and cultural context. This is reflected in Crafter and Maunder’s application to the transition process, where “encountering and getting to know new people involves a reorientation of identity based on how the self is reflected through interactions with others” (p.13). Crafter and Maunder describe the transition to secondary school as an example of a ‘rupture’; situations or periods of change that “engender uncertainty or disquiet” (p.13), which commonly occur when a person experiences a change in their cultural context, a change to their ‘sphere of experience’ or a change in their relationships or interactions with others. In the transition to secondary school, all three of these elements are present, leading Crafter and Maunder (2012) to claim that “transitions are about a change in self identity born out of uncertainty in the social and cultural worlds of the individual” (p.10).
Another central aspect of Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural framework is that of the zone of proximal development and its relation to learning. This approach advocates relationships as a basis for learning, where interactions between the ‘teacher’ and the ‘learner’ facilitate progress (Tobbell, 2003). This is particularly relevant for pupils who do not possess the necessary skills to cope with the complexities of transition and who therefore require additional support from others in order to manage this effectively (Richards, 2011).

2.2.3.3. Summary

While the ecological and socio-cultural approaches have been pioneered by different authors, the two approaches can be seen to complement each other quite considerably (Wertsch, 2005). When engaging with the topic of transition to secondary school, it may even be necessary to draw upon both approaches in order to better understand the complexities of the transition process (Tobbell, 2003). Consequently, the present study bases much of its approach upon these two frameworks, particularly recognising the importance of considering the complex contexts within which people develop and the significant influence of relationships and social interaction on learning.

2.2.4. Transition: ‘an important life event’

Bailey and Baines (2012) define the transition as an “important life event” (p.48) characterised by a number of stresses, changes and adjustments, which can have a positive or negative influence upon the child. The view that the transition is significant has been supported by a number of authors such as Anderson et al., (2000); Zeedyk, Gallacher, Henderson, Hope, Husband and Lindsay (2003); Humphrey and Ainscow (2006); and West, Sweeting and Young (2010). The following sections will explore some of the reasons why the transition is considered
to be significant, focusing first on the various aspects of change pupils are required to navigate during the transition process, then on the features of early adolescent development that often coincide with the transition, making the process more complex for pupils. An exploration of pupil perspectives follows, outlining the way in which pupils view the transition from primary to secondary school. The fourth section considers the various impacts of the transition, both in the short term and in the long term. A summary is provided at the end, which suggests that the transition from primary to secondary is a significant process for most, if not all, pupils.

2.2.4.1. Aspects of change

The transition from primary to secondary school is characterised by a number of significant and simultaneous changes which results in a “deep discontinuity” (Howe, 2011, p.1) for pupils. Within the transition, pupils are exposed to a new environment where they have to learn how to act and respond appropriately, at the same time as dealing with the loss of familiar people and environments and establishing new relationships with both peers and staff (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008). This process, as with any process of change, inevitably involves aspects of both loss and of gain (Stringer and Dunsmuir, 2012).

A number of authors consider both the academic and social aspects of change (Anderson et al., 2000; Sirsch, 2003; West et al., 2010; Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012), whereby pupils are required to navigate changing social structures with peers and staff while also adapting to a larger environment and a more challenging academic setting. Alternatively, Howe (2011) presents an adaptation of Bore and Fuller’s (2007) model which proposes that pupils are required to cross five ‘bridges’ in the transition to secondary school: administrative; social and personal; curriculum; pedagogy; and autonomy and managing learning.
Authors such as Anderson et al. (2000) and Humphrey and Ainscow (2006) have contrasted the often very different primary and secondary school environments. Primary schools are typically smaller, feel safe and familiar and involve one teacher and one set of classmates in one room. However, the secondary environment can appear complex and daunting as pupils experience the larger, busier, secondary school where they encounter a number of teachers, peers and rooms within any given day. Galton, Gray and Rudduck (2003) document a number of curriculum and learning discontinuities that exist between primary and secondary schools. There are also pedagogical differences, for example Jindal-Snape and Foggie (2008) observe that teaching in primary schools tends to be focused upon the pupil whereas teaching in secondary schools is often more subject-focused. Changing expectations is another aspect of the transition, with primary and secondary school staff holding different expectations of learning, behaviour, discipline and social aspects of school life (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008; Theriot and Dupper, 2010; Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012).

It has been widely acknowledged that “school transitions disrupt the continuity of life” (Anderson et al., 2000, p.326). This disruption seems to entail profound and simultaneous changes involving complex physical, social and learning environments, shifting expectations and psychological changes. This process occurs simultaneously with early adolescence, when many of these factors come to the fore.

2.2.4.2. Early adolescent development

The transition to secondary school coincides with early adolescence and the many developments that occur at this time. Early adolescence is seen as “a pivotal stage of development that is marked by a confluence of normative biological, psychological and social challenges” (Rudolph et al., 2001, p.292), which can often
lead to an increase in psychological symptoms and maladaptive behaviour such as anxiety, depression and antisocial behaviour. A number of change elements characterise the period of early adolescent development, including: physical; biological; cognitive; emotional; psychological; social and behavioural changes (Aikins, 2005; Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008; Richards, 2011). Recent research has linked many of these developmental changes to neurological processes in the adolescent brain, which are particularly significant in early adolescence (Nelson, Leibenluft, McClure and Pine, 2004; Steinberg, 2005; Blakemore and Choudhury, 2006). Dunsmuir and Stringer (2012) consider adolescence to be a developmental transition, meaning that pupils are navigating more than one transition in the period between Year 6 and Year 8.

Given the complex developmental changes that pupils encounter in early adolescence, Richards concludes that “the transition from primary to secondary school might be one challenge too far for the adolescent, by creating an additional change at a time when massive physical, social, emotional and intellectual [cognitive] changes are already occurring” (p.49). However, the majority of pupils in the UK and elsewhere are required to make the transition at this critical period of their development. The next section will consider the ways in which pupils themselves view the transition to secondary school.

2.2.4.3. Pupil perspectives

The transition is often seen as “a period of stress and turmoil” (Grills-Taquechel Norton and Ollendick, 2010, p.493); a period of anxiety where pupils are faced with a high ‘concentration’ of challenges, which can present as “a challenge of living” (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008, p.217). Key aspects include worrying about making friends, being bullied, older pupils, being able to do the work, having
different teachers, homework, what to do at lunch and break times, navigating the building, using the timetable and getting lost (Tobbell, 2003; Ashton, 2008; Evangelou, 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie 2008; West et al., 2010; Rice, Frederickson and Seymour, 2011). Tobbell claims that these worries take up pupils’ cognitive capacity and therefore present a barrier to learning, a view that is supported by Ashton (2008).

Sirsch (2003) found that most pupils experienced the transition as a ‘positive challenge’, while some experienced it as a ‘difficult threat’. Very few pupils reported ‘low challenge’ and ‘low threat’, suggesting that transition is a “*significant and important life event*” (p.394) for the majority of pupils involved. Interestingly, Mellor and Delamont (2011) compared pupil concerns in the 1970s to current pupil concerns, finding little difference between the two cohorts. The main concerns in both decades related to friendships and growing independence. This suggests that there is still much to be achieved if the stress and anxieties of transition are to be reduced.

Pupils often report mixed emotions about the transition, viewing the process as both exciting and challenging (Lucey and Reay, 2000; Tobbell, 2003; Ashton, 2008). Graham and Hill (2003) found that pupils were anxious about the inherent changes in the transition but were also positively anticipating the new opportunities that accompany the move. It seems that the secondary school itself offers opportunities and experiences that are a source of excitement for pupils but the process of change can be difficult (Ashton, 2008; Bailey and Baines, 2012).

2.2.4.4. *Impact*

A number of authors have noted that the transition impacts significantly upon pupils’ psychological, emotional, social and cognitive development (Rudolph *et al.*,
Academically, a number of studies have reported a ‘dip’ in attainments following the transition to secondary school, which is often accompanied by a dip in academic engagement and attitude towards learning (Galton, Gray and Ruddock, 1999; Anderson et al., 2000; Graham and Hill, 2003, Rice et al., 2011). Alongside these academic impacts, the transition has the “potential to cause psychological disruption and impact upon an individual’s thoughts, feelings and behaviours” (Stringer and Dunsmuir, 2012, p.6). Outcomes of the transition include decreases in attendance, acceptable behaviour, motivation and engagement (as summarised by Rice et al., 2011) in addition to a decrease in self esteem and an increase in anxiety and depression (Anderson et al, 2000; Aikins et al, 2005; Grills-Taquechel et al., 2010; Bailey and Baines, 2012). In addition, the transition has been shown to impact upon pupils’ identity and self-concept (Osborn, McNess and Pollard, 2006; Crafter and Maunder, 2012). A large scale study on the impact of transition was conducted by West, Sweeting and Young (2010), who found that pupils’ adjustment following the transition had a significant impact upon wellbeing and attainment at age 15 and older. These findings led West et al. to conclude that “transition matters in a more profound way than often assumed” (p.47).

Rice, Frederickson and Seymour (2011) claim that the transition to secondary school is a stressful process that impacts upon adjustment and emotional health and wellbeing, but can also be a catalyst for positive outcomes. Crafter and Maunder (2012) believe that transitions can “facilitate a process of reconstruction or change” (p.13), which influences both the individual and their social context. Transitions have the potential to engender change through a number of processes, for example
the construction of new knowledge, the adaptation of old skills or incorporation of new skills into a new context, a change in identity and a change in social position. A successful transition experience can positively impact upon resilience, self concept, confidence, competence and motivation (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008; Brewin and Statham, 2011; Crafter and Maunder 2012). This dual experience is summed up by Crafter and Maunder (2012) who state: “Despite the uncertainty, unfamiliarity and feelings of discomfort associated with change, learning to navigate this process is personally constructive and identity shaping” (p.16). With potential for significant positive or negative impacts, the transition from primary to secondary school represents “an important crossroad for development” (Aikins, 2005, p.42).

For the majority of pupils, it seems that psychological and school adjustment occurs fairly quickly and any negative impacts of the transition are short-lived, for example Gillison, Standage and Skevington (2008) found that most pupils showed an improvement in ‘Quality of Life’ and psychological need satisfaction over the first ten weeks of secondary school and Evangelou et al. (2008) found that three quarters of pupils felt happy after the first term of secondary school. However, both Sirsch (2003) and West et al. (2010) reported that a quarter of the pupils in their studies found the transition very difficult. Jindal-Snape and Foggie (2008) reported that one third of pupils had problems adjusting for some time after the transition and Topping (2011) reported that 40% of pupils who found the move difficult were still struggling one year after the transition. These findings suggest that, while the negative impacts of transition are short-lived for most pupils, concerns remain for a small but significant group of pupils (Anderson et al., 2000; Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; Sutherland, Yee and McNess, 2010): for vulnerable pupils, the negative impact of transition can be significant and long-lasting.
2.2.4.5. Summary

The transition from primary to secondary school entails a “dramatic shift” (Aikins et al., 2005, p.42) as pupils are required to navigate a series of environmental, academic and social changes (Howe, 2011; Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012), which occur alongside the complexities of early adolescent development (Rudolph et al., 2001; Richards, 2011). The transition is considered to be significant, as a successful transition can provide positive opportunities for future development (Rice et al., 2011; Crafter and Maunder, 2012), while a negative transition experience can have long term consequences for emotional wellbeing and academic attainment (West et al., 2010; Rice et al., 2011). Pupils often report that the transition represents a challenging experience (Sirsch, 2003; Tobbell, 2003), which is characterised by a number of common worries (Ashton, 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). These worries have a tendency to consume pupils’ cognitive capacities, thereby presenting a barrier to learning until they have been alleviated (Tobbell, 2003; Ashton, 2008).

It therefore seems that “the turbulence of transition” (Noyes, 2006, p.59) is a reality for most, if not all, pupils (Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006). For most pupils the effects of this ‘turbulence’ are relatively minor and temporary (Evangelou et al., 2008). However, for a significant few, the effects can be significant and long-lasting (West et al., 2010). The next section will consider which pupils tend to be particularly vulnerable in the transition process.

2.2.5. Vulnerability factors

Having established that the transition to secondary school is significant for most, if not all, pupils, this next section will focus upon the factors that can make pupils particularly vulnerable in the transition. Contextual factors will first be
considered, followed by pupil characteristics that influence transition success. This will be followed by a discussion surrounding the complexity of factors involved in determining vulnerability, ending with an alternative approach that considers resilience and mediating factors that can influence the transition.

2.2.5.1. Contextual factors

A number of contextual factors have been associated with vulnerability in transition. These include socioeconomic status (Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; Evangelou et al., 2008; Bailey and Baines, 2012), ethnicity (Ashton, 2008) and parental support (Anderson et al., 2000; West et al., 2010). Pupils who are not able to draw upon support networks in their family, peer group or community are particularly vulnerable in the transition (Tobbell, 2003; Akins et al., 2005; Schneider et al., 2008). Previous school factors such as disengagement from education (West et al., 2010), school absence (Carmen et al., 2011), school refusal (Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012), school exclusion (Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012) bullying (Evangelou et al., 2008; West et al., 2010; Carmen et al., 2011; Bailey and Baines, 2012) and previous school transitions, for example attending more than one primary school (West et al., 2010) all have an impact on pupil vulnerability. Pupils who are not prepared for the transition or who are experiencing greater discontinuity, for example in relation to school size or peer relations, are likely to find it particularly difficult (Anderson et al., 2000; Ashton, 2008; West et al., 2010).

2.2.5.2. Pupil characteristics

Pupils with SEN are often considered vulnerable in the transition (Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; Bailey and Baines, 2012; Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012) particularly those with learning difficulties, physical difficulties, social and emotional difficulties and speech and language difficulties (Bloyce and
However, a number of other pupil characteristics have been associated with vulnerability in the transition that reach further than labels of SEN. These include social skills (Aikins et al., 2005; Evangelou et al., 2008); self esteem (Qualter, Whiteley, Hutchinson and Pope, 2007; Gulati and King, 2009; West et al., 2010; Bailey and Baines, 2012); anxiety (West et al., 2010; Carmen et al., 2011; Grills-Taquechel et al., 2010; Bailey and Baines, 2012); aggression and challenging behaviour (Anderson et al., 2000; Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; West et al., 2010; Carmen et al, 2011; Rice et al., 2011; Bailey and Baines, 2012); emotional intelligence and wellbeing (Qualter et al., 2007; Gulati and King, 2009); resilience (Gulati and King, 2009; Bailey and Baines, 2012); self regulation (Rudolph et al., 2001); academic ability (Anderson et al., 2000; Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; Evangelou et al., 2008; West et al., 2010; Carmen et al., 2011; Bailey and Baines, 2012); and learning skills such as problem-solving, independence and motivation (Anderson et al., 2000; Rice et al., 2011; Jacobson, Williford and Pianta, 2011).

2.2.5.3. Complexity of factors

While many authors have categorised vulnerability factors, they commonly caution that it can be difficult to disentangle vulnerability factors as these often interact very closely (Anderson et al., 2000). Bailey and Baines (2012) describe vulnerability during transition as a “complex phenomenon” (p.61), influenced by a number of factors that interact and mediate each other, which can also be moderated by other factors. Often vulnerability in transition is impacted by a range of factors, including the child’s internal attributes, the attitudes of family, peers and community and the support offered by peers, school systems, staff and professionals (Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). Authors such as Tobbell (2003) therefore state that it is important to consider the range of factors that may be influencing a child’s transition.
experience, drawing on frameworks such as Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological approach.

2.2.5.4. Mediating factors

Bailey and Baines (2012) suggest a different approach as they conceptualise these factors as complex systems of risk and protective factors. Their key finding was that pupils are active, not passive, in the transition process and that the way in which the child perceives, interprets and interacts with the various risk and resilience factors influences the outcome. This suggests that vulnerability factors are not fixed and can be mediated by appropriate adult and peer support.

2.2.5.5. Summary

This section has shown that certain pupils are more at risk of negative outcomes in the transition to secondary school than others (Evangelou et al., 2008; Bailey and Baines, 2012). Vulnerability has been linked to contextual factors and individual characteristics, often representing a complex interplay between the two (Anderson et al., 2000; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). Despite these vulnerabilities, there are a number of mediating factors that can significantly improve a pupil’s transition experience (Bailey and Baines, 2012). The next section will consider some of these mediating factors by exploring interventions and approaches that have been found to impact positively on pupils, especially those who might be considered vulnerable in the transition.

2.2.6. Interventions and approaches

This section focuses upon the things that school staff and other professionals can do to improve pupils’ transition experiences and facilitate positive outcomes. The section starts by outlining three important targets for intervention: helping pupils
build relationships; fostering a sense of belonging and supporting emotional wellbeing. Psychological theories as to why these are significant aspects of transition are also provided. The next four sections consider generic principles and approaches that have been identified as contributing to successful transitions: preparation; communication; pedagogical approaches to curriculum and learning; and the value of adopting a flexible and personalised approach. The final section considers the main issues and implications that arise from literature concerned with interventions and approaches for supporting pupils in the transition to secondary school.

2.2.6.1. Relationships

Positive relationships with staff, peers and older pupils are considered to be an important part of successful transitions to secondary school (Galton et al., 2003; Tobbell, 2003; Aikins et al., 2005; Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; Weller, 2007; Ashton, 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008; Gulati and King, 2009; Smith, 2011; Bailey and Baines, 2012; Crafter and Maunder, 2012; Sancho and Cline, 2012). Peer friendships are considered to be a protective factor in the transition to secondary school (Grills-Taquechel et al., 2010; Bailey and Baines, 2012; Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012), offering a valuable source of both social and academic support (Galton et al., 2003; Crafter and Maunder, 2012). Allocation of a specific member of staff who is attuned to pupil needs and who can form positive relationships is considered particularly important for pupils who are vulnerable in the transition (Tobbell, 2003; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008; Gulati and King, 2009).

Jindal-Snape and Foggie (2008) draw upon attachment theory to explain the importance of relationships in the transition to secondary school and recommend that schools work to foster attachments for pupils following the transition: “There should be a system of providing non-stigmatizing secure attachments in secondary school,
especially for children who come from unstable families” (p.16). They suggest that this could be through buddy systems with older pupils or with a key member of staff for more vulnerable pupils. Smith (2011) also draws upon attachment theory, claiming there are significant benefits to secondary schools providing an identified person to build positive, empathic relationships with a group of pupils. She claims that emotional resilience can be fostered through the provision of a key person in an emotionally enabling environment, where their role is in “providing an attuned, sensitive response to children’s needs, knowing individuals well and being emotionally available to them” (p.17). Smith suggests that the most appropriate person to fulfil this role would be non-teaching support staff, as they would have capacity to address concern as they arise and are likely be perceived as more accessible than teaching staff.

Other authors, such as Tobbell (2003) and Crafter and Maunder (2012), draw upon a socio-cultural approach to illustrate the importance of relationships in transition. They claim that other people, including peers, older pupils and staff can play a vital role in modelling appropriate behaviour and responses to situations, which can be a source of support for pupils in the transition. Crafter and Maunder conclude that “other people can provide social knowledge about ways of behaving or ways of being... practitioners should therefore prioritise the development of relationships for learners undertaking educational transition” (p.16).

2.2.6.2. Sense of belonging

Enabling pupils to feel a sense of belonging within the new school has been found to ease the transition process and enable pupils to settle in more effectively (Anderson et al., 2000; Aikins et al., 2005; Ashton, 2008; Crafter and Maunder, 2012; Sancho and Cline, 2012). This sense of belonging incorporates a social sense
of belonging to a community alongside a sense of belonging to the school itself, which can be gained through growing familiar with the environment, getting used to new routines and using the timetable (Ashton, 2008). Anderson et al. (2000) consider two key aspects to gaining a sense of belonging: identification (in which pupils see themselves as valued members of the school community) and participation (where pupils are actively involved). Aikins et al. argue that pupils feel they belong when there is a good sense of ‘fit’ between the pupil and their new environment. They therefore place the onus on schools to ensure they are accommodating each pupil appropriately. Both Anderson et al. and Aikins et al. endorse the creation of ‘subcommunities’ of peers and staff that facilitate a sense of belonging and enable pupils to feel welcomed, accepted, respected, valued and needed.

Crafter and Maunder (2012) view the transition to secondary school as “the process of joining and becoming members of a new community” (p.14). Pupils therefore need to become familiar with the new ‘rituals’ (such as routines and the structure of lessons) and ‘rules’ (such as expectations and responsibilities) of this community and find their own place within it. Some pupils may need support in order to achieve this effectively. Crafter and Maunder draw upon Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural learning theory to explain why the sense of belonging to a community is important, claiming that “social participation in a community is central for learning to take place” (p.14).

Aikins et al. (2005) and Ashton (2008) draw instead upon Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs, claiming that relatedness and the sense of belonging to a community represent a fundamental human need. Aikins et al. (2005) found that a sense of belonging improved pupils’ attitudes to learning and emotional wellbeing and facilitated proactive behaviours such as seeking friendships or help from adults,
all of which facilitated successful transitions for pupils. It seems that transition support that prioritises relationships and practical ‘settling in’ issues can foster a sense of belonging, which then sets up the conditions required for pupils to engage effectively in learning (Aikins et al., 2005; Ashton, 2008).

2.2.6.3. Wellbeing

A number of authors have endorsed transition interventions that focus on emotional wellbeing, particularly pastoral support and support for developing self esteem and resilience (Aikins et al., 2005; Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008; Gulati and King, 2009; Smith, 2011; Lyons and Woods, 2012). Resilience is seen as “a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity” (Jindal-Snape and Miller (2008) p.218), while self esteem is seen as a “vital human phenomenon” that is “central to the adaptive functioning and everyday happiness of the individual” (Humphrey et al., 2004, p.592). Both are risk factors in the transition but can be addressed through effective interventions. The primary mode for supporting emotional wellbeing and building resilience is through relationships with key adults (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008; Gulati and King, 2009; Crafter and Maunder, 2009; Lyons and Woods, 2012).

Jindal-Snape and Miller (2008) advocate the provision of teaching and learning opportunities for pupils to understand and develop self worth and competence. They also suggest activities such as role play and drama as valuable tools in developing pupil’s resilience and self esteem. Aikins et al. suggest that enhancing self esteem and emotional wellbeing enables pupils to have a more positive view of themselves and the transition, which leads to adaptive coping approaches and proactive adaptive behaviours, which in turn leads to a “brighter
lens through which to interpret the new [school] context” (p.57). Supporting emotional wellbeing is therefore an important consideration for transition support.

2.2.6.4. **Preparation**

Preparation before the transition is an important aspect of facilitating successful transitions, in particular pre-transition information sharing, effective identification of pupil needs, enlisting appropriate support from family, school staff and peers and pre-transition visits (Anderson et al., 2000; Akos and Martin, 2003; Sirsch, 2003; Aikins et al., 2005; Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; Evangelou et al., 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie 2008). Lyons and Woods (2012) found that pre-transition visits helped reduce pupils’ anxieties by enabling them to become familiar with the new environment and to develop a greater sense of autonomy. Aikins et al. (2005) suggest that preparation and exposure to the new school environment facilitates successful transitions because pupils tend to feel more prepared and to hold more positive expectations, which in turn impacts positively upon their transition experience.

2.2.6.5. **Communication**

Effective communication is another important factor for successful transitions (Graham and Hill, 2003; Ashton, 2008; Evangelou et al., 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008; Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008). This includes clear policies and processes; effective sharing of information between primary and secondary schools; communication with parents; and providing clear messages to pupils about what they can expect and what is expected of them. Ashton (2008) advises parents and staff to engage in two-way conversations with pupils about their concerns and seek to address these concerns, however trivial they may seem, in collaboration with the pupil. This can reduce pupil anxieties and enables them to hold more realistic
expectations of the transition process, hopefully dispelling myths and misconceptions. As the transition involves a number of different stakeholders, effective communication can facilitate a smooth, joined-up process that ensures the best outcomes for pupils and enables increased continuity between primary and secondary schools (Evangelou et al., 2008).

2.2.6.6. Curriculum and learning

It is important for schools to enable pupils to reconnect with learning following the discontinuities often associated with transition (Galton et al., 2003). Boyd (2005) argues that schools should ensure the secondary curriculum entails continuity, progression, coherence, breadth and balance, alongside explicit teaching of meta-cognitive skills that enable pupils to progress in their learning. It is important for schools to consider pedagogic strategies that improve attainment and intrinsic motivation (Galton et al., 2003) and to reframe learning as an enjoyable activity by providing a balance of work that is both achievable and challenging (Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006). Galton et al., (2003) advise that pedagogy should advance in line with pupil development in order to sustain excitement and motivation for learning. There should also be opportunities for pupils to experience increased trust and autonomy as they develop. In this way, Galton et al. recognise that change can be positive and represents a new and important stage of development. It is therefore important for schools to attempt to achieve an appropriate balance of continuity and discontinuity in curriculum and learning. Galton et al. (2003) suggest that practices such as providing time and space in school for pupils to talk about difficulties, enabling pupils to set their own targets and staff recognition of effort and even small successes can make a significant difference to engaging pupils in learning.
In addition to the main curriculum, there are significant benefits to specifically teaching coping strategies that can help pupils successfully navigate the transition (Rudolph et al., 2001; Noyes, 2006; Vanlede, Little and Card, 2006; Qualter et al., 2007; Evangelou et al., 2008; Grills-Taquechel et al., 2010; Choi, 2012). These authors endorse teaching pupils coping strategies in relation to emotional intelligence, resilience, social skills, learning skills and self-regulation, which can facilitate better adaptation to change and more positive adjustment to the secondary school environment.

2.2.6.7. A personalised approach

Authors such as Smith (2011), Bloyce and Frederickson (2012), Crafter and Maunder (2012) and Sancho and Cline (2012) endorse a personalised and flexible approach that takes individual differences into account in order to accommodate pupils effectively. This approach draws upon the Department for Education and Skills (2004) definition of personalisation as “the drive to tailor education to individual need, interest and aptitude so as to fulfil every young person’s potential” (p.4), which encompasses five core principles: assessment for learning; effective teaching and learning strategies; curriculum entitlement and choice; school organisation; and strong partnership beyond the school. In a personalisation approach, schools need to consider their provision in each of these areas to ensure they are meeting pupil needs effectively. This is supported by Crafter and Maunder, who argue that generic, ‘one-size-fits-all’ approaches are rarely appropriate in meeting pupils’ transition needs. Flexibility is therefore required to enable schools to tailor their transition procedures to fit their setting, the cohort and local circumstances (Ashton, 2008; Sancho and Cline, 2012).
2.2.6.8. Implications

Having explored a number of interventions and approaches that have benefitted pupils in the transition, this final section will consider the implications of these and other studies in more detail. Interventions and approaches need to reflect the complexity of the transition process by focusing on a combination of social, emotional, psychological, environmental and academic adjustment (Galton et al., 2003; Evangelou et al., 2008; Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008; West et al., 2010). Jindal-Snape and Miller note that the aim of transition support should be to equip children to face challenges and manage, rather than minimise, risks. In a supportive learning environment, this process can have a positive impact upon pupil development and resilience, thus improving pupils’ ability to overcome future challenges (Brewin and Stratham, 2011). Transition support can have complex and far-reaching implications, for example targeting pupil engagement can increase self-confidence, which fosters further engagement, which in turn leads to resilience, which facilitates learning about self and others, which paves the way for increased self worth, which has a positive impact upon wellbeing and achievement (Gulati and King, 2009).

The first priority for intervention should be social and emotional needs (Aikins et al., 2005; Ashton, 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie 2008), as this provides the basis for pupils to be able to engage effectively in learning (Tobbell, 2003; Ashton, 2008). There are complex links between many of these factors, for example Jindal Snape and Miller (2008) found that self esteem and resilience were closely linked to relationships. In view of the complexity of the transition process and the variety of pupil needs, Crafter and Maunder (2012) recommend “personalised, flexible, comprehensive, multi-faceted and prolonged approaches to transition
support” (p.17). This recommendation echoes that which Anderson et al., proposed in 2000, suggesting that much is still to be achieved in establishing effective forms of transition support.

The transition to secondary school is a complex process that does not stop when pupils enter secondary school, so support should continue well into Year 7 as pupils adjust to the new social, academic and physical environment (Aikins et al., 2005; Galton et al., 2003; Graham and Hill, 2003; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). The first days and weeks are critical for successful transitions and secondary schools should explore ways in which to support students build relationships and get to grips with daily routines, which lays the foundations for learning (Ashton, 2008). More vulnerable pupils are likely to need longer-term support. Crafter and Maunder assert that directive, short term approaches are not effective for more vulnerable pupils: “Learners need to be given the chance to actively participate in their transition experience and make their own meaning from the hurdles they encounter and overcome. The focus should be on helping the person negotiate their own way through the change, ensuring that they remain central to the sense making and reconstruction of knowledge that is needed in order for them to make a successful transition” (p.17).

Humphrey and Ainscow (2006) assert that schools need to prioritise transition, continuing to develop and innovate their practice in order to meet the needs of their pupils. This requires schools to address issues of cost and capacity (Smith, 2011), but the focus should be on developing an approach infused with “energy and imagination” (Galton et al., 2003, p.v). Galton et al. recognise that schools are not alone in this process and there is a significant role for local
authorities in developing, supporting and evaluating initiatives that aim to support pupils in the transition.

2.2.6.9. Summary

This section has considered what schools can do to improve the transition experiences of their pupils. It seems that targeted interventions and carefully planned approaches can be highly beneficial in supporting pupils before, during and after the transition to secondary school (Anderson et al., 2000; Aikins et al., 2005; Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; Evangelou et al., 2008; Bailey and Baines, 2012; Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012). Addressing social and emotional factors such as building relationships, fostering a sense of belonging and promoting emotional health and wellbeing can positively impact upon transition success (Tobbell, 2003; Aikins et al., 2005; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008; Bailey and Baines, 2012), as can principles such as good communication, thorough preparation, flexibility and personalisation (Sirsch, 2003; Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008; Crafter and Maunder, 2012; Sancho and Cline, 2012). Transition literature suggests that interventions should be long-term (Crafter and Maunder, 2012) and should focus primarily on social and emotional needs (Tobbell, 2003; Aikins et al., 2005; Ashton, 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie 2008), with the main aim of equipping pupils to face and overcome the challenges inherent in the transition process (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008). Transition support should be broad, flexible and tailored to the needs of individual pupils (Crafter and Maunder, 2012).

2.2.7. Summary of transition section

Transition is a “complex phenomenon” (Bailey and Baines, 2012, p.61) that represents a “crucial and often problematic period” for pupils (Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006, p.320). School transitions can profoundly influence pupils’
subsequent development and engagement in education (West et al., 2010), both positively and negatively. Given that transition is a universal issue with significant consequences, it should be a priority for both schools (Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006) and educational psychologists (Dunsmuir and Stringer, 2012; Stringer and Dunsmuir, 2012).

This section has argued that transition is a significant process for most, if not all, pupils (Sirsch, 2003; Zeedyk et al., 2003; Lohaus et al., 2004; Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; Noyes, 2006; Bailey and Baines, 2012). Some pupils are particularly vulnerable in the transition; for these pupils the impact can be significant and long-lasting (Anderson et al., 2000; Ashton, 2008; Evangelou et al., 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008; Gulati and King, 2009; West et al., 2010; Bailey and Baines, 2012; Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012). Transition success can be influenced effectively by various interventions and approaches (Anderson et al., 2000; Aikins et al., 2005; Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; Evangelou et al., 2008; Bailey and Baines, 2012; Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012), particularly those that focus upon social and emotional factors (Tobbell, 2003; Aikins et al., 2005; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008; Bailey and Baines, 2012). It therefore seems that there is a strong case for further exploration of interventions that can support these pupils effectively. The current thesis proposes that one such approach could be nurture group provision, as discussed in the following section.
2.3. **NURTURE GROUP SUPPORT**

2.3.1. Introduction

This part of the literature review focuses upon nurture group support. The main focus is upon nurture provision in primary schools, as most of the literature refers to support in this age bracket: those that do include nurture provision for secondary-age pupils are explored later on in this section. It begins with background information regarding definition and context, followed by an outline of the history of nurture groups and how they have developed since the first groups were established. The third section explores the main psychological theories underpinning nurturing approaches, while the fourth and fifth sections cover the different types of nurture groups and the findings from various evaluations. The final section considers the role and effectiveness of nurture group support in secondary schools, drawing upon findings from a systematic literature search and critiquing in detail the three articles that this search yielded. A summary is then provided, in which the author concludes that nurture group support can be an effective intervention for supporting pupils’ social and emotional development, but that further research is required to explore the potential role of nurture groups in secondary schools, in particular to support vulnerable pupils in the transition from primary to secondary school.

2.3.2. Definition and context

Nurture groups are a form of therapeutic provision within mainstream schools (Cooper, Arnold and Boyd, 2001) that have developed rapidly in the UK over the last ten years (Reynolds, Mackay and Kearney, 2009). Nurture groups aim to promote emotional wellbeing (Seth-Smith, Levi, Pratt, Fonagy and Jaffey, 2010) and remove barriers to learning (Cooper and Tiknaz, 2005) by addressing unmet developmental needs (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007). This is achieved by
establishing a careful balance of structure and affection (Binnie and Allen, 2008), delivered by consistent and emotionally responsive members of staff (O’Connor and Colwell, 2002). Nurture groups often cater for pupils from socially and economically deprived backgrounds (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; Seth-Smith et al., 2010). Pupils may be referred for nurture support for a range of reasons, including aggression, hyperactivity, low mood or social withdrawal (Seth-Smith et al., 2010). Central to an effective nurturing approach is an understanding of the complex and intricately linked processes of emotional, social and cognitive development (Binnie and Allen, 2008), a recognition of the profound impact that missed developmental opportunities can have upon learning (Kearney, 2005) and a commitment to providing an environment that facilitates positive development (Cooper, 2009). Nurture provision aims to address emotional issues, to improve social skills, to develop an ability to recognise and communicate feelings, to develop empathy and to teach skills such as conflict resolution and self regulation (Seth-Smith et al., 2010). The following section will outline the history and development of nurture groups, from their conception to the present day.

2.3.3. History and development

Working as an educational psychologist for the Inner London Education Authority in the 1960s, Marjorie Boxall (Bennathan and Boxall, 2000; Boxall, 2002) encountered many children who demonstrated significant social, emotional and behavioural needs that mainstream education did not seem able to meet effectively. While the specific difficulties varied, Boxall considered many of these needs to be related to parental stress that had impacted on their capacity to provide a positive and consistent relationship for their child in the early years, which in turn influenced the child’s social and emotional development and their learning processes. Boxall
hypothesised that many of the children she worked with had entered school at a
developmental level much lower than expected for their age and that this disparity
had led to many of the difficulties these children encountered in mainstream
education. At the time, many of these children were being excluded from mainstream
education and referred to specialist services for treatment of their ‘aggressive’ and
‘disruptive’ behaviour. Boxall, however, considered an alternative approach to
recognising and meeting the needs of these children and created the first ‘nurture
groups’ in 1970. The aim of these groups was to provide opportunities for children to
form attachments with nurture group staff, experience nurturing care and engage in
the learning experiences typically encountered by children in their early years, all
within the context of their local school.

While nurture groups originated over forty years ago, it has seemingly only
been in the last decade that the benefits of nurture groups have been more widely
recognised. This “renaissance” (Cooper and Tiknaz, 2005, p.211) is reflected in a
simple database search using PsycInfo, as illustrated in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search term</th>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Date of publication</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“nurture group*”</td>
<td>Title or abstract</td>
<td>1963-1972</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1973-1982</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1983-1992</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1993-2002</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2003-2012</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1. Search details to demonstrate interest in nurture groups*

This basic exploration shows a marked increase in the number of publications
focusing on nurture groups in recent years, particularly in the last ten years when
79% of the articles were published. It seems that this increase in academic literature reflects the growing practice of nurture groups within schools: the *Nurture Group Network*, an organisation that supports nurture groups throughout the UK, reports that there are currently around 1,500 nurture groups in the UK\(^2\). This represents a marked increase from the 300 nurture groups Cooper and Whitebread (2007) claim were registered in 2007. Nurture group provision has recently featured in two government reports (Steer, 2009; Ofsted, 2011), marking its significance in the UK. Both reports suggest that nurture groups are a valuable intervention, the benefits of which are deemed to significantly outweigh the heavy investment required from schools. Both recommend that nurture group practice continues to develop in order to provide effective early intervention and targeted support to vulnerable pupils.

2.3.4. Psychological theories

Although Bennathan and Boxall (2000) emphasise that nurture groups were set up as a practical response to a perceived need, not to “*demonstrate a theoretical position*” (Bennathan and Boxall, 2000, p.111), they do recognise that nurture group practice is underpinned by some core psychological theories. These have been explored by a number of authors, with the three most prominent being attachment theory (Cooper, Arnold and Boyd, 2001; O’Connor and Colwell, 2002; Kearney, 2005; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; Reynolds, MacKay and Kearney, 2009; Scott and Lee, 2009; MacKay, Reynolds and Kearney, 2010; and Seth-Smith *et al.*, 2010); sociocultural learning theory (Cooper and Tiknaz, 2005; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; and Binnie and Allen, 2008); and psychological need satisfaction (Cooper,

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Arnold and Boyd, 2001; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; Kearney, 2005). These psychological theories are discussed below, in relation to nurture group practice.

Socio-cultural learning theory (pioneered by figures such as Vygotsky, 1987, Bruner, 1996, and Feuerstein, 1969) asserts that learning takes place in the interactions between an adult and a child, which occur within a complex social and cultural context. This means that adults can play a key role in children’s development and learning, for example Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) emphasise the importance of relationships for emotional health and wellbeing, as children learn to value themselves through the experience of being valued by significant others. Seth-Smith et al. (2010) also extol the benefits of experiencing positive, mutually rewarding social interactions, as this can help children learn social skills and adaptive behaviours. Socio-cultural learning theory suggests that many of the difficulties children experience are due to a lack of learning opportunities rather than innate, within-child difficulties (Scott and Lee, 2009). Bennathan and Boxall’s nurture group principles incorporate many aspects of socio-cultural learning, in particular that children’s learning is mediated through positive relationships with adults (O’Connor and Colwell, 2002; Cooper and Tiknaz, 2005; Binnie and Allen, 2008) and that any intervention should be targeted at the developmental level of the child, not the stage at which the child’s chronological age suggests they might be (Bennathan, 1997; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; and Binnie and Allen, 2008).

Bennathan and Boxall (2000) refer to the “important influence” (p.10) of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980) on nurture group theory and practice. Attachment theory is concerned with the impact of caring and consistent relationships in the early years on later development and has been described thus: “Secure attachment occurs when a child has a mental representation of the
attachment figure [primary care-giver] as available and responsive when needed. Infants are considered to be insecurely attached when they lack such a representation” (Cassidy, 2008, p.7). Internal working models may be of a caregiver who is sensitive and responsive or of a care-giver who is unwilling or unable to invest resources in the child. A child’s internal working models are seen to influence the way in which they view the world and other adults within it (Thompson, 2008). Research suggests that attachment in the early years may have a profound influence on later development, for example, attachment has been linked to the development of personality, self-concept, social cognition, moral conscience, memory and the ability to understand and regulate emotions (see Thompson, 2008, for a review). Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters and Wall (1978) claim that secure attachment is vital for learning and development, as responsive care-givers provide a secure base from which the child is then able to explore the world. This has been reflected in the nurture group literature, where authors propose that nurture groups provide a secure base within school by enabling pupils to develop positive and consistent relationships with key members of school staff (O’Connor and Colwell, 2002; Cooper and Tiknaz, 2005; Seth-Smith et al., 2010).

Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs has also been cited in the nurture group literature, with authors suggesting that nurture groups seek to meet basic needs, such as belonging, stability and even nutrition, which then enables pupils to engage more effectively in higher-order processes such as engagement in learning (Bennathan, 1997; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; and Binnie and Allen, 2008). By applying these psychological theories, authors such as Bennathan and Boxall (2000) and MacKay, Reynolds and Kearney (2010) advocate nurture groups as an effective means of providing children with positive and consistent relationships with adults.
within school, which can facilitate the experiences necessary for social-emotional
development and engagement with classroom learning.

2.3.5. Effectiveness of nurture groups

A growing body of evaluative research has accompanied the increased
interest in nurture groups over the last ten years. The main findings of these studies
include: improved social, emotional and behavioural development, as reflected in
factors such as improved attention, empathy and emotional regulation (Bishop and
Swain, 2000; Colwell and O’Connor, 2002; Cooper and Tiknaz, 2005; Cooper and
Whitebread, 2007; Sanders, 2007; Binnie and Allen, 2008; Reynolds, MacKay and
Kearney, 2009; Scott and Lee, 2009; Seth-Smith et al., 2010); improved self esteem
(Cooper and Tiknaz, 2005; Kearney, 2005; Sanders, 2007; Binnie and Allen, 2008);
improved relationships, both at home and at school (Sanders, 2007; Binnie and
Allen, 2008; Seth-Smith et al., 2010); improvements in key learning skills such as
attention and independent working (Sanders, 2007); and improvements in academic
achievement (Cooper and Tiknaz, 2005; Gerrard, 2005; Cooper and Whitebread,
2007; Reynolds, MacKay and Kearney, 2009; Scott and Lee, 2009). Studies have
also noted that nurture provision often has a positive impact upon the whole school
environment, staff attitudes and school confidence in dealing with pupils with social,
emotional and behavioural difficulties (Bishop and Swain, 2000; Cooper and Tiknaz,
2005; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; Sanders, 2007, Binnie and Allen, 2008; Seth-
Smith et al., 2010).

Despite these positive findings, Cooper (2009) cautions against accepting the
intervention uncritically. The nurture literature identifies a number of challenges that
schools face in establishing nurture provision, including the need for staff training to
ensure whole school support and understanding; the need for effective support so
that nurture staff do not feel isolated; the need for nurture staff to feel confident in their role and to feel free to focus specifically on social and emotional development rather than academic teaching (Sanders, 2007); the need for a clear definition of staff roles and responsibilities, good group composition, support from senior management and clear communication amongst staff (Cooper and Tiknaz, 2005); and the need to establish a system of continued support for pupils once they have left the nurture group (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007). Cooper (2009) advises that the cost of providing effective nurture support should not be underestimated, although the potential benefits are considered to far outweigh the costs.

Several factors were found to impact upon the effectiveness of nurture provision, for example Cooper and Whitebread (2007) found that the length of time a group had been established and the experience of its staff was a significant factor, while Scott and Lee (2009) found that the earlier a child accessed the intervention, the more readily they were influenced by it. This highlights the importance of early intervention before social and emotional difficulties become entrenched (Bennathan, 1997; O’Connor and Colwell, 2002), although it should be noted that Scott and Lee did also find positive impacts on older pupils receiving nurture support.

2.3.6. Types of nurture group

The Nurture Group Network outline six principles that underpin nurture provision:

1. “Children's learning is understood developmentally..."

2. The classroom offers a safe base...

3. Nurture is important for the development of self esteem...

4. Language is understood as a vital means of communication...

5. All behaviour is communication...
6. *Transitions are significant in the lives of children*” (*Nurture Group Network*).

However, there are a number of different ways in which these principles have been applied in practice. Cooper and Whitebread (2007) outline four main nurture group variations: ‘classic nurture groups’; ‘new variant nurture groups’; ‘groups informed by nurture group principles’; and ‘aberrant nurture groups’. A description of each of these variations is given below:

- **Classic nurture group:** This describes groups that adhere to all of Boxall’s recommendations (Boxall, 2002). These groups cater for 10-12 primary-aged pupils and are located within the children’s local mainstream school. The main purpose of the group is to enable pupils to return to their mainstream class, typically within three or four school terms. Pupils attend the nurture group for all but one afternoon each week, although strong links are maintained with the child’s mainstream class. Classic nurture groups are run by one teacher and one teaching assistant and focus on providing a holistic curriculum. The provision would typically include a homely atmosphere, developmentally appropriate play opportunities and a ‘breakfast’ activity, which provides a wealth of experiences through sharing a simple meal.

- **New variant nurture groups:** These groups are based on the classic nurture group model but some structural or organisational differences are evident. For example, these groups may run on a part-time basis, may be accessed by a cluster of schools or may cater for secondary age pupils.

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• Groups informed by nurture group principles: These groups are organised very differently to the classic nurture group model, but maintain many of the underlying principles. For example, they may run more as a drop-in centre for pupils at break and lunchtime rather than as a part of the timetable. These groups tend to focus on social and emotional development but not academic skills and may only be run by one adult.

• Aberrant nurture groups: These groups focus more on control and containment of behaviour rather than education and social-emotional development. Even though they may bear the name ‘nurture group’, these groups do not adhere to the classic nurture group principles of support and development.

While authors are in agreement about the need for nurture groups to adhere to the main nurture principles (Cooper, 2009), there is some contention within the literature as to the effectiveness of the first three types of nurture provision. Some authors (for example Seth-Smith et al., 2010) have focused solely upon the ‘classic’ nurture group model, while others have found that alternative types of nurture provision can also be effective (Binnie and Allen, 2008; Scott and Lee, 2009). Mackay, Reynolds and Kearney (2010) suggest that pupil needs should determine the level of nurture provision, with pupils with the greatest level of need requiring a classic style of nurture provision. This view is supported by Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) and Sanders (2007), who highlight the importance of keeping pupil needs foremost within both the design and delivery of nurture provision. An increasing number of studies have emerged in recent years that consider ways in which nurture principles can be applied in new settings and situations. One of these areas of
development has been in exploring the application of these principles in mainstream secondary school environments.

2.3.7. Nurture groups in secondary schools

For the purposes of the current thesis, a systematic literature review was conducted to explore the use and effectiveness of nurture groups in secondary schools. An initial search of four databases that were considered relevant to the topic was carried out. These databases were the British Education Index, the Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA), the Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC) and PsycInfo (see Appendix B for the results of these searches). Two broad search engines (the University of Manchester Library search tool and Google Scholar) were then explored to ensure these did not contribute more articles than had already been found. As these searches did not produce new articles, it was considered that the literature search had been comprehensive and had found the articles relevant to this review.

As shown in Appendix B, these searches identified three articles that focused upon nurture groups in secondary schools: Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes (2008); Colley (2009); and Garner and Thomas (2011). An in-depth analysis of these studies was conducted, focusing on the psychological theories drawn upon by the authors, the rationale offered for secondary nurture groups, the sample and methods used, the type of nurture group described, the findings and implications of each study, alongside various critiques. The main findings of this analysis are outlined below. In addition, a table showing the characteristics of each nurture group is shown in Appendix C.
2.3.7.1. Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes (2008)

Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes (2008) focus upon one nurture group that supported pupils in Year 8 and Year 9. They draw upon attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1978; Ainsworth and Bowlby, 1965), neuroscience (Schore, 2005; Blakemore, 2007) and adolescent development perspectives (Blos, 1979; Frankel, 1998) to inform their approach. Cooke et al. believe that insecure attachment in the early years has an impact upon later development and adjustment. This can impact on self esteem, empathy, sense of responsibility, academic achievement, conformity to social expectations and appropriate engagement in social situations. Cooke et al.’s findings lead them to argue that adolescents with delayed social and emotional development require support to develop positive relationships, which in turn impact upon their sense of self, ability to trust others, social cognition, interpersonal understanding, thinking and reasoning skills, problem solving and ability to manage emotions such as anger or anxiety. This has a positive impact upon emotional health and wellbeing in adolescence and beyond.

Cooke et al. advocate secondary nurture groups as effective means for young people to develop secure attachments with caring adults, which in turn helps them to cope with the biological, emotional and psychological aspects of adolescent development and provides a safe opportunity to explore and develop a positive psycho-social identity. Cooke et al. draw upon work by Schore (2005) and Blakemore (2007) to claim that early adolescence offers a ‘window of opportunity’ for neurological pathways to be altered through positive relationship experiences (Geddes, 2006; Sutherland, 2006). They claim that adults in the secondary nurture group “provide an emotionally containing relationship whereby the vulnerable adolescent is offered a reparative attachment experience” (p.294). In summary,
adolescents with attachment issues are at risk of poor outcomes, but early adolescence provides a ‘window of opportunity’ for neurological pathways to be re-wired through positive relationships and nurturing support. This is likely to have a positive impact on psychological wellbeing and academic engagement.

Cooke et al. describe the process of one secondary school setting up a nurture group to support pupils in Year 7 and Year 8. The process started with whole school nurture training delivered by an educational psychologist, which impacted on staff understanding of challenging behaviour and led the school SEN department to set up a nurture room. They report that this has been successful, that staff and parents value the nurture support and that the school went on to offer support and share good practice with a range of primary and secondary schools.

The description is enhanced by pre- and post-measures using data from the Boxall Profile and by a case study of one pupil for whom the provision has been successful. The Boxall Profile scores suggest that the nurture group support had filled in some of the gaps in pupils’ social and emotional development. However, the data was minimal and not clearly defined, for example they did not specify how many pupils were in the sample, who completed the forms or the time scales within which the data collection took place. The individual case study led the authors to conclude that the pupil in question had made ‘dramatic’ progress as a result of the nurture provision, demonstrating improvements in relation to social skills, confidence and self esteem and literacy. While the positive outcomes for this pupil are appreciated, there are some methodological flaws; for example details are not provided about how or when the data was gathered and the data only refers to one pupil, which begs questions such as whether the intervention was successful for
other pupils or just for this pupil. Also, it is felt that a clearer gathering of pupil views would have enhanced this account.

In conclusion, the study by Cooke *et al.* offers support to the rationale that nurture groups can be appropriate and effective in secondary school settings. They conclude that Key Stage Three nurture groups can have a positive impact on pupils’ social emotional and behavioural development and that adolescence is “not too late” (p.302) to effect change for pupils. It seems that further investigation of the experiences of secondary age nurture group pupils would add value to this area of research.

2.3.7.2. *Colley (2009)*

Colley (2009) claims there is a well-established evidence-base for the effectiveness of nurture groups in primary schools but draws attention to the lack of large-scale evaluations of secondary nurture groups as this intervention is a relatively recent development. He does, however, reference several Ofsted reports where nurture groups were recognised as valuable contributions to specific secondary school settings. Colley draws upon attachment theory (*Bowlby, 1969; 1973; 1980*) and the idea that many pupils with social and emotional difficulties may have missed opportunities for early learning experiences. However, he also suggests that other factors may trigger social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, for example bereavement, trauma or loss. He suggests that alternative reasons for pupils requiring nurture support become more likely as pupils enter adolescence, so therefore secondary nurture groups may be meeting needs that reach beyond attachment.

Colley’s methodology is not clearly defined, although it appears to be a series of interviews with a range of senior school staff such as head teachers, deputy head
teachers and SENCOs in what appear to be four separate schools, each of which have developed nurture provision. Unfortunately, not enough detail is provided to enable inclusion within the table shown in Appendix C. The paper also introduces the rationale for the development of a secondary-age version of the Boxall Profile, which Colley had developed and standardised: a brief evaluation of which is provided in the paper. Colley reports that preliminary evidence from school staff and other professionals suggests these revisions are positive and the standardisation accurate.

Colley’s findings have been separated out to focus on each secondary school in turn. General findings and implications will then be discussed. In the first school, senior staff reported that the nurture group had extended their school’s capacity to meet the needs of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. They found the provision to be most appropriate for pupils who were introverted, withdrawn and making limited academic progress rather than for pupils with ‘entrenched’ challenging behaviour difficulties. The intervention was deemed to be effective for pupils who had experienced trauma, pupils who had unstable home lives and pupils who refused or were reluctant to attend school. Following intervention, these pupils were better able to cope with the demands of secondary school and it was felt that the provision enabled vulnerable pupils to be successful who would likely otherwise fail in the secondary environment. The nurture group formed part of a ‘continuum of care’ within the whole school pastoral system and it was important to establish a clear referral system to ensure the provision was used appropriately.

In the second school, staff had focused on developing a sense of community for pupils, ensuring they felt part of a safe and comfortable environment. They
formed this as ‘nurture support’ rather than a ‘nurture group’ as such, with open access to the room and staff support as required by any pupil. They found the support to be particularly effective for pupils who had experienced difficult situations such as loss, trauma and serious illness. Staff reported that support offered to parents was also appreciated.

The third school in Colley’s study had tailored their provision to specifically support pupils in the transition to secondary school, which the head teacher described as being “very worthwhile, very beneficial” (p.295). The Boxall Profile was used to identify two groups of six pupils, who then attended the nurture group for two double lessons each week. A specially refurbished classroom provided a ‘safe and secure base’, with activities focused largely on co-operation, language development and dealing with trauma. School staff reported an improvement in behaviour and attendance and noted that school exclusions were reduced, seemingly as a result of this provision.

The nurture support in School Four seemed to follow a different pattern again, focusing more upon the place of nurture within the whole school ethos and continuum of provision. They found the nurture principles to be an effective guide to their work supporting vulnerable young people through a coherent, joined up approach, which included a nurture team, a youth inclusion programme member of staff, a school counsellor, community police officers and a school social worker.

Colley notes that secondary nurture provision can have similarities to primary nurture provision, for example setting up the room, consistent staffing, building relationships with parents and adhering to the six nurture principles. However, he also notes that there are a number of differences between primary and
secondary schools, and therefore the delivery of nurture groups is likely to differ in response to the different settings and the needs of the pupils themselves. For example, Colley found that secondary school nurture might take place across several different rooms or for only one or two sessions each week. In addition, secondary school nurture provision often deals with a broader range of issues than primary nurture groups, as ‘lifestyle choices’ relating to sex, drugs and alcohol become more prominent. As secondary schools are generally much larger in size to primary schools, they often need to employ a range of provision to meet individual needs more appropriately. One particular finding of Colley’s study is that secondary schools seem to differentiate between learning needs, nurturing needs and behavioural needs, with nurture focusing more on pupils with social and emotional vulnerabilities. A further difference comes in the form of establishing a whole school approach: much of the primary nurture literature advocates a top-down approach whereby nurture is introduced as a whole school approach, which seems to be appropriate for a primary school setting. However, Colley suggests a bottom-up approach for secondary schools, where nurture is introduced in an unobtrusive manner and builds up a reputation as positive results are seen so that “the credibility of secondary nurture provision is earned not imposed” (p.297).

Despite the differences outlined above, Colley suggests that secondary nurture can be an effective provision for pupils. He argues that flexibility is required for secondary schools to be able to adapt their nurture provision to meet the needs of their pupils and the constraints of their environment. It seems that secondary nurture may require “a different approach from that employed at the primary level” (p.296) and Colley therefore suggests a revision of the nurture group variants outlined by Cooper and Whitebread (2007) to reflect the broader practices of secondary nurture.
Colley concludes that nurture can be a highly effective intervention for vulnerable secondary school pupils, but that this may be delivered in different ways to primary nurture. He therefore advocates that, as long as the six core principles of nurture are adhered to, flexibility should be allowed for secondary schools to deliver these in ways that are deemed most appropriate for their pupils and settings.

While Colley’s paper adds weight to the rationale for secondary nurture groups and sets out some of the ways in which this might be applied in practice, there are a number of limitations, particularly in relation to the reporting of the methodology and findings.

2.3.7.3. Garner and Thomas (2011)

Garner and Thomas (2009) claim there is “significant demand” (p.208) for effective interventions that support adolescents with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, which they state are particularly prevalent at secondary schools as pupils face the “challenges and pressures” (p.208) of adolescence. They suggest that nurture groups are likely to be an effective intervention for secondary age pupils, supporting this stance with evidence from qualitative pupil, parent and staff data regarding three secondary nurture groups.

Garner and Thomas cite the work of Bowlby (1969; 1973; 1980) and Ainsworth (1995) in relation to attachment, the impact early experiences have upon the formation of internal working models and the way in which a person’s sense of self develops in relation to their interactions with others. They consider the work of Vygotsky (1978), for example socio-cultural learning theory and the zone of proximal development, to be equally important in relation to nurture groups. This links to the importance of understanding individual needs and supporting the child to
make progress at a developmentally appropriate pace, alongside the importance of both language and play for socio-emotional development. In addition, they draw on Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs, stating that nurture groups enable pupils’ basic needs, such as food and a sense of belonging, to be met, which then leave them better able to access the higher order process skills required for learning.

Garner and Thomas’ study focuses upon three NGs in three secondary schools, each of which catered for pupils who were considered ‘vulnerable’ or ‘immature’. They gathered the views of school staff, parents and pupils in each school, totalling seventeen members of secondary school staff (comprising a mix of nurture and mainstream staff), eight parents of nurture pupils and six nurture pupils. Parent and staff data were gathered through focus groups while pupil data was gathered through individual interview, as they felt this would enable pupils to feel comfortable in the process and would elicit a rich picture of each pupil’s experience. Data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Each school had implemented nurture support in a different way, as outlined in Appendix C. However, a number of common themes were drawn from the data and these led to a large number of recommendations in relation to secondary nurture support.

The main findings were that secondary nurture support was deemed to be an effective intervention for adolescents with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties with a range of positive outcomes, for example the provision facilitated positive relationships, provided a secure base in school and increased pupil self esteem, motivation and independence. However, nurture group success was influenced by other factors such as support from home, from other members of staff and most importantly from members of the school’s senior management team. It was therefore important to secure support from these stakeholders and to ensure good
communication at all times in order for secondary nurture to have the best impact.

Garner and Thomas advocate a systems theory approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) for understanding school systems alongside each pupil’s home context and the impact this can have upon their engagement with school. Effective communication and a shared understanding were particularly important for successful reintegration of pupils following the intervention.

As noted by Colley (2009), Garner and Thomas found that secondary nurture groups differed considerably from Boxall’s classic nurture group model, for example: the activities were changed to be more age appropriate; relationships were characterised by ‘respect and equality’, rather than the ‘parent and toddler’ approach advocated in classic nurture groups; the practical and organisational aspects, such as fitting the provision around a secondary school timetable and the diffusion of nurture principles across a range of different teachers and departments were often problematic; groups tended to be part-time, sometimes with only a few sessions each week, but additional support was often offered alongside the group, for example lunchtime clubs, drop-in sessions or additional therapeutic groups; there tended to be greater emphasis on social and emotional skills than on academic skills, although this may simply be a result of pupils spending less time in the group; and links with parents need to be forged more purposefully as there is less natural contact with parents at secondary school. Despite these differences, the underlying principles of nurture remain appropriate and central to the provision. While remaining true to the six core principles of nurture, secondary schools are exploring new ways of delivering nurture support in secondary settings and new models are therefore emerging.
Garner and Thomas believe that secondary nurture provides effective support for pupils who are at a lower developmental level to their peers and who need support to develop the social and emotional skills needed to adapt to the secondary school environment. Nurture provision meets adolescent attachment needs by providing a secure base and supporting young people to develop their own abilities so they are better able to regulate their emotions, make changes and deal with difficult situations, leading to ‘socio-emotional independence’. It is particularly important for nurture group staff to understand and respond appropriately to each child’s developmental level. The provision should be flexible, adapting to reflect the needs of each pupil and each cohort.

Garner and Thomas found that staff characteristics were vital to nurture group success, so “recruitment and development of staff could be considered essential.... they need to support the ethos, be committed, tolerant, strong and patient. They would also need to be able to establish and maintain relationships based on respect and equality, regardless of the children’s resulting behaviour” (p.221). Nurture group staffing needs to be consistent, with contingency plans in place for staff who are absent or moving on. In addition, staff require adequate support to be able to fulfil their role effectively.

Garner and Thomas conclude that nurture groups “can be implemented into a secondary setting and provide beneficial support for children with SEBD [social, emotional and behavioural difficulties]” (p.222). However, the classic primary model is not necessarily appropriate or effective for this age group and therefore should be adapted to meet the needs of secondary age pupils: “Careful preparation and support is needed to translate current Nurture Group theory into an intervention that
can successfully meet the needs of vulnerable children in our secondary schools” (p.223).

While this study appears more methodologically sound than Cooke et al. (2008) or Colley (2009), there are still limitations. The three nurture groups were not comparable, as can be seen in the table in Appendix C, and therefore drawing themes from data across all three nurture groups may not be representative. In addition, data are not linked to specific nurture groups, so it is difficult to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of certain forms of nurture provision. Only six pupils were included in the study, two from each nurture group. A more in depth analysis of pupil experiences of their nurture groups would be beneficial, as would the views of pupils who had experienced different forms of provision within the same school, for example lunchtime clubs, therapeutic groups or main nurture group provision.

2.3.7.4. Common themes

Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes (2008), Colley (2009) and Garner and Thomas (2011) have each reported small scale, exploratory studies of secondary school nurture provision focusing on pupils in Key Stage Three. A number of common themes have become apparent through analysing these three papers in depth. The first is that early adolescence is a difficult time for pupils, with many challenges and pressures that can overwhelm already vulnerable pupils and even those who previously had coped adequately. The second is that nurture provision can be an effective intervention for vulnerable pupils in Key Stage Three, particularly because they provide positive and consistent relationships with key adults whilst also teaching social and emotional skills. The third is that secondary nurture support may differ considerably from the classic primary nurture group model and a number of different variations have emerged that seek to accommodate pupil needs within
secondary school settings. Secondary schools should have the flexibility to develop their own nurture provision, providing it adheres closely to the six core principles of nurture. Finally, each approach was grounded in psychological theory, most notably Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) and Ainsworth’s (1978) attachment theory, Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural learning theory, Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs and Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) systems theory approach, alongside the neurological perspectives of Blakemore (2007) and Schore (2005). This highlights the importance of underlying psychological theories for understanding the nurture approach and ensuring that nurture group practice is evidence-based and grounded in theory.

It was noted that each article contained at least one type of nurture provision for Year 7 pupils. Colley and Garner and Thomas both mention that these nurture groups were set up to support pupils after the transition to secondary school. However, neither article discusses this in great detail. It therefore seems that research is required to further explore nurture provision designed specifically to support pupils in the transition to secondary school.

2.3.8. Summary of nurture support section

This section has considered the nurture group phenomenon that has grown significantly since its inception over forty years ago (Cooper, 2009). Nurture groups are a highly prevalent intervention for supporting pupils’ social and emotional development within the school environment (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; Reynolds, Mackay and Kearney, 2009), which is firmly grounded in psychological theory (Bennathan and Boxall, 2000). Evaluations have suggested that nurture groups in primary schools can have positive impacts upon pupils, including improvements in social skills, emotional wellbeing, self esteem, learning skills and pro-social behaviour (Bishop and Swain, 2000; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007;
Sanders, 2007; Binnie and Allen, 2008; Reynolds, MacKay and Kearney, 2009; Scott and Lee, 2009; Seth-Smith et al., 2010). However, little research has focused upon nurture provision in secondary schools.

A systematic literature search identified three papers that did consider nurture group support for secondary-age pupils: Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes (2008); Colley (2009); and Garner and Thomas (2011). While each of these advocated nurture provision as an effective intervention for Key Stage Three pupils, they recognised that secondary school nurture groups tend to operate in significantly different ways to those in primary schools. Each of these papers included an example of at least one nurture group that catered for pupils in Year 7 and was linked to the transition process. However, this was not the main focus of any of these papers and the author has not found any other study that considers these topics simultaneously. The author therefore considers the combined topic of nurture support in the transition to secondary school to be an identified knowledge gap and a subject worthy of further exploration. The following section will synthesise the literature on these two topics, thereby drawing out the rationale for the current study.
2.4. SYNTHESIS

Having previously discussed both the transition from primary to secondary school and nurture group support, the author will now provide a synthesis that combines both bodies of literature, culminating in the rationale for the current study. It should be noted that nurture provision is only one of the many interventions identified by Cooper and Jacobs (2011) as being effective in meeting the needs of pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. The current thesis focused specifically upon nurture provision for two main reasons: firstly, the researcher was responding to their local context, as the TaMHS collaborative inquiry group had suggested the study focused upon the nurture provision in a local secondary school; secondly, the topic of nurture support in secondary schools was found to link closely with the transition literature and to represent a significant knowledge gap.

The starting point for this synthesis is the psychological theories that are prevalent in both the transition and nurture literature, within which there is considerable overlap. Most prominent is the application of sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980) to transition and nurture literature, both of which draw heavily upon the importance of relationships for learning and development (for example see Crafter and Maunder, 2012, in relation to transition and Seth-Smith et al., 2010, in relation to nurture). Two other psychological theories were also present in both groups of literature: Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) systems theory approach (for example see Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006, in relation to transition and Garner and Thomas, 2011, in relation to nurture); and Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs (for example see Ashton, 2008, in relation to transition and Cooper and Whitebread, 2007, in relation to nurture). That
both groups of literature have their foundations in very similar psychological theories provides the first rationale for believing that they are compatible topics.

The second justification for applying a nurturing approach to the primary-secondary transition process is that nurture groups target many of the vulnerabilities acknowledged in the transition literature. Transition authors have identified a range of factors that can make pupils vulnerable in the transition to secondary school, including poor social skills (Aikins et al., 2005), anxiety (Grills-Taquechel et al., 2010), low self esteem (Carmen et al., 2010), challenging behaviour (Theriot, Craun and Dupper, 2010) and low academic attainments (West et al., 2010). Transition authors therefore advocate interventions that develop skills such as resilience (Bailey and Baines, 2012), learning skills (Bore and Fuller, 2007), self regulation (Rudolph et al., 2001), emotional intelligence (Qualter et al., 2007) and emotional wellbeing (Gulati and King, 2009), in order to address pupil vulnerabilities. Nurture groups aim to address many of these issues by promoting wellbeing and facilitating social, emotional and cognitive development (Cooper and Tiknaz, 2005; Binnie and Allen, 2008; Reynolds, MacKay and Kearney, 2009; Seth-Smith et al., 2010).

Transition authors suggest that schools can do much to support vulnerable pupils in the transition (Anderson et al., 2000; Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; Bailey and Baines, 2012; Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012). It has been suggested that the most effective interventions are those that focus specifically on social and emotional aspects of the transition (Tobbell, 2003; Aikins et al., 2005; Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008; Bailey and Baines, 2012), as this provides the basis for pupils to be able to engage effectively in learning (Tobbell, 2003; Ashton, 2008). The importance of relationships for successful transitions has featured strongly in the transition literature (Galton et al., 2003; Tobbell, 2003; Aikins et al., 2005; Humphrey and
Ainscow, 2006; Ashton, 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008; Gulati and King, 2009; Smith, 2011; Bailey and Baines, 2012; Crafter and Maunder, 2012; Sancho and Cline, 2012), with certain authors advocating specific approaches that allocate a key member of staff to form positive relationships with pupils who are vulnerable in order to support them in the transition (Tobbell, 2003; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008). Smith (2011) appears to be advocating a nurture approach in the following quote, although she does not use nurture terminology: “By explicitly addressing children’s emotional experiences, providing an emotionally enabling environment and ethos and having skilled adults who are attuned to children’s needs and can model and teach coping strategies, transition can be a process that enhances children’s emotional wellbeing and develops their emotional resilience for life” (Smith 2011, p.23). The present thesis suggests that nurture groups could be an effective means of providing social and emotional support for vulnerable pupils in the transition, through the provision of a key member of staff who is able to attune to pupil needs and support them appropriately.

2.5. RATIONALE

The present thesis aims to focus specifically upon nurture support for socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school. Humphrey, Charlton and Newton (2004) claim that Year 7 is a “critical period” (p.579) in education, which can have a lasting impact upon academic and psychosocial outcomes and carries increased risk of marginalisation and disaffection. Exploring ways in which to effectively support vulnerable pupils in the transition should therefore be a priority for both school staff (Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006) and for educational psychologists (Stringer and Dunsmuir, 2012).
2.5.1. Knowledge gap

Recent research has shown that nurture groups can be an effective intervention for supporting vulnerable pupils in secondary schools (Cooke et al., 2008; Colley, 2009; Garner and Thomas, 2011). Several nurture groups were identified in these studies that specifically targeted the transition to secondary school, but these were embedded within broader studies rather than a specific focus. Nurture support in transition was also mentioned by Evangelou et al. (2008), but the reference is very brief. It therefore seems that the topic of nurture support in the transition to secondary school represents a significant knowledge gap between two potentially compatible and complementary topics. The present thesis aimed to address this knowledge gap, as illustrated in the diagram below.

![Figure 2. Visual representation of the knowledge gap](image)

In order to address this knowledge gap, the present study proposed to undertake a case study exploration of one secondary transition nurture group. This represented a new variation of nurture group that had been mentioned in the literature but had not been explored in detail. Adopting a case study design fulfilled a recommendation from Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) that more case studies should be
conducted to explore different forms of nurture provision, as a case study approach enables detailed exploration of individual groups, which can provide valuable information about how nurture groups can work in practice.

The author recognises that previous studies have considered nurture groups that were designed to support vulnerable pupils in the transition (Evangelou et al., 2008; Colley, 2009; Garner and Thomas, 2011). However, this has not yet been discussed in great detail within any of these studies. The author felt that the combined topic of nurture support in transition had the potential to contribute a valuable perspective to both topics, as has already been demonstrated through the literature review. The present research aimed to build on previous studies by explicitly focusing upon the role of nurture provision in supporting vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school.

2.5.2. Propositions

The literature review led the researcher to develop a number of propositions that would subsequently guide the case study approach (Yin, 2009). The main proposition was that nurture provision could be an effective way to support socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition from primary to secondary school. This theory combined elements from both the transition literature and the secondary nurture provision literature. Further propositions relating to transition arose from the literature outlined in Section 2.2.6. Interventions and Approaches, which considered factors that can facilitate successful transitions. Propositions relating to secondary nurture provision were informed by the three key articles: Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes (2008), Colley (2009) and Garner and Thomas (2011).
The primary-secondary transition literature proposed eight factors that are important for facilitating successful transitions, especially for pupils who are vulnerable. These are outlined in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key word</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
<td>Pupils who have social and emotional difficulties are considered to be particularly vulnerable in the transition to secondary school: these pupils therefore require targeted support to help them make a successful transition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Positive and consistent relationships with school staff play an important role in helping pupils navigate the transition process: a key member of staff should be allocated to support vulnerable pupils in this. Friendships with peers are a key source of support and increase pupil resilience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>It is important for pupils to develop a sense of belonging to the new school and to find a place where they feel welcomed, respected, valued and safe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellbeing</td>
<td>It is important to address social and emotional needs first and foremost, as this enables pupils to engage more effectively in learning. Supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of vulnerable pupils should be a key priority for secondary schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>It is important for both schools and pupils to be well prepared for the transition. Schools need to identify pupil needs early and effectively and to know how they will meet these needs from the start; pupils benefit from pre-transition visits and conversations with significant others so their worries are acknowledged and addressed and they know what to expect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Effective communication is important between primary and secondary school staff, parents and pupils. Schools should have well-defined practices and policies for meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils in the transition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Secondary schools should ensure a balance of continuity and challenge for pupils in relation to curriculum and learning, responding to pupils needs as required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalisation</td>
<td>It is important to adopt a personalised and flexible approach that recognises individual differences and responds to these appropriately: ‘one-size-fits-all’ approaches are rarely effective.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Table depicting research propositions for facilitating successful transitions
From the literature concerning nurture provision in secondary schools, four propositions were developed. These are outlined in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key word</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nurture facilitator</td>
<td>Positive, consistent and respectful relationships are fundamental for social and emotional development and for helping pupils feel safe and secure in school. Designated nurture facilitators are at the centre of nurture provision in secondary schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurture principles</td>
<td>The six principles of nurture (see Section 2.3.6. for details) remain appropriate to secondary school nurture provision and should be adhered to at all times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>Schools should have the flexibility to adapt the classic nurture group model to most appropriately match their context and cohort, providing they continue to adhere to the six nurture principles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Nurturing approaches should be grounded in psychological theory.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Table depicting research propositions for secondary nurture provision

2.5.3. Research questions

The present study aimed to address the identified knowledge gap by considering the role of nurture provision in supporting vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school. It also aimed to explore whether the identified propositions were relevant to this particular case. In order to address these aims, the research centred around two research questions:

Research Question One

How can nurture provision in a secondary school support socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition from primary to secondary school?

Research Question Two

How do pupils who have received nurture support perceive the transition to secondary school and the role of nurture provision within this?
3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This section outlines the methods used to answer the research questions that arose from the literature review. It starts with a description of the process of development that led to the conceptualisation of the present study and the stance from which the researcher approached the study. The research questions are then restated, followed by a section outlining the design of the research, which flows into details of the participants, data collection methods, data analysis methods and dissemination. Each of these sections includes a critique that explains why that particular method was selected, addresses the limitations of the method and offers alternative methods that were considered but in reality were not feasible. The final section focuses upon the principles of ethics and integrity that guided the author’s approach throughout the research process.

3.2. PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT

This piece of research evolved over a period of time and was beset by a series of unfortunate circumstances. The researcher explored a number of designs and methodologies in order to address these circumstances as they unfolded, before finally conceptualising the present study. This section will provide the context for the present research by outlining these previous methodologies and providing the author’s reasoning for developing the research further. A timeline showing the main phases of this process is included in Appendix D.

As noted in the Introduction, the researcher was involved in the Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS) initiative within the locality and had agreed that their doctoral research project would focus upon an issue pertinent to this initiative.
The researcher therefore met with a number of different TaMHS stakeholders and a substantial amount of time was spent trying to accommodate the broad needs and interests of these various stakeholders. In order to address this disparity, the researcher assembled a core collaborative inquiry group comprising a senior educational psychologist (EP), the head teacher of a Primary Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), the head teacher of a Secondary PRU and the deputy head teacher of a mainstream secondary school, in the hope of narrowing down the topic focus.

Through working with this group, the researcher was able to establish that the broad focus would be on exploring what schools can do to promote the emotional health and wellbeing of their pupils. The first idea was to study potential links between executive functioning and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, as this linked to a concurrent TaMHS project that the researcher was also involved in. It was agreed that the research would focus upon assessing the needs of permanently excluded pupils in the secondary PRU, using a mixed methods design that included pupil, staff and parent interviews alongside data from the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS: Gresham and Elliot, 2008) and the Behaviour Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF: Gioia, Isquith, Guy and Kenworthy, 2000). Unfortunately, however, access to the PRU became difficult due to unforeseen circumstances, so the researcher needed to amend their ideas.

A member of the TaMHS stakeholder group suggested an alternative cohort: a group of pupils due to start a local secondary school who had been identified as vulnerable in the transition. School staff hypothesised that the topic of executive functioning and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties was still relevant to this group of pupils, so the researcher developed an action research project that would identify the needs of these pupils, which in turn would influence the support
offered by secondary school staff. The SSIS and the BRIEF would again be used, alongside pupil interviews and staff focus groups. Having gained ethical approval in October 2011, information sheets and consent forms were sent to the parents of all thirty pupils in this group. Despite school staff providing a telephone call to parents, resending information packs to those who were interested and following this up with a reminder telephone call, only five parental consent forms were returned. Having sent the information twice and given two telephone calls, it was not considered ethically appropriate to continue asking parents to give their consent. School staff noted that this was a common problem with parents of the school, but felt that this response rate was even lower than might be expected. However, they did note that the problem seemed to be exacerbated in families with a higher level of need, to which many of these pupils belonged. Interestingly, this was also the case in West et al.’s (2010) study, where they reported a lower response rate for pupils with lower ability, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and those from lower socio-economic status backgrounds. It therefore became apparent that this pupil group represented a particularly hard-to-reach sample, having several of these risk factors present.

It was decided to continue the research with the five participants, so staff SSIS and BRIEF forms were obtained for each pupil. Parental information packs were then sent out to seek consent for phase two of the research. Again two packs were sent out, with each followed by a reminder telephone call. For this phase, parental consent was only gained for three participants. It was decided to carry out the interviews with these three pupils, with a revision to the research design to incorporate three case studies in order to explore the needs of these three pupils in more detail. During the interviews, however, it became apparent that these pupils
had very little in common with each other except that they had received support from a certain member of staff.

By this stage, two terms had passed and the majority of the original group of pupils had settled well into secondary school. The primary purpose of the research, which was to identify the needs of a group of pupils so that school staff could put appropriate intervention in place, was no longer useful for practice. In the meantime, school staff had developed their own approaches and interventions to meet the needs of this group of pupils. The researcher therefore became interested in what had helped these pupils make a successful transition: this led back to the member of staff mentioned in all three of the pupil interviews. Further discussion with the deputy head teacher revealed that this member of staff was the nurture facilitator who had been appointed at the start of the academic year. This new nurture provision had seemingly been instrumental in supporting the group of vulnerable pupils before, during and after the transition. It was therefore agreed that the research would evolve again to explore the role of nurture provision in supporting vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school. This new topic was meaningful and relevant to school staff, of interest to the researcher, met the objectives of the TaMHS stakeholders and represented a gap in the literature. Consequently, the researcher sought additional ethical approval for these revisions, which was granted in June 2012.

While the focus had shifted towards a case study exploration of nurture provision to support socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school, the researcher decided to keep the pupil interview data as embedded units of analysis within the larger case study framework. It was not considered appropriate to incorporate the SSIS and BRIEF data of pupils within the current study, as this data was not considered relevant to the new research questions.
The researcher felt that attempting to incorporate this data would detract from the coherence of the revised study.

As a result of this complex process of development, much of the research design has needed to adapt several times in order to incorporate new elements and revised research questions. This has meant that the research design has not been as coherently designed as might have been the case had the study followed a more typical route. However, research in real world situations is often complex and rarely straightforward (Robson, 2011). In the current study, the researcher needed to evolve a workable methodology that incorporated relevant aspects of previous designs while linking with new literature and research questions. While frustrating, the necessary changes and revisions eventually led to the development of a manageable and meaningful area of research. One advantage of this process was that it facilitated prolonged engagement with the research context and good relationships with school staff, which provided a useful background to the current research.

3.3. **RESEARCH STANCE**

3.3.1. **Ontology and epistemology**

The researcher approached the study with a number of assumptions regarding ontology (what can be known) and epistemology (how it can be known). It has been important to recognise these and to acknowledge the impact this has had on the researcher’s approach (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). The author approached this piece of research from a pragmatic stance (Creswell, 2009), where the main aim was to identify the approach that most effectively addressed the purposes of the research. This was demonstrated through the range of different topics, designs and methodologies that were considered during the course of developing this piece of research.
The final research design and methodology was based upon the assumption that there is an external world full of knowledge that can be known, but there are multiple perspectives about how to interpret this knowledge. This is most closely aligned to the critical realist perspective (Bhaskar, 2008). Lane and Corrie (2006) outline the two main assumptions of this approach: that “discourse plays a central role in shaping human reality” (p. 83), but there is also a “reality which exists independently of discourse” (p. 83). In the current project, the researcher used qualitative methodology to explore the perspectives of pupils and staff regarding the transition to secondary school and their involvement in the school’s nurture group. It is acknowledged that this approach will only tap into a small proportion of what could be known about the nurture group, but it is reasoned that even research of a much broader scope could not consider every angle. This is where the pragmatist approach has come to the fore, with the researcher considering the core aims of the research, what can realistically be known within the necessary time and capacity constraints of the research, and how this can be explored in an appropriate and meaningful way.

This piece of work placed particular value on the perspectives of the participants, based on the assumption that they are best-placed to provide appropriate information about the topic. This was felt to be the most effective and pragmatic approach to answering the research questions. As the focus was on one specific nurture group, conclusions will be drawn in relation to this particular school’s situation. While potential broader implications will be discussed, the author encourages readers to judge the relevance of the findings in relation to their own settings and situations.
3.3.2. Axiology

As identified by Gillham (2005), it was important for the researcher to consider their own underlying beliefs and values and how this might influence their approach. In this way, the researcher recognised that “our experience of the world is profoundly influenced by our assumptions, intentions and actions” (Yardley, 2000, p.222) and that acknowledging these enables a more reflexive research approach.

The researcher’s axiological position is closely linked to their practice as an applied psychologist, in particular their belief that all people are viewed as important and valuable, that each person has a valid contribution to make and that positive change is always possible (Rees, 2008; Seligman, 2011). The researcher adheres to an ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Faupel, 1990) and therefore considers concepts such as learning and behaviour to be best understood as interactions between a pupil and their environment. The researcher believes that schools have a responsibility to meet the needs of all pupils by adapting their environment and approaches as required (Kennedy, Cameron and Greene, 2012). The researcher recognises that this axiological position is likely to have significantly influenced their approach throughout this project.

The researcher has had a number of experiences of nurture groups, from engaging in nurture training, working with staff to develop nurture provision, seeing positive impacts on a wide range of pupils and exploring nurture provision in previous university assignments. The researcher therefore began this research with a positive view of nurture provision and its potential to engender change. The researcher has needed to remain mindful of this previous experience throughout the project to try to ensure a balanced approach without assuming that the nurture group in question would necessarily be the same as previous nurture groups they had
encountered. The researcher found their previous knowledge of nurture groups provided a good foundation for the research, but needed to ensure the focus of the research remained on the current nurture group.

At the time of conducting this study, the researcher was working as a trainee educational psychologist in the same locality. They were acutely aware of the ethical implications that this dual role of researcher and practitioner could have (Nolen and Vander Putten, 2007), which might include confusion over the exact role of the researcher, difficulties defining boundaries between research and practice, difficulties maintaining confidentiality and issues relating to perceptions of power. Precautions were therefore taken to protect against this and the researcher purposefully selected a school where they did not have involvement in another professional capacity, in the hope that this would enable the role of researcher to be foremost in this case. If the researcher had felt that their role was compromised in any way as a result of this dual identity, they would have taken steps to address this by restating their primary role as researcher in this project.

3.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current study focused on two research questions, as outlined below.

*Research Question One*

How can nurture provision in a secondary school support socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition from primary to secondary school?

*Research Question Two*

How do pupils who have received nurture support perceive the transition to secondary school and the role of nurture provision within this?
3.5. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.5.1. Case study research

The research was built around a case study design (Yin, 2009). Yin argues that case study methodologies represent a relevant and useful approach to research in the social sciences. However, there are a number of challenges and limitations inherent within this approach, as with all methods of research. Yin identifies four key arguments often espoused against case study research, the first two of which state that there can be a lack of rigour among case study researchers and that it is a time-consuming approach, which can yield complex and unfathomable data. Yin argues that the first two potential pitfalls can be overcome by researchers who adopt a rigorous and systematic approach, establish clear boundaries to the case study and communicate their findings clearly and concisely.

The third often-cited limitation is that findings cannot be generalised to wider populations, although Yin considers this to be little more applicable to case study research than to other forms of research. He argues that findings are “generalisable to theoretical propositions” (p.15), which in essence is the aim of most research rather than statistical generalisation. The fourth limitation of case study research is that it does not enable researchers to infer causality within the topic they are studying. However, Yin argues that this presents a narrow view of what research is about and that understanding complex phenomena, even without a clear understanding of causality, is important and valuable.

The main advantage of a case study method is that it “allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 2009, p.4). As this was the main purpose of the current research, the author decided that a case study approach would be appropriate. In addition, the present research was
considered to match with Yin’s three criteria for judging whether a case study method was appropriate, when “‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, ... the investigator has little control over events, and ... the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context” (p.2).

3.5.2. Design process

Yin (2009) identifies five important parts to developing a research design: developing the research questions; identifying the propositions of the study; defining the ‘unit of analysis’; clarifying data collection methods to show how the findings link to the propositions; and establishing the criteria for interpreting findings.

Having established the research questions, it became clear that ‘how’ questions would form the main basis of the study. As previous studies had not considered the role of nurture provision in supporting socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school, the research was framed as an ‘exploratory’ case study.

The researcher started from the proposition that the nurture provision had positively supported vulnerable pupils, because school staff had cited this as the main reason the pupils had successfully navigated the transition to secondary school. However, little was known about how this provision had been delivered or how it benefited pupils. Detailed exploration of relevant literature informed an expanded set of propositions, as outlined in Section 2.5.2. Propositions.

The next stage was to identify the ‘unit of analysis’, which includes identifying the topic and setting boundaries around this to ensure it provides a meaningful, coherent whole. In the current study, it was decided to narrow the focus to the nurture provision offered to pupils to support the transition to secondary
school. This provided temporal boundaries, as the group had only been established at the start of the academic year, and spatial boundaries, as it limited which pupils and provision would be discussed, both of which are important aspects of the research design (Yin, 2009). In addition, Yin argues that the unit of analysis should also be defined by relevant literature, which then provides a clear rationale for the case study. This was shown to be the case for nurture provision in transition, as discussed in the Synthesis section of the literature review. The nurture provision therefore became the main unit of analysis, incorporating contextual information alongside the perspectives of the nurture facilitator and three pupils who had received different types of nurture provision. The researcher had also determined how the data would be analysed and how this would be interpreted once the data had been collected, ensuring a transparent and systematic approach throughout (Meyrick, 2006).

3.5.3. Quality and rigour

Yin (2009) identifies four elements of design quality: construct validity; internal validity; external validity; and reliability. In order to maintain construct validity, the researcher gained the perspectives of staff and pupils, made explicit links between the interview questions, interviewee responses and the data analysis and met with participants to check the analysis and ask for feedback. School documentation and research diary entries provided additional data to enable stronger construct validity. In relation to internal validity, the researcher used caution in making inferences from the data, checking these out with participants throughout the research process. In addition, the researcher began to build their own explanations as to why the nurture group provision had been effective, drawing on relevant literature and educational psychology practice, while also considering alternative explanations. In order to gain external validity, the researcher applied psychological theory to
inform the research and also to make inferences that bridged the findings to similar situations, drawing on core themes that seemed applicable to wider practice.

Fourthly, the researcher took care to establish the reliability of the study by keeping a research diary. Detailed descriptions of the research process have been provided in this methodology section, drawing on relevant literature as appropriate.

Yin’s (2009) quality criteria were useful in defining a number of aspects of the research design, but the researcher felt that more stringent criteria were required for an exploratory and largely qualitative research design such as this. As a result, the researcher also used Yardley’s (2000; also Yardley and Marks, 2004) criteria for ensuring quality and rigour in qualitative research. Yardley proposes four principles that are central to ensuring quality and validity in qualitative research: sensitivity to context; commitment and rigour; transparency and coherence; impact and importance.

The researcher ensured sensitivity to context by first considering relevant literature, psychological theory and previous research and situating the study firmly within this, as demonstrated in the literature review. Secondly, the researcher carefully considered a number of socio-cultural factors that may have influenced the study: the socio-cultural setting of the school, the nurture provision, the participants and the researcher; the social context of the relationships between the researcher and each participant; and the reciprocal nature of an interview discussion and what the researcher contributes to each interaction. Thirdly, the researcher considered ethical issues that were pertinent to the study, for example principles such as respect, integrity, confidentiality and anonymity were ensured throughout and the researcher remained mindful of potential issues such as any perceived or actual balance of
power between the researcher and participants, taking action to minimise these and any impact they may have.

Throughout the process of data collection, analysis, interpretation and dissemination, the researcher sought to adhere to Yardley’s (2000; 2004) principles of commitment and rigour. Commitment was demonstrated through the researcher’s extended engagement with the school during the process of development and through an in-depth exploration of the topic under investigation. The researcher was committed to developing the most appropriate and effective methods for data collection and data analysis and was able to immerse themselves fully in the data. The principle of rigour was applied to ensure that the data set felt complete and was adequately able to answer the research questions. The researcher applied approaches advocated by Yardley and Marks (2004), such as ensuring a clear paper trail that details the progression from raw data to final interpretation and checking data analysis with participants. Triangulation of data was achieved by gaining the views of staff and pupils, with the aim of providing a “rounded, multilayered understanding of the research topic” (Yardley, 2000, p.222).

The researcher aimed to make this piece of work transparent and coherent at every stage. The process of development illustrates the researcher’s commitment to ensuring coherence between the research questions, the philosophical and theoretical perspectives that shaped the research and the data collection and analysis methods that were applied. The researcher has aimed to make this explicit throughout the write-up of this piece of work, providing detailed accounts of the data collection and data analysis methods used. In addition, the researcher has been open and reflective about their own assumptions and the ways in which these may have influenced their approach, as outlined in the previous section addressing axiology.
The impact and importance of the research was considered in relation to several factors. Firstly, it was considered useful and important to the TaMHS stakeholder group and relevant to their aims; secondly, it was considered useful and important to the school as they explored new ways of supporting socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school; thirdly, it was considered to effectively address a gap in the literature pertaining to nurture and transition. The researcher was keen to devise a study that had the potential to impact both academically and practically, which they believed the current study was able to do.

3.5.4. Research design

The research took the form of an exploratory, largely qualitative study of the role of nurture provision in supporting socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school. Based on the definitions provided by Yin (2009), the research design was considered to be an ‘embedded, single-case design’, where the nurture provision represented the case itself, four illustrative case examples focused upon the staff and pupils who were involved in this provision and the research diary offered contextual information. This is illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 5. Research design
Within this, there were five units of analysis: the research diary, the nurture facilitator and three pupils, each of whom had received different forms of nurture provision. This is illustrated in the diagram below.

![Figure 6. Units of analysis](image)

### 3.6. PARTICIPANTS

This section details the participants who took part in the study. It begins by providing information about the school and the nurture provision, then discusses sampling procedures. Pupil and staff characteristics are presented, followed by a description of the process of gaining consent from parents, pupils and staff. Finally, a critique discusses the sampling procedures, participants and alternative methods that were considered but were unfortunately not feasible.
3.6.1. **School details**

The study focused upon one secondary school in a small town in the North West of England. Information about this school was gathered via informal discussions with the deputy head teacher and transition manager; exploration of the school’s website; and a recent Ofsted Inspection Report (Ofsted, 2009). The school is a mixed, mainstream secondary school catering for pupils aged 11-19: at the time of conducting the research, there were approximately 1,150 pupils on role. The school is situated within an area of socioeconomic deprivation, with a higher than average number of pupils being eligible for free school meals, a national indicator of socioeconomic deprivation. In addition, the English Indices of Multiple Deprivation (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011) place the school’s Lower Super Output Area score within the lowest 20% nationally. Most pupils are of White British backgrounds, with a minority of pupils from White European backgrounds. The school has a higher than average proportion of pupils identified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN) and offers a broad range of provision for these pupils. Ofsted (2009) rated the school as ‘Satisfactory’ overall, as a result of consistently lower-than-average attainments in literacy and numeracy, but identified many aspects as ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’. In particular, Ofsted (2009) reported that: “The quality of care, guidance and support provided for students is outstanding” (p.3): discussions with school staff supported the notion that pastoral and learning support was a significant strength of the school.

Since the latest Ofsted report in 2009, the school has aimed to continue building upon its strengths in pastoral support and to identify new areas in which to target interventions. Senior staff recently identified transition to secondary school as a key concern, as many issues seemed to arise for pupils during Year 7. They
therefore appointed a transition manager; a member of teaching staff who became part of the senior management team and was given specific responsibility for considering ways in which to improve the transition process. In her first year, the transition manager worked to identify which pupils were particularly vulnerable in the transition to secondary school, concluding that pupils with social and emotional difficulties were those most at risk. Having attended nurture training, she suggested that a nurturing approach could be an effective means of meeting the needs of this group of pupils and therefore set about establishing nurture provision for the cohort of pupils due to start Year 7 in September 2011. A member of support staff accepted the role of nurture facilitator, working closely with the transition manager throughout the process of development and delivery.

3.6.2. Nurture provision

The study focused upon the nurture provision set up by the school in order to address the needs of socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition from primary to secondary school. This had only recently been established and the researcher was involved in the first academic year that the nurture provision ran, meaning that the nurture facilitator was new to the role and the pupils were in the first cohort to receive the provision. In relation to Cooper and Whitebread’s (2007) nurture group categories, the provision could best be described as a ‘new variant secondary group informed by nurture principles’. According to Cooper and Whitebread’s categories, the provision could not be termed a true nurture group because it only ran for two hours each day and only had one member of staff. However, as noted by Colley (2009), these categories do not accurately reflect nurture provision in secondary schools, which is often more diverse than in primary
schools. For the purposes of this research, the author will use the terms ‘nurture’, ‘nurture group’, ‘nurture provision’ and ‘nurture support’.

3.6.3. Sampling

This section describes the sampling process, with further discussion provided in Section 3.6.7. Critique.

As part of the school’s transition procedures, primary and secondary school staff had liaised to develop a profile of the cohort of pupils joining Year 7 in September 2011. The data from this profile enabled the researcher, in collaboration with the deputy head teacher, to select a purposive sample (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007) of pupils for the research. These pupils were those who had been identified as ‘vulnerable’ in the transition to secondary school, particularly due to social and emotional needs. Out of a total of thirty pupils in this group, parental consent was only gained for three.

3.6.4. Pupil participants

Pupil participants were three Year 7 pupils who had been identified as ‘vulnerable’ via the school transition procedures. Details of these pupils are provided in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupil</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Difficulties at primary school</th>
<th>Transition issues</th>
<th>Nurture provision</th>
<th>Provision level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil One</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Anxiety, Challenging behaviour, Low self esteem, School refusal, Social skill difficulties</td>
<td>Struggled on the visit day, School refusal following first day in Year 7</td>
<td>Pre-transition visits, Core nurture from start of Year 7, Lunchtime club, Ongoing support</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Two</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Anxiety, Low self esteem</td>
<td>Small primary school, Sole pupil transferring to this school</td>
<td>Pre-transition visits, Lunchtime club, Therapeutic group sessions, Joined core nurture in November</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Three</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Anxiety, Social skill difficulties</td>
<td>Bullied at primary school, Previous school move - found this difficult</td>
<td>Pre-transition visits, Lunchtime club, Therapeutic group sessions</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 7. Pupil characteristics*

The three pupils experienced different levels of nurture provision, ranging from high to low. This level of provision reflected the level of need they presented with prior to transition and any difficulties that became apparent following the transition. It was felt that these pupils provided an insight into the scope of the nurture provision and the different needs that were accommodated within this provision. The researcher therefore anticipated that this would provide a rich picture of the differing experiences of these pupils, as well as the common themes among
them. Prior to the interviews, information was sought from school staff to ensure that potential pupil participants possessed the verbal and cognitive skills to engage in the interview process, to understand the questions and to reflect upon their experiences. In this case, all pupils were considered able to engage in the process.

3.6.5. Staff participant

In addition to the three pupil participants, the research incorporated the views of one staff participant: the person who facilitated the nurture support, subsequently referred to as the ‘nurture facilitator’. This person was a member of pastoral support staff who had worked at the school for a number of years and had been involved in a variety of initiatives, most notably running parenting courses and supporting pupils who were reintegration to the school following temporary or permanent exclusion. She had not yet had the opportunity to attend the nurture four-day training course but had received in-house training from the school’s educational psychologist and was closely supported by the transition manager, who had completed the nurture training. She had been invited to take on the role of nurture facilitator towards the end of the previous academic year, which began with providing pre-transition visit days for vulnerable pupils and then considering how best to support the needs of these pupils from September. As she was new to the role and it was a new initiative within the school, much was worked out by trial and error. It is likely that using a more established and experienced nurture facilitator may have provided a more grounded and balanced view of the pros and cons of such provision, but unfortunately the researcher was not aware of other such nurture groups within the locality. However, there were advantages to gaining the perspectives of a member of staff who was new to the role: it was fresh in her mind, all the information was specific to one cohort
and there was a lot of energy and enthusiasm in the way she talked and in her willingness to contribute over and above what the researcher had suggested.

3.6.6. Consent

3.6.6.1. Parental consent

As the research evolved, parental consent was sought at different stages of the process. Parental consent had already been granted for pupils for phase one of the previous research design, which was no longer considered appropriate: this letter is therefore not shown. When phase two of the previous research design evolved, additional parental consent was sought using the research invitation pack shown in Appendix E. As the research developed further, an additional information pack was sent out to parents to request involvement in what was now entitled ‘phase three’, as shown in Appendix F.

The research invitation packs included an information letter and a consent form for parents or carers to complete. The information packs were distributed by school staff who already had access to the names and addresses of pupils, in order to respect confidentiality. In this way, the researcher only had access to the names of pupils for whom parental consent had been given and at no point had access to the contact details for these pupils.

From the difficulties previously encountered engaging parents in the research process, the researcher kept some key points in mind when devising the information pack, for example to keep it to one sheet of paper, to keep language simple and to provide the information clearly and concisely. A return date was also included, giving parents one week to return the form in the hope that this would mean it was completed immediately rather than left and forgotten about. Parents were given a
two-week ‘cooling-off’ period, in case they changed their mind about their child’s involvement.

3.6.6.2. Pupil assent

In addition to parental consent, the researcher felt it was important to seek pupil assent for their participation in the research (Freeman and Mathison, 2009). At the beginning of each interview, the researcher explained to pupils the purpose of the research and what was required of them. It was also made clear that participation was voluntary. The researcher had devised a script for this, which is shown at the start of the pupil interview schedule in Appendix G. Pupils were then asked to complete an assent form, as shown in Appendix H. The researcher read this alongside the pupil but moved away for a few minutes after explaining the ‘yes/no’ question in order to alleviate pressure.

3.6.6.3. Staff consent

Staff consent was gained for phase two and phase three of the revised research design, as shown in Appendix I and Appendix J, respectively. The Phase One information pack was not considered relevant to the current study and has therefore not been included. A two week ‘cooling-off’ period was observed before interviews were arranged.

3.6.7. Critique

3.6.7.1. Sampling

Purposive sampling provides a ‘purposeful’ approach (Creswell, 2008), whereby “researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (p.214). In this case, purposive sampling appeared to be the most appropriate approach, as it enabled the research to focus on
one area of practice within a secondary school. It could be argued that the identification of the school and nurture group were both instances of ‘opportunistic sampling’, based upon the way in which the study evolved and developed. Indeed, this may well be the case. However, this section refers specifically to the selection of participants once the research design and methodology had been established.

There are a number of different types of purposive sampling (Cohen et al., 2011), but ‘extreme case’ sampling is considered to be the type aligned most closely with the present research. In relation to this research, the sample has been selected to explore “a case that is noticeable for its success” (Creswell, 2008, p.563), that is, the nurture provision in a secondary school that has supported pupils in the transition from primary school. School staff and pupils had previously spoken positively about the impact of this provision, which led to it becoming the focus of inquiry.

A probability sampling approach would not have fitted with the research design, as the aim was to focus on one specific type of provision rather than compare different types. However, it should be noted that using a non-probability sampling method means that the findings are by no mean representative of the wider population, either within or beyond the school in question. Caution will therefore be needed when implications for practice are drawn from the data analysis.

3.6.7.2. Additional pupil perspectives

Had the researcher benefitted from increased time and resources, a much larger sample would have been included in the study. Ideally the study would have included all pupils in the nurture group, plus other pupils who were initially identified as vulnerable but did not receive nurture provision. Unfortunately, the difficulties with gaining parental consent meant that the pupil sample was smaller
than would have been ideal. However, it was felt that the data gained from the three pupils who did participate were adequate to enable the researcher to answer the proposed research questions.

3.6.7.3. Additional staff perspectives

Having had informal discussions with both the transition manager and the deputy head, the researcher had hoped to conduct more formal interviews with these members of staff that could contribute towards the data set. Unfortunately, however, this was not possible on this occasion. The transition manager did give their consent to be included in the study but after a number of unsuccessful attempts to arrange the interview, the researcher decided to stop pursuing this data. While it was felt that the views of the transition manager would have added a useful perspective, the interview data from the nurture facilitator was considered rich enough to be able to answer the research questions in full. It was therefore felt that, while not gaining the transition manager’s perspective was regrettable, it did not compromise the overall quality or depth of the research to any great extent.

3.6.7.4. Parental involvement

The researcher had hoped to interview parents in addition to pupils and staff, to enable further triangulation of the data. However, liaison with school staff had suggested that parent involvement was likely to be problematic with this sample, as confirmed by the difficulties engaging parents in the process of gaining consent. As the researcher was operating within tight time constraints, it was decided to focus on staff and pupil perspectives and not include parental perspectives at the present time. As the main focus was on a school initiative and the pupils who were directly involved in this, it was felt that gaining parental views was not central to the project.
However, it is recognised that parental perspectives would be a valuable addition to a study with a broader remit and longer time scales.

3.6.7.5. Recognition of limitations

Including these three extended groups of participants would have provided a firmer evidence-base and enabled robust triangulation of data. Unfortunately, the researcher was operating within tight constraints on both time and resources, as is often the case with real world research (Robson, 2011). While the researcher acknowledges that the actual sample is smaller than might have been ideal, the current sample is considered an adequate size to be able to address the research questions in this small-scale piece of exploratory research.

3.7. DATA COLLECTION

In relation to the research design shown previously, the data collection methods were as shown below.

![Data collection methods](image-url)
The main data collection method was therefore individual semi-structured interviews, with contextual information provided by the research diary. These two methods will be discussed below.

3.7.1. Research diary

The researcher kept a diary in order to record their actions, findings, reflections, ideas, questions, thoughts and feelings throughout the research process. An approach advocated by Altrichter and Holly (2005) was used, which enabled a broad range of entry topics and styles. These included memos of activities that had taken place such as meetings, observations and interviews; more detailed descriptive and interpretative accounts of these activities; notes linking events and findings to literature and psychological theory; notes detailing the methodology used; and notes that outlined further plans. The research diary proved to be an invaluable tool for reflection and development as the study evolved over time.

In relation to the present study, the research diary provided information about the context of the school and the nurture group obtained through discussions with the deputy head teacher, transition manager and nurture facilitator, exploration of various school documents and observations of the nurture provision. The notes made about these visits formed the basis for the contextual aspect of the research design.

3.7.2. Semi-structured interviews

To explore the case in more detail, the researcher engaged in qualitative, semi-structured interviews with the nurture facilitator and three pupils who had received nurture provision. The main mode of data collection was therefore individual semi-structured interviewing, as supported by Wilkinson, Joffe and Yardley (2004), Gillham (2005), Yin (2009) and Rubin and Rubin (2012).
3.7.2.1. **What is an interview?**

An interview is more than a conversation; it is a discussion with a specific purpose and a clear focus that enables in-depth exploration of a particular topic (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). An interview is quite different to other research methods such as a questionnaire or survey: Gillham (2005) defines three elements that characterise an interview:

1. "**Questions asked, or topics raised, are ‘open’ with the interviewee determining their own answers...**
2. **The relationship between interviewer and interviewee is responsive or interactive...**
3. **There is structure and purpose on the part of the interviewer**” (p.3-4).

Gillham (2005) states that an interviewing approach to research takes place in ‘real-world’ settings and seeks to represent this ‘world’ in some way, although he does caution that it is the interviewee’s construction of their world and the way they present themselves in the interview that is actually being explored. Wilkinson et al. (2004) expand on this, seeing an interview as a means of gaining insight into the interviewee’s personal views and experience, which provides an opportunity to explore the “**complex and ambiguous**” (p.42) nature of human thought.

3.7.2.2. **Interview construction**

An interview schedule was constructed for each interview, which included an introduction, warm up questions, main content, closure phase and debrief (Gillham, 2005). Each interview comprised between five and eight open-ended questions with prompts and probes to explore responses in more detail (Wilkinson, Joffe and Yardley, 2004). Care was taken to link the interview questions to the research questions and to relevant literature, in order to link the data to the research
propositions (Yin, 2009). Further information on the constructed interview schedules is provided in Section 3.7.3. Pupil interviews and Section 3.7.4. Staff interviews.

The researcher aimed to be flexible and responsive during the interview process. This ‘responsive interviewing model’ has been advocated by Rubin and Rubin (2012), who view each interview encounter as a learning experience for the researcher and one which should continually shape their subsequent approach. The notion of ‘follow-up’ formed an important part of this approach, which enabled the researcher to “expand, clarify, or refine [their] emerging interpretations” (p.153). This requires flexibility, responsiveness and wisdom to judge when to follow-up a point, which could occur as the issue is raised, later on in the interview or in a subsequent interview.

3.7.2.3. Active listening skills

Throughout the interview, it is the researcher’s role to probe, clarify, reflect and show appreciation and understanding for the interviewee: it therefore requires skill and practice in order to conduct interviews appropriately (Gillham, 2005). In engaging with this form of data collection, the researcher applied a number of skills gained from the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology course, for example consultation, counselling skills and general process skills. As part of the counselling skills the course, the researcher had analysed a video of themselves offering counselling to a colleague; this was felt to fulfil Gillham’s (2005) recommendation that interviewers watch themselves on video to build awareness of both the strengths and development needs of their interviewing approach. The researcher used a person centred approach to the interviews, providing unconditional positive regard for the interviewee’s point of view and using active listening skills to facilitate the conversation, for example using body language, facial expression, tone of voice,
encouraging utterances, paraphrasing and reflecting, using the interviewee’s own language and responding to what they say (McLeod, 2007). Gillham (2000) endorses an active listening approach in which the interviewer should aim “to be a listener, to decentre from oneself and focus on the person being interviewed” (p.3). This is supported by Wilkinson et al., (2004) who claim that three essential interviewer characteristics are “being a good listener... being empathic not judgemental... [and] allowing the respondent’s worldview to come to the fore” (p.43). The researcher therefore applied much of their knowledge, skills and experience, both as a researcher and an applied psychologist, to facilitate the interviews in an ethical and engaging manner.

3.7.2.4. Critique

Authors such as Gillham (2000; 2005) and Wilkinson, Joffe and Yardley (2004) discuss a number of strengths and limitations of using a semi-structured interview approach to qualitative research. The most noticeable benefit of the approach is the “depth of understanding” (Gillham, 2005, p.3) that it offers, which cannot be gained from other forms of data collection. This creates a high level of validity, as it provides opportunities to engage in real-world settings, to explore situations and perspectives in detail and to check understanding and meaning throughout the process. A second significant benefit is that individual semi-structured interviewing offers a balance between flexibility and structure. Flexibility enables the researcher to be responsive to the interviewee and to develop the interview process as required, responding to what the interviewee says and following their “pathways of thought” (Wilkinson et al., 2004, p.42) in order to gain a rich picture of the subject matter. Conversely, structure provides an outline for the
interviewee, enables the researcher to direct the interview in order that they can adequately answer their research questions and facilitates data analysis.

There are also negative aspects to semi-structured interview methods, most notably that there is a high ‘cost’ element to this approach, with the time and resources taken to develop the topic and questions, secure participants, arrange interviews, transcribe data, conduct appropriate analyses and write up the study all requiring consideration (Gillham, 2000). Further difficulties may arise from other factors, such as analysing data that may be neither consistent or coherent; any perceptions of power that may influence the interview encounter; and the issue of ‘self-presentation’, whereby the interviewer needs to remain aware that what they are hearing is what the interviewee presents in the interview session, which may not be fully representative of their underlying beliefs (Wilkinson et al., 2004).

Other forms of data collection can be considered to bear less cost, for example questionnaires or focus groups. However, these approaches were considered less appropriate in the present study, where the sample size was small and the topic of study was multi-faceted. The researcher considered that attempting to gather adequate data through other methods would have proven difficult and it may not have been possible to answer the research questions in full. As Gillham (2005) has observed: “Methods have to fit the research questions, and suit the kind of data that one is seeking to collect” (p.8). In this case, individual, semi-structured interviews were considered the most appropriate method for data collection.

Authors such as Yardley and Marks (2004) and Gillham (2005) note that interviewing is only one form of data collection and is most beneficial when paired with other forms to enable effective triangulation of data. In the present study, multiple perspective interviews were conducted to explore the views of staff and
pupils. In addition the researcher spent time speaking with school staff and observing the nurture facility as part of familiarising herself with the setting during the development stage of the research. These forms of data were recorded in the researcher diary, which formed the background for the context of the current research and also provided some triangulation of data. However, the lack of further triangulation is acknowledged as a limitation to the present study. It would have been beneficial to include further forms of data collection to enhance the data set and increase potential for triangulation but unfortunately this was not possible within the researcher’s capacity and resources at the present time. The main focus was therefore upon optimising the data set that was available and focusing specifically on answering the two main research questions. This process is recognised by Gillham (2005), who states: “The ‘real-world’ researcher is constantly having to adapt or compromise on methods because of the constraints encountered [during the research process]” (p.4).

In conclusion, and despite the negative aspects identified, “the overpowering positive feature of the interview is the richness and vividness of the material it turns up” (Gillham, 2000, p.10). In the current research, semi-structured individual interviews were considered to be the most appropriate method that would enable the researcher to answer the research questions within the limited capacity and resources available to them.

3.7.3. Pupil interviews

3.7.3.1. Pilot Pupil

The pupil interview was piloted with a family friend of the author. This pilot pupil started secondary school at the same time as the pupil participants in the study but did not have the same needs as the target group, as it was not felt appropriate to
trial the interview schedule with vulnerable pupils. This enabled the researcher to try out different ways of conducting the interview, in particular to explore creative methods for gaining pupil views as endorsed by Ashton (2008). The researcher had considered asking the pupils to draw their feelings and experiences or to use visual resources (for example *Stones Have Feelings Too*, Innovative Resources, 2003) to enhance the discussion. However when trialling these approaches with the pilot pupil it was felt that these approaches actually hindered the discussion and provided less opportunity to explore the topic in detail or to respond to what the pupil was saying.

Having checked with the nurture facilitator that each pupil participant would be able to engage appropriately in a spoken discussion, it was decided that creative methods would not be used on this occasion. The researcher therefore collaborated with the pilot pupil to create an interview schedule that would hopefully be relevant and engaging for the participant pupils.

### 3.7.3.2. Interview schedule

The interview schedule for the pupil interviews is shown in Appendix G. A large font version was provided for the interviews to enable the pupils to read along with the researcher. The interview schedule avoided specific mention of the nurture provision so as not to cue pupils in to this topic.

### 3.7.3.3. Critique

The researcher acknowledges the difficulties inherent in involving children in research, as highlighted by Lewis, Kellett, Robinson, Fraser and Ding (2004). However, the value of obtaining pupil perspectives was considered to far outweigh the potential difficulties of such procedures. Precautions were taken to avoid some of the more common pitfalls, for example clear and accessible questions, a creative approach to the interview process and an emphasis upon developing a collaborative
relationship with pupils (Freeman and Mathison, 2009). The researcher did consider gathering pupil perspectives through focus groups in order to save time and resources, but decided that this would not be an appropriate forum in which to discuss potentially sensitive issues (Cohen Manion and Morrison, 2011) and would not produce the rich data of one-to-one interviews that would be valuable in answering Research Question Two.

3.7.4. **Staff interviews**

The research included four staff interviews: the first covering the nurture provision in general and three interviews focusing upon individual pupils. The interview focusing on nurture provision followed the schedule outlined in Appendix K, while the individual pupil interviews each followed the format shown in Appendix L. These schedules formed the basis of each interview and were open to the nurture facilitator throughout the session.

3.7.4.1. **Devising the schedule**

It was not possible to pilot the staff interviews, as the author was not aware of other people in the locality who were doing the same role as the nurture facilitator. The questions were therefore only appropriate to the nurture facilitator themselves. However, the author discussed the interview schedule with their university supervisor and other educational psychologists, taking into account any feedback offered to finalise the interview schedule, for example to include the questions ‘What worked?’ and ‘What did not work?’ and how they knew it was or was not working in the general nurture interview. In addition, the author took note of feedback from the nurture facilitator during the course of the interviews, for example if a question did not seem relevant or needed to be phrased in a different way, this was adapted as required.
3.7.4.2. The interview relationship

The general nurture interview had been planned for one hour, but the nurture facilitator was so keen to discuss the topic that not all the questions could be addressed in one session. It was therefore agreed that a second interview would take place one week after the first. This had the advantage of giving both the nurture facilitator and the researcher chance to reflect and to revisit points in the second interview. The researcher also offered their contact details to the nurture facilitator in case they subsequently thought of anything else they wanted to add. The nurture facilitator took up this offer on several occasions, even telephoning the researcher after the last interview to add something she felt was important but had not been addressed in the interviews. While this may not have been considered an ideal interview process, as it could have appeared disjointed, it was considered the best approach for the situation. It also facilitated an effective collaborative relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, which in this case seemed to enhance the interview process considerably, with the development of a strong rapport and a two-way process of revising and amending as required.

3.8. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is considered to be an important part of the research process, as “data do not just speak for themselves: selection and interpretation are required” (Gillham, 2000, p.79). The present research used thematic analysis (Joffe and Yardley, 2004; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006) to analyse the interview data, as outlined below. Additional forms of data analysis were then used to explore the sources of data recorded in the research diary, in order to strengthen the case study design (Yin, 2009).
3.8.1. **Thematic analysis**

Thematic analysis refers to a systematic approach to organising and interpreting complex data (Joffe and Yardley, 2004; Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke identify a number of considerations that need to be explicitly addressed by the researcher prior to and during thematic analysis: how much of the data will be included; what constitutes a theme; whether the focus will be upon semantic or latent content; and whether analysis will be inductive or theoretical. Each of these considerations will now be addressed in turn. Firstly, the researcher decided to focus upon the data set in its entirety rather than focus on specific aspects: this approach constitutes a “rich overall description” (Braun and Clarke, p.83) and is considered particularly appropriate when previous research has not been conducted on a topic (Joffe and Yardley; Braun and Clarke). Secondly, the researcher decided to categorise as a theme any piece of data that “captures something important in relation to the overall research question” (Braun and Clarke, p.82). Thirdly, the current research focused upon semantic themes, that is, the explicit, ‘surface’ meanings of the data, rather than the more interpretive latent approach, in which the researcher undertakes a much deeper work of interpreting the more hidden information communicated by participants: it was felt that this was more appropriate to the topic area, as supported by Joffe and Yardley (2004). Finally, the researcher needed to decide whether to use a theoretical approach, where codes are derived from the researcher’s theoretical basis, or an inductive approach, where codes are developed from the raw data. In reality, the researcher considered their approach to contain elements of both theoretical and inductive approaches: being an exploratory study, the analysis was largely driven by an inductive approach, but was also shaped by the researcher’s prior knowledge and experience. This ‘hybrid’ approach has been
endorsed by authors such as Joffe and Yardley and Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) as an effective approach to analysing complex data.

3.8.1.1. Process of analysis

The interview data were analysed using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) comprehensive guide to thematic analysis. This centred around the following six stages:

- Familiarisation with the data;
- Generating initial codes;
- Searching for themes;
- Reviewing themes;
- Defining and naming themes;
- Producing the report.

In following these stages, the researcher aimed to provide a rigorous and coherent account of the data obtained. In order to familiarise themselves with the data, the researcher listened to the audio-recordings several times and then engaged in transcribing the data. The pupil interviews were transcribed verbatim, as were the staff interviews regarding individual pupils. However, the staff interviews regarding the nurture provision in general comprised a complex data set, some of which was not relevant for the current study, for example, the nurture facilitator wanted to show the researcher a number of resources she had developed, which resulted in fragmented discussions that did not yield meaningful data. These interviews were therefore only partially transcribed, an approach advocated by authors such as Ashton (2009) and Robson (2011) as an effective means of representing data when capacity and resources are limited in real world research. After transcribing the
interviews, the researcher listened to the recordings again to ensure the transcriptions accurately represented the audio data. By this time, they had gained familiarity with the data set and were ready to engage in the next stage of data analysis.

Having familiarised themselves with the data, the researcher began to identify initial codes in order to describe elements that seemed salient to the research questions. Three pieces of advice from Braun and Clarke (2006) were heeded in this phase of the analysis: the researcher coded for as many themes as possible; kept relevant context from the surrounding data; and coded the same data two or more times if it seemed to have relevance to different themes.

Once the initial coding was complete, the researcher began searching for themes. In doing this, the data were grouped into different potential themes until more defined themes emerged, which incorporated each code. Relationships between different themes began to emerge at this stage, while others needed to be revised in order to better fit the data set. Having established a coherent set of themes, the researcher reviewed these to ensure they accurately represented the data, making amendments as required. Once themes had been reviewed, the researcher set about defining and further refining the themes to ensure a clear and coherent account of the data. Names were allocated to the themes, adopting Braun and Clarke’s (2006) advice that “names need to be concise, punchy and immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme is about” (p.93).

Having defined and named the themes, the researcher was ready for the sixth and final stage; producing the report. This involved further analysis to consider the findings in relation to the research questions and to relevant literature. In reality, data analysis was found to be a continual process that continued until the write-up was
complete. This ensured that the researcher presented as coherent and accurate an account of the data as they could.

3.8.1.2. Feedback interviews

Having conducted the thematic analysis, the researcher arranged follow-up interviews with each participant in order to feedback the findings and to ensure the analysis accurately reflected their perspectives and experiences. The thematic maps were hand-drawn as it was felt this would convey that they were working documents, which would hopefully encourage participants to feel able to offer feedback. When they did offer feedback, the researcher recorded this directly onto the sheet to demonstrate that this was intended to be a collaborative process and that their views were important. Participants responded well to this process, with several adaptations being made in the light of these interviews. It was felt that this was a valuable part of the process as it ensured a greater degree of rigour and quality in the data analysis.

3.8.1.3. Critique

Braun and Clarke (2006) claim that thematic analysis is a widely used but rarely validated approach to data analysis, particularly in the field of psychology. They argue that it can be a very useful method, providing it is applied rigorously. They identify a number of pitfalls that can afflict the researcher, for example merely describing rather than analysing the data or creating a mismatch between the data and the themes, or between the themes and relevant theory. However, they note that these are more to do with the approach of the individual researcher rather than with thematic analysis itself.

Advantages of thematic analysis include the following: it is a flexible approach that enables the researcher to summarise and make sense of broad and
complex data sets; it provides an accessible means of organising and communicating findings; it is able to accommodate contradictory data; it can facilitate unexpected findings; and it allows for participants to act as collaborators in the process of analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Robson, 2011). Disadvantages of thematic analysis are that it can be time consuming and labour-intensive; it can be too flexible, with analysis becoming unmanageable or meaningless; it is largely descriptive in nature, which is well-suited to exploratory studies but less suited to testing theories or hypotheses; and it is less well established than other methods of qualitative data analysis such as grounded theory or discourse analysis, although it is becoming increasingly recognised as more researchers apply it rigorously (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Robson, 2011).

As with all qualitative research, it can be difficult to establish reliability and validity or to generalise findings from thematic analysis. However, these are positivist assumptions and are not necessary criteria by which to judge qualitative research (Yardley, 2000). It is also subject to researcher bias, but again this is a common feature of qualitative research, or indeed any research. Providing stringent principles of quality and rigour are adhered to, as outlined in Section 3.5.3. Quality and Rigour, thematic analysis can be considered an appropriate and effective data analysis method in qualitative, exploratory studies such as this.

The researcher was influenced by the work of Gillham (2000; 2005), who cautions that analysis “should be kept to the minimum necessary for the implications of the evidence to be apparent” (Gillham, 2000, p.79). In addition, the researcher was mindful that analysis can only hope to provide a true and balanced account of the interview itself, not the underlying people and situations that were the topic of discussion (Gillham, 2005).
3.8.2. Overall analysis

The thematic analysis represents a substantial part of the overall analysis. However, in defining a more rigorous case study approach as endorsed by Yin (2009), further analysis was conducted to integrate the findings of the thematic analysis with other sources of data recorded in the research diary. This included triangulation of data, pattern matching, explanation building and the exploration of rival theories in order to build a detailed and integrated case description.

3.9. DISSEMINATION

As part of the thesis, the researcher conducted an initial feedback meeting with the core members of school staff and the TaMHS collaborative inquiry group. Following completion of the thesis, the researcher will explore wider dissemination of the findings in ways that are accessible and have potential to influence school practice. While this does not form part of the main research project, it is considered important due to the ‘scientist-practitioner’ role of the researcher (Lane and Corrie, 2006). The dissemination will follow the guidelines of Yardley and Marks (2004), for example the researcher will ensure a clear distinction between the actual findings, the interpretation of these findings and the recommendations that flow from this.

The exact nature of this feedback will be developed in collaboration with school staff, perhaps involving a staff focus group or a staff training session. In addition, an ‘executive summary’ report will be produced, which will be made available to school staff, pupils and the parents of pupils who were involved. A pupil-friendly brief report will be produced to be shared with the pupils who participated and any others who may wish to find out about the research. The findings will also be shared with the educational psychology service and other practitioners who express an interest in the research, in order to maximise the impact
of the research upon practice. The researcher will also use information gained from
the literature review and relevant findings of the study to inform their own
professional practice, both now and in the future.

3.10. INTEGRITY AND ETHICS

The researcher followed the ethical guidelines of the *University of
Manchester: School of Education* and was also guided by the *Health Professions
Council* (HPC, 2008) standards of conduct, performance and ethics, as befits their
professional practice as a trainee educational psychologist. Ethical approval was
granted by the School of Education Research Integrity Committee on 14 October
2011 (as shown in Appendix M), with each amendment being agreed as it arose. The
study was deemed to be ‘medium risk’ because it involved working with children
under the age of 16, but the work was within the professional remit of the researcher
who was also a trainee educational psychologist.

3.10.1. Operational risk analysis

A number of operational risks were acknowledged in relation to the study,
many of which were identified in earlier stages of the development process and
unfortunately did come to pass. The most notable of these was that it could be
difficult to gain parental consent. When it came to gaining parental consent for the
pupil and staff interviews, the researcher put a number of safeguards in place to try
and minimise the risk of this happening. The first was that the information letter was
simplified considerably to ensure it was presented clearly, used accessible language
and only covered one side of A4 paper. It was hoped that this would make the
information more accessible and less overwhelming to parents, while still containing
the key elements required to ensure they were giving informed consent. Secondly,
the consent forms were designed so that parents were asked to return the form
whether they indicated ‘Yes’ or ‘No’. If forms were not returned, it could therefore be assumed that parents had not yet responded, not that they do not want to be involved. Thirdly, a free reply envelope was included with each letter so there was no cost to parents to return forms. Fourthly, a system of reminders was devised with school staff whereby a member of staff known to the parents would provide a telephone call to remind them and gauge their interest in the study. For those parents who claimed to have misplaced the letter, a new pack was sent out, which was again followed by a reminder telephone call if required. In both cases, a period of at least two weeks was provided before any follow up was made and school staff were briefed about not putting any pressure on parents to give their consent. Finally, the contact details of the researcher were provided and the deputy head teacher was named as a contact point in school so parents could ask any questions they might have. These amendments secured parental consent for the three pupils involved in the current study and were therefore viewed as being moderately successful in minimising this risk. While more participants would have been appreciated, the three for whom parental consent was gained provided adequate data for the study to progress.

Once the pupils had been identified, there was a concern that they may not engage in the interview process. This was considered to be a medium risk due to the difficulties these pupils reportedly experienced, particularly relating to anxiety and social skills. In order to minimise the risk of pupils not engaging in the interview, the researcher put a number of strategies in place. The interview process was designed to be accessible and engaging to pupils and a pilot interview was carried out with a young person known personally to the researcher, who was transferring to secondary
school at the same time as the pupil participants. The pilot participant provided several insights that were then incorporated into the pupil interview format.

All participation was voluntary and therefore if pupils had decided they did not wish to be involved, their wishes would have been respected. All three pupils gave their assent to be involved in the research and seemed to engage well in the process. Pupil Two in particular appeared very shy in the interviews and tended to give brief answers to questions. In discussion with the nurture facilitator, it was felt that this was as a result of her difficulties rather than a reluctance to engage with the interview process. The interviews took place in two pleasant and familiar environments, with drinks and snacks provided to provide a relaxed feel. The researcher began each session with a general chat to put pupils at ease.

The researcher discussed any special needs or requirements with school staff before meeting with pupils and was therefore able to anticipate difficulties, for example with literacy skills or shyness. The researcher remained mindful of these individual needs and adapted the interview process as required to minimise any stress and optimise the engagement of each pupil. If a pupil had shown distress at any point, the researcher would have halted the interview and addressed the issue appropriately.

With regards to staff engagement, the deputy head agreed that the nurture facilitator would be given time to attend the interviews within their normal working hours. The data collection spanned two days, which were arranged at a mutually convenient time for the researcher and the nurture facilitator. The sessions were flexible to allow for the nurture facilitator to take breaks when students or members
of staff wished to speak with her. It was also made clear that the interview could be paused and postponed if any unforeseen problems arose.

3.10.2. Integrity

The researcher aimed to maintain integrity throughout the research process. An approach endorsed by Macfarlane (2009) had a significant impact upon the author’s methods throughout the project: in this approach ‘integrity’ is seen as an over-arching principle, which goes beyond fulfilling ethical criteria by shaping the researcher’s attitudes and actions at all times. Macfarlane states that “research ethics is a complex subject that demands an active and continuing struggle with personal conscience” (p.166). He suggests that gaining ethical approval or following a code of practice carries a risk of “disengagement with moral decision making” (p.166). Instead, he advocates that researchers focus on developing “a personal sense of responsibility characterised by virtues” (p.166). Macfarlane’s concept of ‘virtues’ is influenced by Aristotle and he identifies six ‘virtues’ that are central to integrity: courage; respectfulness; resoluteness; sincerity; humility and reflexivity. These principles became increasingly relevant as the researcher encountered difficulties and unfortunate events along the way, as outlined in Section 3.2. Process of Development.

Macfarlane argues for ‘courage’ as the first virtue, because “courage is needed to pursue a demanding and ultimately worthwhile project. Courage is also needed to cope with the road ahead and the disappointments and frustrations that occur along the way” (p.61). In the current research project, the author was beset by a number of unfortunate and unforeseen situations. This certainly embodied a number of ‘disappointments and frustrations’, but the author learnt to show courage
and resilience in moving forwards despite these setbacks and to continue to carve out a project that they believed would be ‘ultimately worthwhile’.

Macfarlane’s second virtue is that of ‘respectfulness’, which at its core involves treating each participant “as a person rather than simply a resource to be exploited” (p.63). This includes ensuring participants are informed before they give their consent, giving them the right to withdraw at any time and maintaining confidentiality. Beyond this, respectfulness is “a virtue that needs to be lived out, in all its complexities, rather than idly asserted as a mantra” (p.77). In the present study, this became particularly apparent as issues with parental consent began to arise. The researcher experienced a high level of frustration as the events unfolded, but was careful to only express this frustration in supervision to educational psychologists or university tutors. In this situation, the researcher needed to remain mindful at all times that the pupils and parents who had been invited to take part were people in their own right and not ‘a resource’. This made it easier to accept that they had not responded as the researcher had hoped, that the reasons for this were beyond the researcher’s control and for the researcher to move on without putting pressure on parents beyond what was considered appropriate by supervisors and school staff.

The third virtue introduced by Macfarlane is that of ‘resoluteness’, which is essential if one is to complete a research process that can be “demanding... long and arduous” (p.79-80). Resoluteness “requires individuals to be purposeful and determined and not to give up when the going gets tough” (p.80). In the current research, the author demonstrated considerable resoluteness in keeping going despite setbacks and re-envisioning the research at several points along the way. The researcher has needed to learn to stay motivated and engaged even when they did not
feel either of these things, and found a solution-focused approach to be particularly helpful in this. The support of friends, family, colleagues and supervisors has been hugely beneficial and the author has learnt to draw on these resources more and more, as advocated by Macfarlane. In addition to persistence, resoluteness requires “emotional flexibility” (p.89). This versatility has also been apparent in the author’s research journey.

‘Sincerity’ refers particularly to data analysis and the interpretation of findings: “It is vital that such endeavours are authentic representations of what the researcher has found out or, at least, believes to be true” (p.91). Macfarlane warns against both ‘concealment’ and ‘exaggeration’ of data, which often only the researcher will be aware of. This virtue requires that “we are analysing ourselves as rigorously as we are analysing our data” (p.122) to ensure that data is represented accurately in the analysis and write up of a study. In the present study, the researcher took care to accurately represent the data and engaged in a process of checking the analysis with participants to ensure they felt it accurately reflected their opinions, with amendments and additions made as required.

Following ‘sincere’ data analysis, the process of dissemination should be underwritten with ‘humility’ in recognition that, while the researcher is likely to have made a contribution to knowledge, this will usually be “modest” (p.109). Macfarlane endorses a humble approach in recognising one’s contribution to knowledge, but also recognising the limitations of the study. He warns against both ‘boastfulness’ and ‘timidity’, both of which can provide a skewed picture of the research contribution. In the current study, the dissemination of research has several elements: at the present stage this includes feedback to participants and thesis write-up. Further dissemination will include an executive summary for distribution to
educational psychologists, school staff and other interested parties such as parents, pupils and other professionals, followed by presentations to these parties and discussions as requested.

Macfarlane’s final virtue is that of ‘reflexivity’, the process of reflecting both during and after the completion of a research project. This process has four key elements: “having an experience, reflecting on it, thinking about how relevant theory or other abstract ideas might help, and then implementing a new approach based on the conclusions you have reached” (p.128). He recommends both personal and collaborative reflection, which demand “conscious engagement with the trials and tribulations of being a researcher through analysing experiences” (p.136). This incorporates a desire to develop and improve practice over time. During the course of this research project, the author has learnt much about the research process and the obstacles and pitfalls often inherent within ‘real world’ research (Robson, 2011). She has overcome obstacles and adapted practice in order to develop and hone her research skills and, upon reflection, can appreciate the benefits of working through a number of difficulties, despite the frustrations and disappointments these engendered at the time. It is hoped that this process, while difficult, will have provided a firmer foundation for future research projects and developed the author’s competence as a researcher.

Macfarlane argues that many of these virtues have both intellectual and moral elements and it is important for researchers to focus on developing “the values and attitudes central to good research practice” (p.158). For “it is only by maintaining and constantly developing an understanding of our own sense of integrity, and being critically aware of our own frailties, that we can hope to exercise the responsibilities of being a good researcher” (p.167). Throughout this piece of work, the author has
strived to do everything with integrity, characterised by the six ‘virtues’ proposed by Macfarlane (2009). It is hoped that this is reflected in the design, data collection, data analysis and dissemination of this piece of work and in the author’s practice as a real world researcher within the field of education.
4. FINDINGS

This chapter outlines the main research findings. The first section focuses upon contextual information recorded in the research diary, including observations, documentation and informal discussions with members of the senior management team. The second section gives an account of the thematic analyses of interviews with the nurture facilitator and three pupils who received nurture support.

4.1. CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

The research diary provided a wealth of information about the nurture provision, how and why it was set up and how it was implemented for the 2011-2012 cohort of pupils. Data were collected from a variety of sources, including:

- Discussions with members of the senior management team
- Discussions with the nurture facilitator
- Observations of pupils attending the nurture provision
- Observation of the nurture facilitator’s interactions with pupils, both in the nurture room and around school
- Resources used in delivering the nurture provision
- Pieces of work produced by pupils while accessing the nurture provision
- School documentation, including:
  - Information about all feeder primary schools
  - Pupil information form (completed by the transition manager in consultation with primary school staff)
  - A ‘Readiness for Transition Screening Tool’ developed by the transition manager to identify pupils who were socially and emotionally vulnerable
o A detailed ‘Transition Plan’ outlining the transition process, beginning in March when pupils are in Year 6

o A ‘Welcome Letter’ to parents introducing them to the school and detailing the range of support that is on offer to pupils

o School contact details for parents and pupils to discuss anything they wish about the transition process, including a specific email address and telephone line that parents and pupils can access

o A ‘Shield of Achievement’ to celebrate pupil success and progress

o A series of lesson plans detailing pre-transition visit days for the whole cohort, able and gifted pupils and nurture pupils

o A training package delivered to all school staff, outlining the purpose of nurture provision, application of nurture principles and how the provision would work in practice

The following table outlines the way in which these pieces of evidence support or contradict the propositions that arose from the literature review, as detailed in Section 2.5.2. Propositions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition</th>
<th>Supporting evidence</th>
<th>Contradictory evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Vulnerability** | Discussions with members of the senior management team  
Discussions with the nurture facilitator  
‘Readiness for Transition Screening Tool’  
Pupil information form  
Transition planning documents                                                                                                                                 | None found              |
| **Relationships** | Discussions with members of the senior management team  
Discussions with the nurture facilitator  
Observation of nurture provision  
Resources used in the nurture provision  
Training package delivered to all school staff                                                                                                                                 | None found              |
| **Belonging**    | Discussions with members of the senior management team  
Discussions with the nurture facilitator                                                                                                                                                                             | None found              |
| **Wellbeing**    | Discussions with members of the senior management team  
Discussions with the nurture facilitator  
‘Shield of Achievement’  
Resources used in the nurture provision  
Pupil information form                                                                                                                                                                                                 | None found              |
| **Preparation**  | Discussions with members of the senior management team  
Discussions with the nurture facilitator  
‘Readiness for Transition Screening Tool’  
Lesson plans for pre-transition visit days  
Pupil information form  
Transition planning documents                                                                                                                                                                                                 | None found              |
| **Communication**| Discussions with members of the senior management team  
Discussions with the nurture facilitator  
Letters to parents  
Training package delivered to all school staff  
Dedicated email address and telephone line                                                                                                                                                                                                 | None found              |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Curriculum</strong></th>
<th>Discussions with members of the senior management team</th>
<th>Not evidenced in great detail – seemingly not a significant factor for vulnerable pupils in this context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personalisation</strong></td>
<td>Discussions with members of the senior management team Discussions with the nurture facilitator Observation of nurture provision Resources used in the nurture provision Pupil information form</td>
<td>None found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nurture facilitator</strong></td>
<td>Discussions with members of the senior management team Observation of nurture provision Training package delivered to all school staff</td>
<td>None found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nurture principles</strong></td>
<td>Discussions with members of the senior management team Discussions with the nurture facilitator Observation of nurture provision</td>
<td>None found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsiveness</strong></td>
<td>Discussions with members of the senior management team Discussions with the nurture facilitator Observation of nurture provision</td>
<td>None found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychology</strong></td>
<td>Discussions with members of the senior management team Discussions with the nurture facilitator Observation of nurture provision</td>
<td>Identified as an area for development by staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 9. Supporting evidence for propositions identified in the literature*
Further propositions arose from the findings of the research diary, as outlined in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Supporting evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Identification    | An important part of the process is identifying those pupils who are socially and emotionally vulnerable so that appropriate provision can be made for them | Discussions with members of the senior management team  
Discussions with the nurture facilitator  
‘Readiness for Transition Screening Tool’  
Pupil information form  
Training package delivered to all school staff |
| Transition manager| Having a designated member of staff is key to ensuring effective identification of needs and coherent provision | Discussions with members of the senior management team  
Discussions with the nurture facilitator  
‘Readiness for Transition Screening Tool’  
Pupil information form  
Transition planning documents  
Training package delivered to all school staff |
| Range of provision| A range of provision is required to ensure that pupil needs can be met at the appropriate level | Discussions with members of the senior management team  
Discussions with the nurture facilitator  
Training package delivered to all school staff |

Figure 10. Additional propositions arising from the research process

In order to explore these propositions more fully, the researcher conducted thematic analyses of one-to-one interviews with the nurture facilitator and three pupils who received support from the nurture provision. The following section presents these analyses in detail.
4.2. THEMATIC ANALYSIS

This section outlines the findings from thematic analyses of staff and pupil interviews. An overview of the data analysis method will first be presented, with photographs of the process included in Appendix N. The findings are then split into two main sections: the first covers the staff perspective of the nurture provision, going into detail about the school’s motivation for setting up the provision, what they put in place, how it was facilitated and the observed impacts. The second section focuses upon three pupils who have received different types of nurture provision and the ways in which nurture support has worked in practice for these pupils: each of these incorporates a pupil perspective and a staff perspective.

The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), with the stages of data analysis illustrated in Appendix N. Thematic maps are provided at the start of each section. The themes were shared with the pupils and nurture facilitator and feedback was requested. Each participant felt that the analysis of their interview was an accurate reflection of their perspective, as outlined in the following quote from the researcher and nurture facilitator:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher:</th>
<th>I’m just hoping that what I’ve picked out accurately reflects the actual situation...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nurture facilitator:</td>
<td>It does, yes... absolutely.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 11. Quote from staff interview transcript*

In collating this section, the researcher has adhered to guidelines set out by Gillham (2005), for example regarding the use of narrative and the ratio of quotes that should be included to illustrate each point. Quotes were refined to ensure clarity for the reader, with parts that disrupted the flow, such as ‘erm’ and ‘sort of’, often being removed.
4.3. ILLUSTRATIVE CASE EXAMPLE: NURTURE FACILITATOR

This section details the main findings from the staff interviews regarding the nurture provision: all quotes are attributed to the nurture facilitator. There are four main themes, each of which is explored in detail. The first, Motivation, considers the school’s rationale for setting up the nurture provision; the second, Provision, outlines the main components of this provision; the third, Facilitation, explores the methods and approaches needed in order to run the provision effectively; while the fourth, Impact details the outcomes of the provision. The thematic map is shown below.

![Thematic Map - General Nurture Provision](image-url)

*Figure 12. Thematic map - General nurture provision*
4.3.1. Motivation

This section explores the main reasons that prompted the school to set up the nurture provision. It incorporates the school ethos, recognition of the difficult aspects of transition, characteristics that made pupils vulnerable and the purpose of the nurture provision. This is illustrated in the thematic map below.

Figure 13. Thematic map - Motivation

4.3.1.1. School ethos

The nurture facilitator identified school ethos as the starting point for the development of nurture provision to support pupils in the transition to secondary school. The school valued innovative practice, dedicating time and resources for staff to explore the most effective ways in which to meet the needs of their pupils: “The school processes... never stay still. It’s always changing... always trying to improve the facilities that we have for our students”.
4.3.1.2. Transition

The nurture facilitator spoke of a number of different aspects of change that pupils need to navigate in the transition from primary to secondary school. Environmental and organisational aspects of change related to factors such as the increased size of the building, increased work demands and stricter discipline that was often found at secondary school. Getting used to new routines was a significant aspect of change, especially as there tended to be less structure than at primary school: “It’s such a massive change for students to come from primary to high school... It’s just huge... going from something quite small and very structured, you know, often in one room or something like that into suddenly being put into a big school... it’s just so challenging”.

Pupils also experienced social aspects of change, for example peer relations became more complex at secondary school as pupils encountered a much larger assortment of peers than they were used to at primary school: “At primary they have a class group... and they’re very familiar, here it’s totally different... there’s more students to mix with”. In addition, pupils needed to adjust to having up to fourteen or fifteen different teachers in a given week, all of whom had “different expectations [and] different methods of working”, which she considered to be “difficult for some to cope with”.

The nurture facilitator felt that pupils experienced complex emotions around the transition to secondary school, for example worrying about getting lost, making friends or whether the rumours they had heard were true, while also trying to understand new rules and expectations. She felt that the transition process was complex for pupils and recognised that some needed support, particularly before and during the transition.
4.3.1.3. Vulnerable pupils

The nurture facilitator considered the process of adapting and managing the complexities of transition to be “extremely difficult” for some pupils: “Expecting our children to suddenly fit into all these slots, erm, is very, very difficult, for some it’s very, very difficult”. She recognised that some pupils have “a lot of issues to contend with... things that they’ve had to deal with... things outside [school]”, which might make the transition particularly challenging. Pupils could be vulnerable for a number of reasons: “Some of the students are very quiet and they have low self esteem”; “some come in with anger issues”; “[some are] on their own”; “[some are] unhappy”. The transition was often a catalyst for difficulties to arise because primary schools tend to be “smaller... [and] more nurturing”, which meant that “some of the issues... don’t present themselves as much as when they come to high school where they’re very much expected to be more independent... and learn quickly without that nurturing support”. The nurture facilitator felt that pupils with social and emotional issues were particularly “vulnerable” in the transition and felt strongly that they needed to be supported, concluding: “There has to be something for them”.

4.3.1.4. Purpose

In recognition of the complex and “diverse” needs of socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school, the school began to explore ways in which to support these pupils effectively. The nurture facilitator conceptualised the nurture provision as assisting transition and promoting social and emotional development and engagement with education, focusing on “the ones that really need some quite intense support”. The main aims of the provision were “to support and encourage engagement... to make them feel that they are worth
something... to raise aspirations... to develop a sense of purpose... to help them fit in... [to] make that transition easier for them, so that they will be successful”.

The nurture facilitator viewed pupil difficulties developmentally and believed that providing the pupils with opportunities to develop early learning skills would be beneficial to help “fill the gaps” by “taking it all the way back and starting there”. Through nurture provision, school staff hoped to develop a wide range of skills that would help vulnerable pupils to be “happy in school” and “less needy”.

4.3.2. Provision

The school offered three main forms of provision: learning support, behaviour support and nurture. The nurture provision was a new venture, designed to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils in the transition. There were four main elements to the nurture provision: pre-transition visits; core nurture; therapeutic groups; and a lunchtime club. The thematic map is shown below.
4.3.2.1. **Pre-transition visits**

School staff felt it was important to begin supporting pupils before they started secondary school, because “those first impressions, those weeks coming up to transition are critical really for some of the students”. All pupils attended a pre-transition visit day in the summer term of Year 6. Those for whom concerns had previously been raised with primary school staff, or who were noticed to be struggling on this visit, were given the opportunity to attend an extra ‘nurture day’: “Any that are identified as potentially being possible nurture are invited to come on that day”. This was offered for around thirty pupils, giving them the opportunity to become more familiar with the new school environment by having a more in-depth tour of the school and meeting more members of staff, alongside helping pupils to make friends. The main aims of this day were to build familiarity with the school and to outline what pupils could expect, and what is expected of them in return. A number of practical aspects of the transition were addressed: “It was a gradual introduction... covering the basics, so we’d discuss travel, organisation, punctuality, attendance, need for a routine, diet, sleep... timetables and staff”. Another important aspect of this day was to address worries: “[Pupils] would identify their worries about [secondary] school... anything from getting lost, being bullied, homework, new friends... all those things that bother them... and what we hope to do is turn those worries into less significant big obstacles for them ready to start in September”.

For pupils who were identified as particularly vulnerable in the transition, additional visit days were organised where pupils came for pre-transition sessions in the nurture room as required, either on their own, in small groups or with parents. Again, this appeared to be an important aspect of preparation for pupils who were
particularly vulnerable in the transition, many of whom were incorporated into the core nurture group from September.

4.3.2.2. Core nurture

The core nurture group was established from the start of Year 7. This took place in a specially designed room that included a kitchen area, a large table, computer desks and a sofa. The nurture facilitator aimed to “keep it relaxed and not too busy” and had thought about ways to “keep the room in some sort of good order and structure, and keep it tidy”. She felt that addressing practical aspects such as the physical environment of the room could enhance pupils’ nurture experience as “it’s not too much more chaos added, you know, to things they’re having to cope with”.

The core nurture group catered for between eight and ten pupils and met for one two-hour session each day. On Monday to Thursday the group met in the first two lessons of each day, regardless of which lessons were timetabled. The first hour was spent sharing news, doing activities and generally getting pupils ready for the day: “The first hour is mainly getting the students in, get them settled”. The second session focused on the main activity of preparing and eating ‘breakfast’ together. On Fridays the group met for the last two sessions of the day, where the first session focused on activities while the second session was spent reviewing each pupil’s target for the week and setting new targets for the coming week, finishing with the ‘Star of the Week’ activity.

The core nurture group followed an “action-packed, full” programme that incorporated a range of activities, including ‘Star of the Week’, ‘Mood Share’, ‘Confession Time’, ‘News Sharing’ and a ‘Daily Diary’. ‘Star of the Week’ took place at the end of each week and required each pupil to nominate one group
member and give reasons for their selection, providing an opportunity for pupils to experience giving and receiving praise, which the nurture facilitator considered to be “a great confidence builder, very good for self esteem”. In the ‘Mood Share’ activity, pupils used visual aids to communicate how they were feeling, which was “quite useful, particularly when some of these students are not very knowledgeable or not very good at body language”. ‘Confession Time’ provided a chance for pupils to consider any incidents of inappropriate behaviour or negative approaches to a situation, encouraging them to take responsibility for their response, understand why they acted in that way, work out a plan for putting things right and consider how to prevent the same issue arising in the future. This was described as a “step by step analysis of what went wrong and then putting it back together again... [asking] what do you have to do to put things right?”. The ‘News Sharing’ activity gave everybody a chance to speak about things that are going on for them, both in school and at home. This served a number of purposes, for example “[building] confidence... developing their communication, their listening skills... [and] respecting other people”. The ‘Daily Diary’ activity encouraged pupils to write about anything that was important to them in a private book: “It can be an anger vent, an emotional vent, a ‘this feels good because’ vent”. This helped pupils become more aware of their emotions and the value of self-reflection, as well as developing literacy skills by encouraging pupils to engage in free-writing.

The nurture facilitator felt that these activities had all proven to be valuable to group members, for example, activities such as the ‘Mood Share’ and ‘News Sharing’ had facilitated understanding and support among the group: “I think that it... develops empathy, because I have had some students in here who have been
really upset and it’s amazing to see them rally round and say ‘Is there anything I can do for you?’, or ‘This has happened to me and I understand how you’re feeling’.

The group shared ‘breakfast’ together four days a week, where pupils were required to “prepare a breakfast within a small team”, taking it in turns to fulfil different roles. The nurture facilitator gave pupils full responsibility for this session, from devising the rotas to ordering the food, although she was available to support pupils as required. Her main role was to encourage pupils to problem-solve, providing hints but enabling them to devise their own solutions, try out ideas and learn from mistakes, which was a highly effective learning experience: “It’s the problem-solving that makes this a success”. The breakfast activity was a prominent feature of the core nurture group, as it afforded so many learning opportunities, including “organisation, teamwork, erm, communication, problem-solving [and] hygiene”. The breakfast session was especially popular with pupils, who often did not realise how much they were learning from it: “To them it’s... [just] eating... but what they really don’t know is that they’re doing all those things... the leadership and teamwork and things, the problem-solving... they don’t realise they’re doing it but they’re doing it”. In addition to preparing the breakfast, pupils were given the opportunity to share a meal with others, something some had not previously experienced. This enabled pupils to learn skills such as table manners and provided valuable social time, in which pupils could build listening and communication skills and develop friendships.

The nurture facilitator aimed to provide opportunities for pupils to develop their social and emotional skills through relevant and enjoyable activities so they were “learning skills without realising it”. Practical approaches such as art and craft were useful, as was role play, which “gives them the confidence to say things in front
of other people... feel less embarrassed and self-conscious about things, so that hopefully when they go to the classrooms they will talk more and get involved”. The core nurture group covered a wide range of topics, many of which developed as a response to pupil needs or incidents that happened. The main focus was on understanding and managing emotions, with other topics covering personal organisation, bullying, resilience, motivation, health and hygiene. Social interaction and communication featured repeatedly in the topics covered, as this was a primary need of many of the pupils: “Social interaction and communication, that’s one of the huge things”. As the group became more settled, the nurture facilitator arranged for visitors to join the group, for example the school nurse and a motivational speaker.

Pupils were responsible for setting their own weekly targets in the core nurture group. The target could be about anything that was important to them but it needed to be relevant and achievable: “A target that they can stick to... what is the next step that they could do?” Targets were evaluated at the end of each week. This activity was designed to help pupils build self-awareness and motivation: “A lot of it has been them setting themselves a target, evaluating their own behaviour, not only at school but at home and being able to look at things that they’ve done well, [and] maybe things that they haven’t done as well as they maybe could’ve done, and looking to resolve that”.

The main purpose of the core nurture provision was to equip pupils to be able to engage in full-time mainstream classes: “The aim... is that they would start in September and develop the skills through the year so that by the following July they would be fully in class”. This was done by containing their anxieties, teaching them skills and building their confidence. With this support, it was anticipated that pupils
would be able to move on and join their peers full-time: “You’ve had this amount of support; you’re all able to do the next step”.

Reintegration readiness was judged using a range of information, including staff observations, the Boxall Profile and pupil views. Reintegration readiness would always be agreed in collaboration with the pupil, the nurture facilitator and the transition manager. The nurture facilitator would regularly ask questions such as “Are you coping? Do you still need me?” to ascertain whether the support was still needed at that level or whether it could be reduced. This was important because “there’s no point in continuing something if it’s not necessary”. Sometimes pupils needed support to begin the reintegration process, but others decided for themselves that they were ready to be back in mainstream classes: “As people decided they didn’t need help they just told me and... with [transition manager]’s blessing, they were removed”.

During the second term, pupils underwent a gradual reintegration process based on their level of need and readiness for reintegration: “There will be gradual reintegration so those [core nurture] sessions gradually reduce... we keep the breakfast going [until] half term, [in] February we sort of have another look and then... it’s more and more back into class and by Easter they have all gone”. The reintegration involved “gradually reducing” the amount of time pupils attended the nurture sessions: “so it becomes very staggered for some of them and the groups become very small until it gets to the stage where they’ve all gone”. The reintegration process was arranged in collaboration with pupils, beginning with subjects they enjoy: “We have a look at their timetables... and ask... ‘What would you like to return to first?’”. The process was continually monitored via feedback from staff, but also from pupils: “We might just do one [lesson] to start with, [then
ask] ‘Was that ok?’ ‘Yeah’ so [then] we’ll do two”. Throughout the reintegration process, the nurture facilitator was always available to offer additional support as required.

After receiving nurture support, the pupils were “expected to be able to cope”. However, the nurture facilitator felt that many of these pupils were still vulnerable and she was aware that issues may still arise because “they have been identified as nurture children”. She still felt a responsibility for the nurture pupils (“I wouldn’t say ‘Well you’re no longer my responsibility’”) and therefore aimed to always be accessible to them, saying “the door’s never shut”. Most of the nurture pupils had accessed this ongoing support at some point, usually on an informal, drop-in basis: “They still come to me if they’ve got any issues or something’s upset them”. The relationship she had built with the pupils meant that they often came to her for support and reassurance: “They know that I’m still there, that I still care about them and that’s why they still come back to see me”. At more difficult times, this relationship became invaluable: “Sometimes they just need someone they can trust and who understands”.

She felt that her role began to change following reintegration, as she focused more on developing independence: “You’re trying to encourage them to solve a problem themselves”. This was always done in a supportive manner, however: “I’m still here for them, to try and encourage them to do the right thing”. She also conducted ‘spot checks’ in various lessons, “to make sure they’re remembering how to behave in that lesson and that they’re ok”. She felt that continued support was important to ensure the pupils remembered to apply the skills they had learnt, for example “I need them to keep practicing communicating the way they feel”. Further
support came through the lunchtime club, which remained constant throughout the year. In summary, the nurture facilitator said simply: “If they need it, I’m here”.

4.3.2.3. Therapeutic groups

In addition to the core nurture, the nurture facilitator offered a range of therapeutic groups through which she could address the needs of pupils who presented with social or emotional concerns but whose needs were not significant enough to warrant a place in the core nurture group. Groups would typically involve between six and eight pupils and would meet for one lesson a week or one lesson a fortnight, often for half a term, although this was flexible. The sessions would often centre around fun activities such as crafts, role play or group activities and would focus on “communication, problem-solving, things like that... anything sort of going wrong, we’d talk about it”. The nurture facilitator felt that these sessions followed a similar format to the core nurture sessions but they were often more focused: “Because we didn’t have as much time, that was our opportunity, erm, to try and solve any issues that were going on”. As a result, each group would tend to focus on a particular area or need, for example if a group of friends was having difficulties they might be invited to some sessions in order to address this. Other topics might include self esteem, confidence, talking about feelings and emotions, identifying strengths and developing social skills. Pupils set their own targets for what they wanted to achieve through the group and evaluated these at the end of each session.

4.3.2.4. Lunchtime club

The nurture facilitator ran a lunchtime club in the nurture room. This opened for thirty minutes every day and all pupils from Year 7 and Year 8 were welcome to attend, although primarily “it’s for those who find it difficult to make friends” or those who need “peace, rather than the noise outside”. This was intended to be a
social club where pupils could eat their lunch and meet friends: “It’s about making connections, making new friends, building their own confidence and just having somewhere... [to] talk and play games and... [to see] a friendly face”. At the start of the year, the main focus was on pupils in Year 7 who were struggling with the transition: “Initially it’s for those who might find it difficult to get themselves sorted and deal with all the change”. As the year progressed, pupils dropped in and out of the provision depending on their need for it. Pupils accessed the support for a range of reasons: “They might have had a bad morning, they might need some friends, they might be shy and, or they could even be new to the school”.

4.3.3. Facilitation

This section explores the processes and approaches required to make the provision work, from the perspective of the nurture facilitator. It begins by exploring the ways in which pupil needs were identified, the allocation of provision and the importance of monitoring to ensure pupil needs were being met at each stage in the process. The second theme considers the principle of personalisation and the importance of this in delivering the nurture provision. Next, two seemingly contradictory, but actually complementary, themes are discussed: flexibility and stability. Flexibility refers to the need to accommodate pupils appropriately and to respond to individual needs, for example in establishing effective group dynamics and a responsive curriculum. The theme of stability recognises that socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils can often be unsettled by change, so the nurture provision aimed to minimise this as much as possible. The fifth theme focuses upon the role of the nurture facilitator, which was central to the nurture provision, while the sixth theme considers the support that made the venture possible. The final theme
discusses difficult aspects of the nurture facilitator role and the provision in general.

The thematic map for this section is shown below.

![Thematic Map](image)

**Figure 15. Thematic map - Facilitation**

4.3.3.1. **Identification**

The process of identifying vulnerable pupils and allocating them to appropriate provision was both lengthy and complex. Before the transition, the transition manager visited all feeder primary schools where she met staff and pupils and gathered a range of information that enabled her to compile a summary profile of all the pupils who could have had difficulties in the transition. The aim was to glean
“as much insight into the students as we can”, which enabled staff to identify pupil needs and consider ways in which to meet these needs effectively.

Information came from a “broad spectrum” of sources including discussions with primary school staff, especially SENCOs; observations and discussions with pupils at primary school; discussions with parents; primary school records and other information such as assessment details, educational psychology reports and statements of SEN. Secondary school staff were also aware of potential issues, for example a difficult home life, from their involvement with older siblings who attended the school. The nurture facilitator felt that “the information that comes from the primary school is obviously very important” in identifying pupil needs, but she felt that this knowledge could adversely affect her approach to the students. She therefore felt that the information from primary school was important for those making decisions about the allocation of provision, but not necessarily useful for staff working directly with the pupils. She believed pupils were capable of change and was keen to offer a fresh start at secondary school: “Although you can read the records from primary, erm [pause] sometimes you’re better not pre-judging them”.

Further information came from staff observations on pre-transition visit days, which took place in the last term of Year 6: “When the students come during the transition, you can get a good indication about how well that child is going to settle”.

Once the information had been collated, the transition manager and the nurture group facilitator met to discuss provision allocation, with the profile of needs helping school staff “assess which students are going to be suitable or needy of the nurture group”. The decision-making process took into account all the information gathered before the transition, but was also flexible to accommodate difficulties that arose in Year 7. Needs often became apparent in the first week: “It is usual for the
students to be extremely tired... they’re just being, you know, pummelled, basically, with lots and lots of information and by the end of the week you will start to see any who might be showing cracks, that might need some extra support”. Throughout the year, and especially the first term, the nurture facilitator, form tutors and other members of staff worked together to ensure that any pupils showing difficulties were identified early, so “hopefully these children shouldn’t be missed anywhere along the line”.

The nurture facilitator took the task of allocating provision very seriously, as she recognised the impact of taking pupils out of academic lessons: “It’s very important when they’re missing two lessons a day; you’ve got to make sure it’s the right choice”. She felt that “the balance of them not going into an academic lesson versus coming to nurture... was a tough weigh-up really”, but ultimately decided that nurture provision was more important than academic lessons for those who really needed it, because “they wouldn’t be able to manage classrooms if they’re not in the right stage, you know, frame of mind”.

When pupils were allocated to a provision, they were offered “an invitation”, which most pupils accepted. Some did decline, and this decision was respected by staff as they felt pupils would not benefit from an intervention they did not want. Although rare in all forms of provision, this was most common among pupils selected for the therapeutic group sessions: “Sometimes they come and they don’t necessarily want any, they’ll say ‘Oh, I’d rather be in my lessons’ which is fine, you know, I’m not going to force them to come”.

Once provision was in place, school staff monitored pupil progress closely to ensure their needs were being met appropriately. For the core nurture group, progress was tracked using regular reports informed by observation and formal measures such
as the Boxall Profile. However, the nurture facilitator sometimes found it difficult to complete these more formal monitoring procedures (“because there’s only me and because they are all very needy it’s hard sometimes for me to sit back and actually do [this]”), instead adopting informal approaches that were more “manageable”.

Following reintegration, the nurture facilitator conducted “spot checks” to see how pupils were getting on in different lessons and identify any needs that might arise so that these could be dealt with promptly.

4.3.3.2. **Personalisation**

Personalisation was an important aspect of the nurture provision, “because you’re delivering to a group all at different stages”. The needs of the pupils therefore varied greatly and the nurture facilitator needed to consider ways in which to meet the needs of all pupils effectively: “You have to try and tailor something they’re all going to benefit from in different ways... the delivery has to be different... depending on their own particular needs”. The nurture facilitator felt that personalised approaches were an important aspect of her role and of education in general, because “we are all individual”. The nurture facilitator felt that supporting pupils’ social and emotional development was a complex and lengthy process that required patience and persistence because “it takes time”. Emphasis was therefore placed upon responding to individual developmental needs and recognising that progress needed to occur at the child’s own pace.

4.3.3.3. **Flexibility**

It was important to adopt a flexible approach to the nurture provision in order to accommodate pupil needs effectively, seen as “getting the balance right according to their needs”. There was a need for flexibility within the allocation process, to take unforeseen factors into account: “There might be more [pupils]
added... it just depends, when the doors open in September, what that first week or so brings”. Despite careful preparation and thorough identification of needs, it was difficult to accurately predict needs: “Some are more resilient than you think and yet others... you think that they’re going to cope but they don’t”. The nurture facilitator therefore ensured that “nothing would be set in stone” until the groups were established and all pupils were catered for: “Those first few weeks you’re just getting the balance, so any changes can be made”.

Flexibility was also required during the formation of the core nurture group, because “the dynamics had to be right” in order for the group to work. The main consideration was “significant behaviour”, because this could have an adverse effect on the rest of the group: “It makes some of them quite nervous, particularly when you’ve got some... that are fragile anyway, the last thing that they want is someone coming in being aggressive and violent”. However, the nurture facilitator would give grave consideration to removing a pupil from the group, only considering this if their behaviour was deemed to be having a consistently “detrimental impact” on the group.

In establishing the therapeutic groups, the nurture facilitator again adopted a flexible approach, aiming for groups where everyone would feel included and the maximum progress could be achieved, for example, “if you have someone that’s really quiet, they tend to get buried by the noisy ones, but if you’ve got a few quiet ones, that’s nice to have a group separate”. Before forming a group, the nurture facilitator would get to know pupils, for example through the lunchtime club, which helped her to create effective groupings: “You get to know who gets on well... who you’re going to make the most impact with”. She felt that adopting a flexible
approach to establishing groups was an essential part of their success, concluding: “It’s all about getting the dynamics right”.

In facilitating the nurture provision, it was considered important to remain flexible in order to respond appropriately to the needs of the pupils involved. One example includes the core nurture curriculum, which developed in response to pupil needs: “It just progresses... we’ll do about transition, [then] with transition something arises, whether it be stress, or organisation, so we do that, and then it’ll be change, so we’ll need to do some activities on change... and it seems to have evolved... it seems to have progressed in sort of a pattern... so hopefully it’s all followed on, one thing from another”. Another example involves the therapeutic groups, with sessions designed to respond to the needs and situations of individual pupils. Each group formed around a particular issue, while the content and duration was kept flexible: “It just depends on need and demand really”.

4.3.3.4. Stability

While flexibility was an important factor in developing the provision, stability was equally important, particularly for the pupils themselves. The nurture facilitator worked hard to maintain stability for the pupils in the core nurture group: “Change has been kept to a minimum... it’s been kept very stable”. She felt that this was important for vulnerable pupils who were easily unsettled by change: “A lot of these children, if you introduce change again, it’s another change on top of a change and it becomes too much, so we try to keep it very settled”. Stability was ensured in a number of areas, for example the timetable (“The regular daily sessions built into the timetable... has meant they’ve had that stability, they know exactly where they are every day and it has helped tremendously”); the group (“It’s a group with not much change, that’s why it worked”); staffing (“There’s been very little change in
staff, they have me, they always have me”) and the physical environment (“We’ve not kept changing the room round”). Due to the vulnerable nature of the pupils, the nurture facilitator needed to limit visitors to the group: “Some of these children are a bit vulnerable; they don’t necessarily like to see new visitors all the time”. For some pupils, having visitors was very difficult: “Initially in that first stage you could actually see some of them, you know, its like ‘Oh no, there’s somebody else and I’m not, I’m still not used to you yet’”. She therefore established a period with no visitors in order to give the pupils “time to settle”. She felt that maintaining stability was a very important factor in ensuring the success of the group.

4.3.3.5. Facilitator role

The facilitator role appeared to be a central aspect to the nurture provision. The nurture facilitator listed some of the qualities she felt were important for the role: “[You need to be] resilient, flexible, adaptable, non-judgemental, resourceful, fair... [and] accessible”. Additional qualities were to be “respectful”, “patient”, to “believe in what I do” and to be “a good listener”. It seems she had succeeded in achieving these qualities, for example: “One of my students told a member of staff that I was the most patient lady in the whole world”. The nurture facilitator saw herself as a “role model” to the pupils, which meant she needed to model effective ways of interacting with others, dealing with conflict and managing difficult emotions. The pupils were highly sensitive to her own emotions (“If I’m all jiggery and I’m all over the place and stressed, guaranteed 100% they’re going to pick that up”) meaning that she needed to try and remain calm “at all times, even if I don’t feel it myself”. However, she also aimed to be honest with the pupils, “to tell the students how I feel”, which she hoped would help them learn to understand and manage emotions more effectively.
The nurture facilitator felt it was important to be fair in her approach: “I have to try and be fair... I have to be balanced with them”. She always gave pupils the opportunity for a fresh start, adhering to the motto that “every day is a new day”. She also identified the need to remain calm and find ways to communicate effectively with the pupils: “There’s no good in shouting at them because that’s just going to bounce off them or go over their head because that’s what they’re used to, or it’s going to wind them up even more”. A large part of her role was giving praise and positive feedback: “They are encouraged, ‘You can do it’, you know, ‘You’re doing well at it’, ‘You are going to do well’”. She also needed to convey clear expectations and impose set boundaries, for example in relation to language and behaviour: “I have to have some sort of limitation, some balance”. She was particularly firm about respecting each other: “We would talk a lot about, you know, respecting that we are all different and they did come round... because they knew I wasn’t going to back down on it”. Her main aim was to enable the pupils to regulate themselves by helping them think about “how they’re behaving and how to change it”.

The nurture facilitator felt that the most important aspect of her role was to build positive relationships with the pupils: “You are bonding, you are forming a relationship with them”. However, some pupils found this difficult: “You are hoping that they will... learn to trust you and for some of the children it’s very hard... you are asking a lot of them”. She felt that her approach enabled mutual relationships to develop: “Because I care, I think it’s probably why they care about me as well”. She had learnt how to “tune in” and relate to the pupils, getting to know them well after two terms: “I’ve got to know their little, the quirkiness of them... I can tell when they’re telling me half the truth... and I can tell when something’s wrong”. Having formed strong relationships with the pupils, the nurture facilitator then found it
difficult to let go during the reintegration process, saying “it’s quite emotional now that they’re all going”. However, she recognised that this was an important part of the process: “As much as I like them to stay and as much as I like them to say ‘I like coming here’, it has to come to the end when they say ‘I don’t need to come anymore’, and that’s the ultimate aim”. In conclusion she said “You’ve got to let them grow”, but felt that this was the hardest part of her role: the process of building strong relationships with pupils for the purpose of developing their independence and eventually letting them go was described as “very, very hard; it is very, very hard to do that”.

The nurture facilitator gained a high level of satisfaction from her role, even though it was often a difficult one. She described it as “a very fulfilling, satisfying job, a very busy job at certain times, erm, lots to do but, you know, how satisfying”. She later reiterated the complexities of her role, which made the job “quite exciting, then quite tiring, erm, then quite tiring a bit more [laughter] but actually, now, [pause] how satisfying.” The nurture facilitator was highly motivated because she believed in the benefit of nurture provision and her role within that. Despite the difficulties she encountered, the nurture facilitator was encouraged by the progress she saw in the pupils: “My motivation was driven forward by seeing changes in the students, gradual at first and then progressing week by week and that’s, you know, that’s kept me going”. In order to succeed in her role, the nurture facilitator required a high level of resilience: “I’ve had disappointments... I’ve had to pick myself up a few times and think ‘No you are doing it right, you’ve just got to keep going’. Although the role was often difficult, she reflected: “I just have to try it each day at a time”.
The nurture facilitator felt a responsibility to “develop myself as well as the students”. She therefore engaged in self-directed learning, which helped her to understand the nurture approach and the way pupils were responding: “You start to see patterns and think ‘Right this is happening, this is because this child’s had this experience’”. The transition manager had attended the four day nurture course and the nurture facilitator found discussions about this helpful, expressing a desire to complete the course herself in the future. The past year represented a period of discovery and innovation for her, as “you start to develop yourself and develop the role”. In addition, the nurture facilitator felt she had learnt a lot from talking with and responding to the pupils themselves: “I think a lot of the experience is talking to the children, they taught me an awful lot”.

4.3.3.6. Support

The nurture facilitator was conscious that she did not operate in a vacuum and was grateful for the support of other school staff. When asked what made the provision work, the nurture facilitator replied: “The backing that I’ve had, you know, the support that I’ve had from [head teacher], [deputy head] and [transition manager]”. These prominent members of the senior management team were “very, very supportive” of the approach, being constantly available should the nurture facilitator wish to discuss anything: “If I had any problems I know any of the senior team would come in... if I had any issues [they] would help me”. Senior members of staff also showed their support in practical ways, for example joining the core nurture group for breakfast. The transition manager remained involved throughout the project, providing a strong sense of support for the nurture facilitator: “She’s always there if I need it”. Other members of staff were also supportive of the nurture provision: “Generally staff have been absolutely fine with it”.
4.3.3.7. Difficult aspects

While the nurture facilitator was largely positive about the provision, she did identify several difficulties, in particular that she was the only member of staff providing nurture support, which she found “hard: sometimes it is hard”. Other issues related to members of staff who did not understand the purpose or agree with the approach, which the nurture facilitator felt was due to their own level of empathy and emotional intelligence: “You see some people don’t understand because they don’t have that emotional intelligence”. Other members of staff expected the nurture facilitator to take full responsibility for the pupils, which was not realistic. She felt that whole school training would be beneficial to help staff understand the needs of nurture pupils and how best to support them. She also joked that some members of staff would benefit from nurture provision themselves: “Perhaps we need a bit of staff [nurture]!” The final aspect identified as difficult was that pupils in the core nurture group missed a substantial amount of core subject time, which “isn’t ideal”. However, she felt that this disadvantage was far outweighed by the benefits of nurture provision, because “you could go into every academic lesson in the world but if you’re not ready for it you’re not going to learn”.

4.3.4. Impact

This final section focuses upon the impact of the nurture provision. This incorporates general impacts, followed by the specific impacts of the various types of provision available. The section ends with a consideration of future developments that the nurture facilitator would like to see. The thematic map is shown below.
4.3.4.1. **General**

The nurture facilitator felt that the first year of the provision had been successful: “*We seem to have hit it right and made a good impact*. She felt that the stakes were high: “*It has to work... I think that it would be an expensive room to keep going if it doesn’t work*”, but the feedback she received during the first year was positive and suggested that it had been effective. A further accolade was noted, which suggests the provision was valued by the senior management team: “*Mr [head teacher] is happy to bring parents on the tour of the school and explains what this room’s about... I don’t think he would do that if he didn’t really want to show it off*”. 
4.3.4.2. Pre-transition visits

In informal evaluations of the pre-transition nurture days, pupils were asked to give feedback, for example to rate how they were feeling out of ten and to draw a face that showed how they were feeling. The nurture facilitator reported that this feedback was unanimously positive, leading her to surmise that “something’s working”: “They were all really looking forward to it [the transition] and happy about coming... they were much more relaxed when they went home and... they’d started to, to talk to different people and make friends”.

4.3.4.3. Core nurture group

The nurture facilitator thought that the core nurture group had been highly successful and had made a “significant impact” on the pupils involved. This was illustrated by a “significant shift” in the Boxall Profile scores, but also in general observations of the pupils. Comparing the pupils to the way they were twelve months ago when she first met them, the nurture facilitator said it was “amazing really, to see how they’ve grown”. Although progress was individual, she felt that she had seen a “significant change in [each] student from September, I think without exception”.

One of the most significant areas of development for the nurture group pupils was increased confidence, with pupils progressing “from hiding away, from thinking that they’re maybe different from everybody else, to believing that ‘No, well I might be different but I’m just as important as everybody else’”. Pupils also demonstrated improvements in their emotional health and wellbeing, with all having “learnt to understand their own feelings and manage their feelings better”. The general mood and demeanour of pupils was greatly improved, which was even noticed by other members of staff who would comment positively about nurture pupils around school.
Most pupils had settled within positive and supportive peer groups, which was a significant protective factor: “They’ve got nice friends, I’m quite happy, you know, I don’t worry about them, I know they’re going to be fine”. The provision also improved relationships at home: “Some of them get on better with parents at home, maybe because, you know, they’re able to manage their feelings better”. Pupils in the core nurture group formed positive relationships with each other, creating a supportive environment: “I think they have supported each other very well in here, they’ve supported each other very, very well, on the whole”. The pupils were respectful of each other: “Never ever did I have any of them laugh at each other or make remarks behind their back”. They were also highly respectful of the nurture facilitator: “Not one of those children’s ever given me any cheek or walked out, slammed the door on me or anything; they’ve all been really, really great... I have to respect the way that they’ve respected me, because they have, every single one of them”.

The nurture facilitator felt that the core nurture pupils’ characters had matured considerably over the course of Year 7: “They have grown an awful lot over this last year... not only in height but in their social skills, emotionally, being able to cope... [it was] amazing... seeing them develop over the year, their characters mature and the way their thinking changed”. She felt this was mainly due to the timely and effective nurture support, which coincided with a critical period of child development: “They developed, and quite rapidly, cos I think that age when they come to secondary, I think there’s something quite rapid happens in the brain... and they do begin to develop those skills quite rapidly”.

Following the support they had received from the nurture provision, the core nurture pupils were able to contribute to the transition process of the next cohort by
helping on visit days, showing pupils around and talking with nervous and vulnerable Year 6 pupils. In recognition of the importance of preparation, this year’s nurture cohort created a book for new pupils, providing information and advice about their own experiences and what new pupils might expect.

The nurture facilitator hoped that the positive outcomes experienced by the core nurture pupils would “set them up for the future” by providing them with aspirations for the future and the skills to achieve these: “With all of this, they should be able to do it... I would expect them to keep building and building on it”. She recognised that achieving these positive outcomes had demanded a lot of the pupils: “I don’t think it’s been easy for them”. She felt the provision had provided a firm base but recognised that further development was largely out of her control, although she hoped the pupils would continue to use the skills they had learnt through the nurture provision: “I just hope it will have set them up and they will continue down that road”. Other factors also influenced the success of the nurture provision, many of which were outside of the nurture facilitator’s control: “Things outside, things there [at home] affect that [what is seen in school and the outcomes of nurture support]”. The nurture facilitator concluded with the following statement “Don’t get me wrong, all of them are not perfect, they are not all saints, but the difference in them and in just small things that they do has been phenomenal, and I think they’ve all, they’re all amazing [pause] I feel quite emotional talking about it... I’m proud of them”.

4.3.4.4. Therapeutic groups

The nurture facilitator felt that the therapeutic groups had been successful, with the majority of pupils indicating that the groups had addressed the issues for which they were referred. The nurture facilitator felt that it was more difficult to
measure detailed outcomes with these groups but reported improved friendships and emotional wellbeing, with pupils recognising that “being stressed and anxious or angry about things is not always the way to get what you want”.

4.3.4.5. **Lunchtime club**

The nurture facilitator was pleased with the outcomes of the lunchtime club, as it had assisted a number of pupils in making and developing positive friendships. Pupils who had attended the club were more aware of other pupils who may be lonely or finding break times difficult and were keen to help these pupils: “The ones that’ve been coming in here... they will highlight people on their own and they go and get them and bring them in... there’s a massive difference, you know, between those who have been in here and those who haven’t”.

4.3.4.6. **Future developments**

The nurture facilitator reflected upon the year and considered ways in which the provision could be improved, concluding that “I think it’s got potential to develop”. She felt there was more that could be done to make the provision “more efficient” and to help pupils find the transition “much easier in the future”. These reflections focused upon developing the provision for pupils in Year 6, Year 7 and Year 8.

The nurture facilitator considered preparation for the transition to be “critical” and was therefore considering ways in which to extend the nurture support into Year 6. She was keen to “start early, in the beginning of Year 6” to “invite them in” and “do different things through the year” in order to “make them familiar with the surroundings” and “to prepare the students ready for the following September” when they would start in Year 7.
The nurture facilitator had a number of ideas about how to improve the nurture provision for vulnerable Year 7 pupils, identifying two main areas she would like to develop with the next cohort: individual sessions with pupils and the ‘Star of the Week’ activity. In addition to small group work, the nurture facilitator felt she would like to spend time with pupils individually for “some nice chat time”, which she felt would be particularly beneficial for “the quiet ones”. She also wanted to develop the ‘Star of the Week’ activity to make it “more of a prestigious, special event... giving real value to their achievement”. She felt this was important because “a lot of them don’t ever receive compliments or any positive feedback, so it’s really giving value to that”.

After the success of the nurture support for pupils in Year 7, the facilitator was beginning to contemplate ways to continue supporting the most vulnerable pupils into Year 8. This support would be less intensive than the Year 7 support, as Year 7 was the primary focus of the intervention, but the nurture facilitator felt that further transitions, such as the transition to Year 8 and the return to school after the summer holiday could be “difficult for some”. She was mindful of maintaining the progress sustained through the Year 7 intervention and felt that further support may be required for the most vulnerable pupils: “To make it successful we maybe have to look at next year, what can we do for the ones that have had nurture this year, rather than just, sort of, abandon them”. She was considering offering some weekly or fortnightly sessions as “check-in sessions... just to make sure that they’re doing ok still”. Further intervention and support would then be offered as required.
4.4. ILLUSTRATIVE CASE EXAMPLES: PUPILS

Having explored the nurture facilitator’s perspective of the nurture provision in general, the analysis will now turn to three further illustrative case examples, focusing upon three pupils who received varying degrees of nurture support in the transition to secondary school. For details of each pupil and the level of provision they received, please refer to the table in Section 3.6.4. Pupil Participants. The structure of this section is illustrated below.

![Figure 17. Structure of pupil illustrative case examples](image)

4.4.1. Structure of analysis

Each pupil perspective incorporates the same four main themes, although the sub-themes vary. It was felt that keeping this consistency would help to structure the analysis of the pupil interviews and would enable comparison between them. The four main themes link with the interview questions and comprise the pupil’s description of the transition process, which offers an introduction to their perspective; the things they identified as positive aspects of the transition; the things they found difficult; and the things that helped to improve their transition experience. Each staff perspective is structured around three main themes, which comprise the pupil’s needs; the provision they have received; and the outcome of this provision.
While the main themes remain constant across each analysis, the sub-themes reflect the findings from each interview.

### 4.5. PUPIL ONE – PUPIL PERSPECTIVE

Pupil One received the highest level of nurture support out of the three pupils included in this study. This section recounts Pupil One’s perception of the transition experience, outlining the positive aspects of transition that he identified, alongside the things he found difficult and the things that helped. All quotes are ascribed to Pupil One. The main themes of Pupil One’s interview are outlined in the thematic map below.

![Thematic map](image)

**Figure 18. Thematic map – Pupil One (pupil perspective)**

#### 4.5.1. Description of transition process

Pupil 3 described the transition as being “quite difficult”. However he also felt that it was an important and necessary process that pupils are required to go through: “It can be difficult and stuff but you have to live with it, life’s life, that’s it really”.


4.5.2. Positive aspects of the transition

Pupil One enjoyed three main aspects of the transition: being part of the nurture group; meeting new people; and certain lessons.

4.5.2.1. Nurture group

Pupil One enjoyed being part of the nurture group, where he had “friends” and did “fun activities”. He liked different aspects of the nurture provision, for example the room, which was “big enough for enough people to, like, have fun and stuff”. He particularly liked the nurture breakfast, where he could have “toast, cereal and juice or a cup of tea”. He spoke of the teamwork required as “three or two people have to go in the kitchen and make it”, describing this process as “fun”.

4.5.2.2. Meeting people

Pupil One felt that moving to secondary school provided valuable opportunities for “meeting more people”. He enjoyed having new friends at secondary school, summing up the positive aspects of transition by saying: “I made new friends”.

4.5.2.3. Fun lessons

Pupil One felt that some lessons could be fun: “It’s fun... some of the lessons”, for example “when we watch a film”.

4.5.3. Difficult aspects of the transition

Pupil One found the transition difficult for a number of reasons, in particular the aspects of change he experienced moving from primary to secondary school; difficulties leaving old friends, making new friends and getting to know teachers; difficulties with the work at secondary school; difficulties managing his own behaviour; and attendance issues.
4.5.3.1. Change

Pupil One found the changes inherent within the transition process particularly difficult, describing secondary school as “weird” because “it weren’t the same as, like, it were in primary”. On several occasions he drew attention to the things that were “different” between primary and secondary school, for example the building was “bigger”, and it was difficult not knowing people, having many more pupils around and having different departments, classrooms and teachers, particularly at first: “It was weird going from one place to another and not knowing what your teacher’s called, [or] who anyone in your... set [is]”. He found it difficult to find his way around the secondary school environment: “It’s hard to, like, go from one place to the other... it’s quite difficult knowing where you are”. This was particularly difficult in the first term at secondary school: “Not knowing where you were going and stuff and, like, going to your lesson and you get lost”. It was “difficult” to have “lots more people” around at secondary school: “Like when you walk down the corridors it’s always noisy and stuff, and people always walk, like, where you’re exactly walking... and hit you with their bags and stuff”.

Pupil One found it difficult to organise himself to accommodate the new secondary school environment, particularly regarding the timetable and remembering equipment. He found the timetable difficult, saying it “looks weird”. Even towards the end of Year 7 he was having difficulties with this, saying “I don’t even know where I am... I’ve lost mine [timetable]”. Pupil One said that “sometimes I forget to pick stuff up” even with support this remained an issue: “My Mum normally... gets my stuff ready... but most of the time I forget it”.
4.5.3.2. **Relationships**

Pupil One said it was “hard leaving some of your mates, cos they might be going to a different school”. Leaving his “best friend”, who went to a different local secondary school, was “quite difficult... [because] I won’t really see him”. Pupil One said he felt “quite upset... leaving him, cos he was my best friend”. Not knowing his peers was also difficult for Pupil One, particularly at the start of Year 7 when he said it was “not that fun... not knowing a lot of people”.

Pupil One said he was “scared of getting bullied... and people name-calling, like aiming it at me” at secondary school. This had happened at primary school but had “not really” happened in secondary. He also found it difficult having older pupils around, because “they push you around in the corridor, thinking, like, they run the school just because they’re, like, taller and they think they’re strong and stuff like that”.

Getting to know lots of different teachers was “quite hard because you have to like remember all the names” and they “all teach in different ways and stuff like that”. Having supply teachers was especially difficult: “[It’s] hard, because... the teacher you’re used to isn’t there... you don’t know what she’s like, you don’t know her... [it’s] difficult”.

4.5.3.3. **Work**

Pupil One struggled with some of his lessons: “Some of the lessons are difficult”. He said the work was “hard... like learning stuff I’ve never even heard of like, what’s it called, algebra and stuff like that”. He said he had also found the work difficult in primary school, but it was harder in secondary school. Homework was also a difficult aspect of the transition, which Pupil One described as “bad...
because, like, I never get it”. He had particular difficulty remembering the homework and understanding what was required of him.

4.5.3.4. Behaviour

Pupil One cited some of the things he found difficult, for example he said he gets “a bit hyper, all the time, like sometimes I can be all bored and stuff and then the next minute I can be really hyper, be really silly and stuff like that, like winding people up and stuff, that’s what I’m like”. He said he can get “really, really wound up”, which happens “quite a lot” with no obvious triggers: “I can be all happy... and then I’ll just get really, really angry... Just like that [clicked fingers]”. This had an impact at school, for example “sometimes I do get hyper and mess about and I get like a 15 minutes detention”. Detentions were a common consequence for behaviour that broke the school rules, with Pupil One saying he had received “quite a few” detentions in Year 7. These were as a result of “silly behaviour, talking over the teacher, messing about, chucking bits of rubber at people, erm, stuff like that”. He felt that detentions were “annoying” but were not an effective punishment: “you get a detention and then that’s it, you just get ‘done’ and you just have to sit there or put the chairs up or tidy up or summat”.

Pupil One felt that the rules were stricter in secondary school, with greater consequences: “we never even used to have a detention, never, in primary we just used to get told off... And I was a lot naughtier in primary”. Challenging behaviour had been an issue at primary school: “If someone, like, wound me up... I would, like, chuck a pencil pot at them, and stuff like that... my teacher wound me up one day so I chucked summat at her... She wound me up, my Year 6 teacher, I hated her”. Pupil One felt that his behaviours were less of an issue at secondary school, as a direct result of the nurture provision he had received.
4.5.3.5. School refusal

Transition difficulties manifested themselves in attendance issues for Pupil One, who explains: “I didn’t even want to come to school, like, I refused to come”. He said this began at the start of Year 7: “I came into school and it was all ok the first day then I went the second day and it changed completely, like it was a lot different, so I just, like, came home and sat at home”. When asked to explain these differences in more detail he said: “The first day, I think we stayed in form all day, like figuring [everything] out... then it just all changed completely... on the [second] day... we just went straight into work... I just didn’t want to come... and I refused then... I didn't really go”. Pupil One said that school refusal had also been an issue in primary school: “It’s happened before, like in primary I didn’t want to go and stuff because the teachers wound me up”. In the autumn term of Year 7, Pupil One said he had had “quite a lot” of days off.

4.5.4. What helped?

Pupil One identified a number of factors that helped to ease the difficulties he experienced in the transition: people, particularly the nurture facilitator, friends and family; the nurture group provision; and applying self-regulation skills.

4.5.4.1. People

Getting to know people formed an important part of the settling-in process for Pupil One. He said the second term was better than the first because “I knew more people”. He also said he had “friends now”, which meant school was “better”. He named a number of friends he had met at secondary school, many of them through the nurture group provision. These friends helped him cope with the difficult aspects of school life, for example lunchtime used to be difficult for Pupil One but now “[I] sit with my friends... and eat my dinner, just hang about with my friends”.

When asked what it was that had helped him overcome his school refusal, Pupil One responded with the name of the nurture facilitator. He described her in a number of ways: “She’s nice... funny, kind, helpful... caring, erm, there’s loads... she’s always happy, she always has something fun for us to do... she’s awesome, she’s my best teacher”. He said he has appreciated the “things that she’s done”, for example “she provided breakfast”; “helped me to get into more lessons”; and helped with “meeting new friends”. On reflection, Pupil One said she had helped him “quite a lot actually”. He also felt that “Miss [nurture facilitator] finds out everything... like if you’re getting bullied and stuff she’ll find out”. He felt that she would always do something about it, which provided reassurance.

Pupil One recognised the contribution of his Mum and her friends in helping him get into school when he found it difficult in the first few weeks of Year 7: “Mum’s friends like helped me to come to school and stuff... like said, ‘If you’re not going to go to school then you’re not going to get a good job’ and... loads of other stuff, like ‘If you don’t go you’re not going to make any new friends’ and... ‘If you don’t go you won’t be able to have fun’”. This was still the case towards the end of Year 7: “Sometimes I don’t want to come to school... and I tell my Mum that I don’t want to go but she... [tries] to make me go to school and... if I won’t go... one of my Mum’s other friends comes round and tells me to get to school ‘NOW’ like she’s the proper boss”.

4.5.4.2. Nurture group

Pupil One spoke warmly of the nurture provision, saying it was “brilliant” and “fun”. He cited the nurture provision as the most important factor in helping his transition and adjustment to Year 7, for example after speaking of a number of things he found difficult, Pupil One said: “But it’s ok now cos of the [nurture provision]
helping me”. He also thought school was “a lot better now I’ve been in the [nurture group]”. Pupil One said the nurture provision had helped him “a lot”, for example “now I actually come to school”. He thought being with other students was “good” and this helped him make friends: “I didn’t know... people until the [nurture group] and then, now I know all of them quite well”. He thought the breakfast was particularly beneficial because “it wakes me up and I’m not as moody and stuff as I would be”.

If he had not had the nurture support, Pupil One thought the transition would be “hard, really hard” and “I’d still be refusing to come to school”. He thought lots of other pupils should have access to a similar provision “cos this is helpful and caring and it’s nice and Miss has done it just for Year 7s to come in and have fun... to help ‘em, like if they haven’t got enough friends and stuff and if they’re not hanging around with people”. With the nurture support he received, Pupil One thought his first year at secondary school had been “ok”. Considering he was refusing school at the start of Year 7, this seems to represent a significant amount of progress. He recognised the purpose of the nurture provision, which was to reintegrate fully into mainstream classes: “Sometimes we’re in there [nurture group] and sometimes she’s putting us out into lessons... we’re slowly getting out of the [nurture group] so we’re not going to be in it soon”.

4.5.4.3. Self regulation

Pupil One had developed some tactics for not getting wound up, for example “ignoring them” if it was a pupil or if it was a teacher he might “hang around in the corridor to calm down away from the teacher”. At times he was able to control his feelings: “sometimes I try to hold it in so I don’t get ‘done’... Just sit there and calm down, not look at anyone”. A source of comfort for Pupil Three was knowing that he
was going home at the end of the school day. He described this as being “brilliant... knowing that... I can just go home and mess about... do all sorts”.

4.6. **PUPIL ONE - STAFF PERSPECTIVE**

This section details the findings from the analysis of the nurture facilitator’s interview regarding Pupil One, focusing upon his needs, the provision put in place and the outcomes of the provision. All quotes in this section are attributed to the nurture facilitator. The three main themes, complete with sub-themes, are outlined in the thematic map below.

![Thematic map – Pupil One (staff perspective)](image)

4.6.1. **Needs**

The nurture facilitator identified three main areas of need for Pupil One: attendance issues; social and emotional needs; and learning.
4.6.1.1. Attendance

Pupil One had been identified at primary school as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties alongside attendance issues, which had been a significant issue in Year 6. At the start of Year 7, there were fears that this would continue: “The early days of him coming to high school he actually truanted, which... was a big thing because it meant that... it could... get worse”.

4.6.1.2. Social and emotional needs

The nurture facilitator raised concerns about Pupil One’s low confidence and self esteem. She noted a number of emotional difficulties and an inability to understand or express his feelings, for example: “He would arrive upset, it could have been something that happened at home, [although] sometimes, more frequently, he couldn’t tell me what it was that had upset him”. Pupil One was described as “generally quiet”: “Often he would just shut down and sulk, on one occasion he just lied on the floor and that’s where he stayed, for nearly two hours”. She described Pupil One as “clingy”: “When he first came to the sessions with me last September, one of the things I did notice about [name] is that he’d come and sit next to me all the time”.

4.6.1.3. Learning

There were concerns relating to learning for Pupil One, in particular that “he lacked motivation; he gave up very easily”. In addition, “he would refuse to do any form of written work and do anything to avoid it”.

4.6.2. Provision

Pupil One received a range of provision that spanned Years 6 and 7, with further work planned for Year 8.
4.6.2.1. Year 6

Pupil One attended several transition visits, both with the full cohort and in smaller groups. In most of these sessions “he was fine, but he was with his friends and in his comfort zone”. However, at one visit in particular, when the full cohort was visiting, “a lot of his issues... came to the fore” when he “he fell and he became very deeply distressed”. These needs were addressed on the day: “He was actually brought into this room [nurture room] for the rest of the day... he hadn’t hurt himself badly but he was so distressed”. As a result “he was actually given a place in the core nurture group”.

4.6.2.2. Year 7

Upon starting in Year 7, Pupil One was allocated a place in the core nurture group, which had been of “tremendous benefit” to him. He attended two lessons every day for the first term, followed by a gradual integration over the second and third terms. The nurture facilitator felt that “the regular daily contact that he’s had that we’ve built into his timetable has benefitted him”. Activities designed to teach social and emotional skills formed a large part of the nurture curriculum for Pupil One: “We worked on emotions, body language, reading body language and he improved in being able to communicate better using these techniques”. She feels he has responded well to being in a “small group, safe environment... [with] minimal interruption... [and] not much... change”. This stability was considered to be an important factor for Pupil One: “There’s only really my face that comes in here and an occasional visitor, so it’s not like he’s seeing lots of people at the same time”. Following reintegration to all lessons, the nurture facilitator was still offering support as required: “I have noticed a couple of issues in one particular lesson that we have spoken about... I’m still doing spot checks, I’m still looking at his
attendance and I would pull [him] up... and say ‘Come on, what’s going on here, you are better than that’... some skills he might just of forgotten that he can do”.

4.6.2.3. Year 8

The nurture facilitator considered Pupil One to still be vulnerable and was therefore considering ways of supporting his transition into Year 8: “This is being discussed at the moment and I think [name] would benefit in September, just some check-in sessions, either once a week or once a fortnight, just to make sure this progress is sustained... to keep him steady in September”. If attendance became an issue in Year 8, the nurture facilitator felt that this would involve the head of year and the attendance manager in the first instance, but that she would work in collaboration with them as required, to see “what intervention can be put in from my end here”.

4.6.3. Outcomes

The nurture facilitator reported favourable outcomes for Pupil One, focusing mainly on social and emotional skills, attendance and independence. In addition, a number of strengths became apparent for Pupil One over the course of the year. The nurture facilitator attributed these positive outcomes to the nurture provision he had received.

4.6.3.1. Social and emotional skills

The nurture facilitator had seen improvements in Pupil One’s emotional wellbeing, in particular that “he’s much more confident than he was when he first came”, “his moods have become less sullen [and] drastically reduced” and he is better able to understand and express his feelings: “If he [was] upset when he came in... he would now be able to tell me what it was that was wrong”. She has seen
marked improvements in his communication skills, for example: “He is able to talk to his Mum more”, “he’s learnt to have confidence to talk within a group” and he is now “good at giving his own opinion”. The nurture facilitator reported a number of improvements in Pupil One’s social skills: “His need to be next to me stopped as his confidence grew... he isn’t clingy... to me anymore”; “he’s more able to go out and mix without my intervention”; and “he will work as part of a team”.

4.6.3.2. Attendance

Pupil One’s attendance improved considerably since the issue was addressed: “His attendance has improved... he’s doing ok”. She felt that the nurture provision was instrumental in this, saying “[after] we talked it seemed to improve”. She seemed confident that his attendance would remain appropriate: “I don’t think his attendance is going to be an issue [in Year 8]... I think it would have dropped off [after reintegration]... since he’s left here his attendance hasn’t dropped off so I’m quite positive that that isn’t going to happen”. However, she did offer reassurance that he would receive further support if required.

4.6.3.3. Independence

Pupil One had developed greater independence skills and was better able to “solve problems on his own... he doesn’t rely on me to sort things out for him anymore, he’s able to do that himself”. For example, “if he’s in trouble... he at one time came crying to me about that, now he deals with it himself”.

4.6.3.4. Strengths became apparent

He has responded well to the nurture environment: “He’s been a pleasure to have in here”. A number of Pupil One’s strengths became apparent during his participation in the daily breakfast activity: “The breakfast exercise, you know, he
came into his own here, over time; he was a good leader, he could work as part of a
team, his organisation was very good... he could compromise... [He] was trying new
things and learning new skills.” Other regular activities that benefited Pupil One
included target setting (“He was responsible for setting his own target each week
and evaluating his progress, which he was able to do”) and Star of the Week (“He
understood the importance of Star of the Week, the decision making, giving and
receiving praise, the importance of hearing something positive from somebody
else”). All these experiences served to build up his social and emotional skills and
promote more positive outcomes for this pupil.

4.6.3.5. Impact of nurture support

The nurture facilitator was pleased with the progress seen in Pupil One over
the course of Year 7, attributing much of this to the nurture support he received: “I
think the nurture that he’s had has been a tremendous benefit to him”. She saw a
large number of improvements in Pupil One as a result of the nurture provision:
“He’s had a gradual integration into all his lessons, he’s much happier and settled...
his attendance has greatly improved... he’s doing really good”.

If Pupil One had not had nurture provision, the nurture facilitator was less
optimistic about his outcomes: “I think his attendance would have not been as good
as it was... I don't think he would have achieved very much... he would have been
deeply unhappy, he may not have made friends as well as he has done... he just
wouldn’t have reached his potential because... his mindset wouldn’t have been in the
right place”. She concludes that having the nurture group support has been “a
positive move for him... he’s not perfect, [but] we are getting there... I’m pleased
with him and I think he’s actually pleased with himself”.
4.7. PUPIL TWO - PUPIL PERSPECTIVE

This section describes the findings from the interview with Pupil Two, who was allocated to the core nurture group part way through the first term. The section follows a similar format to Pupil One’s pupil interview, including a description of the transition, positive aspects of the process, difficult aspects and what has helped address these. All quotes are attributed to Pupil Two. The main themes and sub-themes are illustrated in the diagram below.

![Thematic map – Pupil Two (pupil perspective)](image)

*Figure 20. Thematic map – Pupil Two (pupil perspective)*
4.7.1. Description of transition process

For Pupil Two, the transition was “a bit hard”. When asked to describe the transition in one word, her reply was “nervous”. She recognised the dual experience of the transition, saying “It’s scary, but then it’s fun”.

4.7.2. Positive aspects of the transition

Pupil Two associated some positive feelings with the transition to secondary school, for example feeling “happy” and “excited” because she thought it was a “good school”. Making new friends was a highlight of the transition process: “I found new friends... they came up to me and started talking to me... [It was] good”.

4.7.3. Difficult aspects of the transition

Pupil Two identified a number of difficult aspects to the transition: feeling nervous; the transition being a ‘big change’; things she was worried about; certain lessons; and unstructured times.

4.7.3.1. Feeling nervous

Despite some positive emotions associated with the transition, Pupil Two’s overwhelming response was to feel “nervous... a lot nervous”. She said getting to school in the morning was particularly difficult for her because “I’m nervous in the morning”. She described feeling nervous as having “butterflies in my stomach... sometimes they stay a long time”. The transition to secondary school made her feel “nervous, because I didn’t know what I was going to do”.

4.7.3.2. Aspects of change

The first term at secondary school was particularly “scary” for Pupil Two, particularly as the transition represented a big change for her: “I came from a really small school... [and] coming to a big school... made me nervous”. She spoke of
primary school as being “fun... the teachers were really nice... [it was] good, quiet... and safe”. In comparison, secondary school was “big”, “crowded” and “loud” and it was “scary... coming and seeing a big school, seeing tall people... all the older kids as well... they're a bit scary”. Pupil Two had to adjust to a much bigger environment and found that “at first it was a bit difficult” to find her way around school “because I get lost”. Not many other people came from Pupil Two’s primary school and this was also “scary”.

4.7.3.3. Worries

Pupil Two expressed worries about the unknown aspects of secondary school, saying: “I didn’t know much about it”. She was “worried about detentions” and about homework, saying “I get worried... in case I don’t bring it in on time”. Being late was also a worry, especially in the mornings when she got nervous “thinking that I’m going to be late”. Before the transition Pupil Two was worried that she “might get bullied”, although having settled in to secondary school she worried “not so much now” about this. Leaving old friends was hard “because I might not have been able to see them”. Making new friends was also a worry because “I thought I couldn’t make new friends at first”.

4.7.3.4. Lessons

Pupil Two found the work at secondary school “hard”. She also found the work hard at primary school, but thought it was “harder” at secondary school. Having different teachers was difficult for Pupil Two, especially not knowing how they might react, for example “they might shout”.
4.7.3.5. *Unstructured times*

Pupil Two found break times and lunchtimes “a bit hard... cos sometimes it can be crowded”.

4.7.4. *What helped?*

Pupil Two identified a number of things that helped her in the transition. These include pre-transition preparation and visits; the process of settling in; particular people, especially her friends and the nurture facilitator; attending the lunchtime club; and being included in the core nurture group.

4.7.4.1. *Pre-transition preparation*

Pupil Two spoke about a number of things that helped before the transition, for example “a teacher came and talked” with her at primary school. She attended a number of visit days, which she found very beneficial. She said she felt “excited” about “coming to see high school” and “knowing some people from different primary schools”. She thought these visits helped because “we went to look around the school... we got to know the teachers... [it helped to] know your way around”. She said she felt “happy” after the visits, because “I’d been and seen it”.

4.7.4.2. *Settling in*

For Pupil Two, it took a while to settle in but this was part of the process and once she started to feel more familiar with the secondary school environment things became easier: “you’re here and then you meet new friends and then you meet the new teachers and you see what the lessons are like”. She felt that finding her way around was “getting easier” as she settled in, as she “learnt it as I went”. Once she got in to school each morning she could relax because “I know that I’m not late”.
4.7.4.3.  People

Making new friends had been an important aspect of the transition for Pupil Two, which helped her settle in and provided a sense of “fun” once she had “found new friends”. Her form tutor had also helped by teaching her how to use the timetable: “My form teacher taught me”. The nurture group facilitator had made a significant difference to Pupil Two in the transition, who described her as “nice... she’s really nice”. Pupil Two saw the nurture facilitator’s key role as being “to help you settle in school”. She felt that the nurture facilitator was successful in this role, saying that she “helps you a lot”. For this pupil in particular, the nurture facilitator “helps you about worries... by solving them with you, talking me through them”.

4.7.4.4.  Self-regulation

Pupil Two had developed organisation strategies to help her adapt to the more complex school environment, for example to “make lists” to help remember what she needs for different lessons. Home was a safe place for Pupil Two which provided something to look forward to at the end of the school day: “I like going home and seeing my horses”.

4.7.4.5.  Lunchtime club

Pupil Two found that the lunchtime nurture club had helped her manage lunchtimes: “I go into the [nurture room]... I eat my lunch in there [with] some of my friends”. She liked it because “it’s not crowded”.

4.7.4.6.  Core nurture group

When things got particularly difficult for Pupil Two, she was invited to join the core nurture group. Speaking about this experience, she said “it was good... I felt happy that I was here”. She valued this support, saying the group was “fun and nice
and relaxing” and she used it “a lot”. Even once she had reintegrated back into full time lessons, she gained reassurance from knowing that the nurture provision was there. Pupil Two felt that the nurture provision has had a significant impact upon her, saying that had such support not been available, “I wouldn’t’ve come to school”.

4.8. PUPIL TWO - STAFF PERSPECTIVE

This section outlines the nurture facilitator’s perspective regarding Pupil Two, focusing upon her needs, the provision put in place and the outcomes of the provision. All quotes in this section are attributed to the nurture facilitator. The main themes and sub-themes are outlined in the thematic map below.

![Thematic Map - Pupil Two (Staff Perspective)](image-url)

*Figure 21. Thematic map – Pupil Two (staff perspective)*
4.8.1. Needs

The nurture facilitator reported a combination of needs that led to Pupil Two having a “bit of a rough start” in the first term of secondary school. These needs comprised social and emotional needs such as anxiety and low self esteem; attendance issues; difficulties with certain lessons; and coming from a small primary school, which amplified the change and meant she did not had the protective factor of friends transferring to the same school.

4.8.1.1. Social and Emotional needs

A number of social and emotional needs were described for Pupil Two, for example “she was very shy [and] nervous”, “she lacked confidence”, “she had low self esteem”, “she found it hard to make friends” and “she would often be upset”. During the first few months of secondary school, Pupil Two’s needs became more apparent: “It was getting more and more regular that parents were bringing her into school and she’d be crying”. This escalated until, at the beginning of November, “she started to show some significant signs of stress and anxiety”. The nurture facilitator reflected that “the trauma... that she must have been facing every day just coming to school... was quite upsetting really”.

4.8.1.2. Attendance

In the second half of the autumn term, these social and emotional issues began to manifest as attendance issues: “She didn’t want to come to school... and attendance was starting to slip”.

4.8.1.3. Lessons

One of the causes for these attendance issues was that Pupil Two “didn't like some of her lessons”. She particularly struggled with Maths: “Any day that she had
Maths she was quite traumatised by it... she was literally shaking”. Through exploring this Maths issue, the nurture facilitator found that Pupil Two “thought she was rubbish at it... she believed that she couldn’t do it, she believed that she was going to get in trouble because she found it hard”.

4.8.1.4. **Small primary school**

In addition to these difficulties, Pupil Two also had some transitional vulnerabilities in that she came from a small primary school and “didn’t come with many people from her own primary school”.

4.8.2. **Provision**

Provision for Pupil Two comprised of pre-transition visits and attendance at the lunchtime club from September; inclusion in the core nurture group from November; and individualised support for specific issues.

4.8.2.1. **Pre-transition visits**

Pupil Two attended several pre-transition small group sessions, which focused on helping her to become more familiar with the larger school environment, helping her to make friends and containing her anxieties about the move. Towards the end of Year 6, Pupil Two also had some individual visit sessions that were further tailored towards addressing her concerns and transition needs, including sessions where she was accompanied by her mother: “She came for some sessions one-to-one before her final transition... on a couple of occasions she came with Mum”.

4.8.2.2. **Lunchtime club**

From the information gleaned from primary school staff and from observations on the visit days, secondary school staff decided to invite Pupil Two to
attend the lunchtime club: “It was decided from what we’d sort of observed, erm, that she was going to just be invited to the lunch club at dinner time, which was a friendship club”. Pupil Two regularly attended this club in Year 7.

4.8.2.3. Core nurture

Pupil Two’s needs became much more apparent during the first term of Year 7, leading to her inclusion within the core nurture group from the start of November. This began as a temporary measure but developed into a more permanent place in the group: “She came to core nurture, initially for a few weeks’ trial but ended up staying”.

4.8.2.4. Specific support

The nurture facilitator offered support for three specific issues that arose for Pupil Two: meeting her at reception at the start of the school day; helping her reintegrate into Maths lessons; and working out a plan to help her get the bus to school in Year 8.

Prior to Pupil Two joining the core nurture group, she was often brought into school by her parents and was seemingly very distressed. At these times, the nurture facilitator would meet her at the school’s reception in order to provide a “familiar face” and help her get into school.

In order to address Pupil Two’s issues with Maths lessons, the nurture facilitator first spoke with her about why she found it difficult. She then arranged a meeting between herself, Pupil Two and the Maths teacher where “we sat down, we came up with a plan [that she would]... sit on the front [and] I gave her a red, amber, green card, which, the red is ‘I’m having trouble’, amber is ‘I’m ok-ish but... go slow’ and green is ‘I’m absolutely fine’”.
In order to increase her independence, Pupil Two would hopefully start to catch the bus to and from school in Year 8. The nurture facilitator felt this would be difficult for her to accomplish, so she worked with Pupil Two and her friends to “break it down and see what we can do”, for example to plan out a bus route that enabled her to travel with friends and to co-ordinate where different people would be getting on or off so she knew what to expect.

4.8.3. Outcomes

The nurture facilitator spoke of a number of outcomes for Pupil Two, all of which were positive and which she felt represented a radical transformation. Outcomes included improved social and emotional skills, friendships, engagement with learning and being able to make a contribution to the school.

4.8.3.1. Transformation

The nurture facilitator felt that the nurture provision had a very positive impact upon Pupil Two: “It’s been an amazing transformation... it’s just massive, a massive transformation”. She described a number of positive outcomes, for example Pupil Two’s attendance had significantly improved, her anxiety had decreased, she had made friends, learnt skills and no longer needed nurture support: “Her confidence has grown... she just gets on, she’s just happy”.

4.8.3.2. Social and emotional skills

The nurture facilitator described Pupil Two as a “lovely girl” who was “very very well mannered” and was “an absolute pleasure in here”. The nurture facilitator felt that Pupil Two had developed a number of valuable social and emotional skills through her participation in the nurture provision. After receiving nurture support, Pupil Two appeared much less anxious and had adapted well to secondary school
life: “She has certainly now got more confidence, she has more friends... she’s a lot more relaxed... in fact I very rarely see her”. Pupil Two was better able to communicate with adults and peers, using the skills learnt from the core nurture sessions: “Her communication skills have improved a lot and that’s because she’s taken part in the role play, the news-sharing, the kitchen activities”. She was also better at communicating difficult emotions: “She will come and tell me if something’s wrong”.

Pupil Two had developed problem-solving skills that enabled her to deal with a wider variety of issues than she could at the start of Year 7. While some issues still remained, Pupil Two was able to ask for help when she needed it: “I’m not saying that she can deal with things always easily but she’ll come and talk to me if she can’t and try and work through”. The more Pupil Two experienced success in dealing with things, the more her confidence grew: “It’s just getting her used to doing something, finding it’s fine and then, you know, just carrying on doing it”.

4.8.3.3. Friends

The facilitator felt that the nurture provision, in particular the lunchtime club and the core nurture group had supported Pupil Two in making friends, both within the nurture provision and beyond in her form group and in lessons: “It’s been a delight that she’s made friends... she’s just become a much more confident person, she’s very popular. She’s got some very very good, erm, pleasant friends who are very supportive”.

4.8.3.4. Learning

Having addressed Pupil Two’s social and emotional difficulties, the nurture facilitator felt that “she’s going to be more successful at her learning now”. This
was particularly noticeable in Maths, which had been a significant issue during reintegration. By using the techniques agreed in collaboration with the nurture facilitator and Maths teacher, Pupil Two was better able to overcome her fears and engage appropriately: “Her confidence grew, she became more able at the subject and in time relied less on using the signals because she was more confident in making the right decision... and now Maths is not a problem”.

4.8.3.5. Contribution

Having grown more confident, Pupil Two was then able to contribute something back: “[She’s] very good if I need any help... I can rely on [her]”. One example was that Pupil Two was invited help out on the nurture transition day for the next cohort of pupils, which included showing Year 6 pupils around the school, helping with activities and talking with new pupils about the transition and addressing their worries. The fact that Pupil Two was able to do this was considered to represent a significant improvement: “She’s enjoyed working with some of the Year 6 transition children... The [Pupil Two] last year wouldn’t have been able to do that but the [Pupil Two] this year is able to go and talk to them, help them, encourage them”.

4.9. PUPIL THREE - PUPIL PERSPECTIVE

This section describes the findings from the interview with Pupil Three, who received less intensive provision than the previous two pupils. The section includes a description of the transition, alongside positive aspects, difficult aspects and things that have eased the transition process: all quotes are attributed to Pupil Three. The main themes and sub-themes from this interview are illustrated in the diagram below.
4.9.1. **Description**

Pupil Three said he found the transition “a bit hard” because “it’s a big change”. When asked to sum up the transition process, he said “it was hard”.

4.9.2. **Positive aspects of the transition process**

4.9.2.1. **Friends**

Pupil Three appreciated the opportunity to broaden his social network, as the transition enabled him to “make more friends, and you still have your old ones as well”.

4.9.2.2. **Independence**

Pupil Three appreciated the increased independence that came with the transition: “You grow up” and “you get more confident”. As examples, he said “You get to free roam more... The days go quicker when you move round... [at
primary] things could get to you easier than when you're like in different classrooms [at secondary]... the rooms are bigger as well, so then you don't feel cramped”.

4.9.3. Difficult aspects of the transition process

4.9.3.1. Worries

When asked what made the transition difficult, Pupil Three replied “the worries... I was like worried about what would happen if I moved... cos it’s a big change”. He then spoke in more detail about his worries, in particular relating to bullying (“I was worried about all like bullying); other people’s perceptions (“What people would think of me”); and rumours he had heard at primary school (“Worries... about stories that I heard”).

4.9.3.2. Negative experiences

Pupil Three cited two negative experiences that had been difficult: bullying and losing things. At the start of Year 7, Pupil Three reported that he had his tie stolen by older pupils: “I’ve had it done to me twice... [it was] horrible”. He described this as “bullying” and, although he felt that this had been dealt with and had not happened since, it had been a negative experience for him that marred his perception of the transition process. Another issue for Pupil Three was “losing something, like [leaving it] in a different classroom and you don’t know where you put it”. He said this had happened once and he remained worried that it might happen again.

4.9.3.3. Homework

Pupil Three felt that homework had been difficult because “sometimes they give us a bit too much... [and] sometimes the work’s too hard”.
4.9.3.4. New environment

Pupil Three found it difficult to adjust to the new environment, saying “it was hard... like coping with all of the rooms and all the lessons... trying to find my way around... getting to know teachers”. Using the timetable was also difficult: “when I first started I thought it was confusing and a bit too much”. He recognised that “it took a bit of time” to get used to this new environment, particularly as “when you’re in primary school you’re just in one classroom”, so “it’s a big change”.

4.9.4. What helped?

4.9.4.1. Preparation

Pupil Three said he had received information from family and school staff about what was expected of him at secondary school, for example “things that you had to do... like, you had to listen always to the teacher and, like, not speak over”.

Pupil Three very much appreciated the opportunity to participate in the pre-transition visit days, of which he remembered there being five in total. This gave him the chance to familiarise himself with the new school environment and get to know some of the teachers and some of his peer group through fun activities. One visit was for the whole cohort while the others were for smaller groups of pupils who had concerns: “A few that were really worried about secondary”. He remembered the valuable input of the nurture transition days, where the nurture facilitator listened to his worries and alleviated these: “She talked to me about anything that I had worried about and then if I had any worries she said just write them down into a ‘worry box’ that she had”. These visit days were beneficial for Pupil Three, who said they “built my confidence up”. After the visits he felt “Brilliant... because we got to write about anything that was on our minds or owt [anything] like that and got to express ourselves”.
4.9.4.2. Settling in

Pupil Three said he found the transition difficult at first but that once he settled in he noticed improvements: “Once I got in... and I got sorted about all my lessons an’ that... I just started to build my confidence back up... I started to, um, do more in lessons... [and] have more friends”. As he got used to things such as using the timetable and finding his way around, he felt much more comfortable at secondary school.

4.9.4.3. Nurture

Pupil Three spoke warmly of the nurture provision, citing this as the main facilitating factor in helping him in the transition: “I went to the [nurture provision] and Mrs [name] she helped me like build my confidence back up”. When asked to describe the nurture provision, he said “It’s like, where, like, you’re getting bullied or you’re worried about something and you, like, go in there to, like, help build up confidence and make more friends”. He felt that the nurture provision had been successful in building up his confidence, helping him make friends and dealing with incidents of bullying.

4.9.4.4. People

Pupil Three said he appreciated the support he had received from family, friends, and school staff. He cited support from his family, who encouraged him “to, like, ‘don’t worry, keep on going’”. His friends helped him considerably: “Whenever I’m like upset or anything like that, they just come and talk to me and see what’s up”. He also appreciated literacy support from friends and staff and felt able to ask for this support: “If I struggle to read or spell then I just ask a friend or a teacher”. The nurture group facilitator helped him to deal with his worries by giving him space to talk and providing reassurance: “I talked to Mrs [name]... and she said ‘don’t
worry”’. She also provided a sense of security for him: “If you like get bullied and you can just tell a teacher or go to Mrs [name] and then she’ll sort it”.

4.9.4.5. Self regulation

Pupil Three was able to use regulatory self-talk to help keep calm in difficult circumstances: “Once I got there I was like, ‘Ok, let’s stay calm’”. After successfully navigating the transition, Pupil Three gained an ability to manage his emotions and to rely on adults for help: “Just keep your head up and don’t worry about anything, and if you do have any worries go to a teacher and they’ll help sort it out”.

4.10. PUPIL THREE - STAFF PERSPECTIVE

This section outlines the nurture facilitator’s perspective regarding Pupil Three, focusing upon his needs, the provision put in place and the outcomes of the provision. All quotes in this section are attributed to the nurture facilitator. The main themes and sub-themes are outlined in the thematic map below.

Figure 23. Thematic map – Pupil Three (staff perspective)
4.10.1. Needs

The nurture facilitator identified three main issues for Pupil Three: anxiety, social skill difficulties; and vulnerability relating to a previous transition. Despite these issues, the concerns for Pupil Three were relatively minor in comparison to other nurture pupils.

4.10.1.1. Anxiety

Primary school staff had identified anxiety as a concern for Pupil Three, particularly in relation to the transition: “Prior to transition, the concerns were that he just might be anxious about the move to high school”. He was considered to be quite sensitive (“He’s a reflective child”), which was considered a strength but could also make him vulnerable in the transition.

4.10.1.2. Social skills

The nurture facilitator observed that Pupil Three had some difficulties with social skills and making friends: “I don’t often see him with a lot of friends”. He seemed reluctant to join in with his peers and often appeared on the edge, tending to “just sit and look in at the others playing”.

4.10.1.3. Previous transition

Pupil Three was also considered vulnerable because “he had previously moved primary schools”, which he reportedly found difficult. This therefore made him more vulnerable in the transition to secondary school, as he was anxious about the move and how he would settle in.

4.10.1.4. Minor concern

Despite these identified vulnerabilities, Pupil Three did not present a significant cause for concern. There were no concerns relating to learning (“He’s a
very conscientious student... he works very hard in his lessons”) or behaviour (“I have no issues with [Pupil Three], he’s very well-mannered and very polite”), so he received less support than Pupil One and Pupil Two.

4.10.2. Provision

4.10.2.1. Pre-transition visits

In Year 6, Pupil Three attended the main pre-transition visit, the nurture visit day and several additional nurture sessions. Prior to transition he “didn’t really show that many concerns”.

4.10.2.2. Lunchtime club

Despite not showing any great concerns on the visit days, secondary school staff were mindful that primary school staff had identified Pupil Three as potentially vulnerable. They therefore agreed to include him in the lunchtime club, which he seemed to appreciate: “He was invited to attend the lunchtime club, which he did”. This gave Pupil Three the opportunity to mix with his peers in a safe environment. However, he seemed to find this difficult, prompting the nurture facilitator to encourage him to participate in games and conversations: “I’ve been trying to get him, to encourage him to join in”.

4.10.2.3. Therapeutic group

Further monitoring of Pupil Three highlighted some concerns in relation to stress and anxiety that became apparent further into the first term, prompting the nurture facilitator to include Pupil Three in a therapeutic group: “He did start to show little niggling signs of stress at school so he was invited to come to the weekly or biweekly [fortnightly] nurture sessions”. Although less intensive than the core nurture group, this provided nurturing support, an opportunity to teach social and
emotional skills and a chance to address any concerns that had arisen following the transition: “[To] solve any issues that were going on”.

4.10.3. Outcomes

4.10.3.1. Confidence

The nurture facilitator felt that Pupil Three had made good progress and that the provision had increased his confidence: “His self esteem and confidence has grown”, which had a positive impact upon his adjustment to secondary school.

4.10.3.2. Friends

The nurture facilitator felt that Pupil Three now had friends: “I know he does have friends”, although he still found social situations difficult. The support to encourage him to participate more at the lunchtime club was felt to have been successful: “He’s been joining in with some of the other students just playing some board games and things like that... I think he’s enjoyed doing that”.

4.10.3.3. Contribution

The nurture facilitator felt that Pupil Three “shows good empathy” and noticed people who are on their own or going through difficulties, which enabled him to contribute to the school. She spoke specifically about an occasion when “someone was being bullied and him and another child were very, very good at organising a bit of a, erm, help group for this boy and they did get awarded for that as sort of ‘Super Citizens’ because they showed that initiative that somebody needed help”.


5. DISCUSSION

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter draws together the main findings and seeks to interpret these in a way that is both academically meaningful and useful for practice. It begins with a summary of the thematic analysis findings in order to clarify and reiterate the main points. The two research questions are then addressed in turn, each with an integration of relevant transition and nurture literature. An integrated case description is then provided to apply these findings and the research diary findings to the research propositions. This leads on to a discussion of the main implications of the findings, within which a tentative model of nurture provision that supports pupils in the transition from primary to secondary school is presented. Limitations of the research are then discussed, followed by ideas for further research. The next section reports on the feedback stage, incorporating school staff and members of the collaborative inquiry group. This raises interesting points about potential pitfalls in implementing interventions, although regrettably it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss these in great detail. Finally, the author presents their own reflections on the research journey, before concluding the thesis with a summary of the main findings and implications for practice.

5.2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS - THEMATIC ANALYSIS

A summary of the thematic analysis findings is provided below. This is split into three sections: the first considers the facilitator’s perspective of the general nurture provision; the second summarises the findings relating to the three pupils; while the third draws out common themes that have arisen from the various interviews.
5.2.1. Illustrative Case Example: Nurture Facilitator

The interview with the nurture facilitator regarding the general nurture provision was arranged into four main themes: Motivation; Provision; Facilitation; and Impact. Motivation explored the factors that inspired the provision, including an innovative and proactive school ethos, recognition of the difficulties inherent within the primary-secondary transition and identification of pupils who were especially vulnerable in the process. The main purpose of the provision was to support socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils before, during and after the transition to secondary school.

Provision outlined the main aspects of support that the school put in place, including pre-transition visits, a lunchtime club, therapeutic groups and a core nurture group. The core nurture group incorporated many elements of a ‘classic’ nurture group, with the formation of positive, strong and consistent relationships, activities that promoted social and emotional development and the ‘breakfast’ activity. However, there were also a number of ways in which the nurture model had been adapted to accommodate pupil needs and the secondary school context, for example there was only one member of nurture staff, the group only met for two hours each day and the group only ran for one and a half terms, with the remainder of support focusing upon reintegration to mainstream classes.

Facilitation considered the ways in which nurture provision was delivered, beginning with early and effective identification of pupil needs and allocation to appropriate provision. Personalisation was considered to be an important principle, as the nurture provision aimed to respond to a diverse mix of needs. The school adopted a flexible approach to ensure that all pupil needs could be met and that any unforeseen outcomes could be accommodated, as it proved difficult to predict how
some pupils would respond to the transition. Stability was an important factor for the pupils, particularly those in the core nurture group. The role of the nurture facilitator was considered central to the success of the provision, as she built relationships with vulnerable pupils and developed her approach in response to pupil needs. Support from other members of staff, particularly the senior management team, was important to ensure success of the venture. Some aspects of facilitation were difficult, for example being the only member of staff in the nurture provision, dealing with a lack of understanding from some staff members and the difficult decision to remove pupils from a substantial number of lessons in order for them to access the core nurture provision.

The provision was considered to have a significant Impact in a range of areas. Pupils seemed to benefit from the pre-transition visits, lunchtime club and therapeutic groups, which provided a sense of security and belonging during the difficult transition process. The core nurture group pupils benefitted considerably from the provision, with the nurture facilitator reporting improvements in self esteem, communication skills, emotional wellbeing and attendance, alongside the formation of positive and mutual friendships within their peer groups. Some pupils still had issues to contend with, for example difficulties in the home, but it was felt that the provision had helped them make a successful transition and would open up possibilities for a more positive future. Due to the many successful outcomes, the nurture facilitator was considering ways in which to improve the provision for the next cohort, for example to work with vulnerable pupils earlier in Year 6, to provide more for Year 7 pupils and to support core nurture pupils in the transition to Year 8 and beyond.
5.2.2. Illustrative Case Examples: Pupils

Three illustrative case examples explored pupil and staff perspectives of the nurture provision and the transition to secondary school in relation to three pupils who had received different types of nurture provision.

Pupil One found the transition difficult, particularly dealing with the many elements of change and getting to know new people, which resulted in a refusal to attend school at the start of Year 7. He felt the nurture provision, and the nurture facilitator in particular, had helped him considerably in the transition and attributed the fact that he was even attending school to the nurture support he had received. The nurture facilitator had identified issues with social skills, emotional wellbeing, learning and attendance, which prompted the inclusion of Pupil One in the core nurture group from the beginning of Year 7. She felt that he benefited considerably from the nurture provision, noting significant improvements in all areas including social and emotional development, attendance and engagement in learning. However, she felt that he was still vulnerable and intended to offer further support in Year 8 as required.

Pupil Two was very anxious in the transition, but also noted positive elements to the experience. She felt that the transition represented a large change, particularly as she came from a small primary school and did not transfer with friends. She appreciated receiving nurture support, both before and after the transition, and felt that the support of the nurture facilitator and her inclusion in the core nurture group helped her to attend school and settle in, enabling her to make good friends and adjust to the new environment. Prior to the transition, Pupil Two was not identified as requiring core nurture support, although the school did provide a number of pre-transition visits and invited her to attend the lunchtime club. Her
needs became more apparent in the first term at secondary school, when she often appeared distressed and attendance started to decline. It was therefore decided to include Pupil Two in the core nurture group from November, which she responded very well to. The nurture facilitator described a number of significant improvements, including increased confidence, an ability to manage difficult emotions and inclusion within a supportive peer group. Pupil Two received ongoing nurture support for specific issues that arose during reintegration to mainstream lessons, to the point where she no longer needed support.

Pupil Three found the transition hard, but also enjoyed aspects such as making new friends and gaining more independence. He had a lot of worries about the transition and appreciated the pre-transition visits and discussions with the nurture facilitator that helped to allay some of these worries. He felt the nurture provision helped to build up his confidence and helped him to make friends, making a significant contribution to the success of his transition. The nurture facilitator had identified some concerns relating to anxiety, which resulted in Pupil Three’s inclusion in several pre-transition visits and an invitation to the lunchtime club. He was also included in a therapeutic group when signs of stress became more apparent in Year 7. The nurture facilitator noted improvements in Pupil Three’s confidence, social skills and friendships, alongside an ability to notice other pupils who were struggling and to offer them support.

5.2.3. Common themes

Throughout the interviews, some common themes seemed to arise. Perhaps the most prominent was the theme of personalisation, which pervaded many aspects of the nurture facilitator and pupil interviews. This was demonstrated in the school’s commitment to adopt a flexible approach and to tailor provision to the needs of
individual pupils: it was also demonstrated in the three pupil examples, where each pupil received different support in response to their needs. The delivery of the nurture provision was flexible, so that pupil needs could be accommodated as they arose. This meant that the nurture facilitator could respond promptly to identified needs, such as Pupil Two being included in the core nurture group and Pupil Three being included in a therapeutic group as needs became more apparent. The delivery of the core nurture and therapeutic groups was kept flexible, to enable the nurture facilitator to respond to the needs of each group in the approaches used and the topics covered. In ensuring that the provision responded to individual pupil needs, staff needed to be proficient at identifying pupil needs early and accurately, so that issues could be addressed promptly. Careful monitoring was also required, to ensure that provision was appropriate at each stage in the process. Principles of identification, flexibility, responsiveness and monitoring were therefore important in ensuring that the needs of each pupil were met appropriately.

In the pupil interviews, two common themes were identified. The first was that each pupil found the transition difficult, particularly because of the many aspects of change and their worries about things such as bullying. The second was that all three pupils appreciated the nurture provision they had received, particularly their relationship with the nurture facilitator. Despite each pupil receiving different levels of support, each felt that the provision had been appropriate for them and had made a positive impact upon their transition experience.

For each pupil, the nurture facilitator reported that the impact of provision had been significant. Common improvements were noted in relation to self esteem, friendships and the ability to manage emotions and deal with challenges, which were considered to facilitate successful transitions. This was reflected in the pupil
interviews, where factors such as making friends, building confidence and being able to self-regulate were identified as supporting the transition process.

Interestingly, there were some differences between the staff and pupil perspectives. This was most notable in relation to the pre-transition visit days, which were discussed by Pupil Two, Pupil Three and the nurture facilitator. The pupils gave more weight to these visits than the nurture facilitator seemed to appreciate, for example the nurture facilitator felt that Pupil Three did not display difficulties in the pre-transition visits, consequently deciding to provide only a minimal amount of nurture support. For the pupil, however, these visits had been highly beneficial, calming many of his anxieties about the transition and enabling him to feel positive about moving to secondary school. It may even be that the preparation Pupil Three received meant that the potential issues identified by primary school staff did not develop. Continued monitoring enabled the nurture facilitator to notice when needs did start to surface, meaning that she was able to address these effectively. It seems that early identification enabled school staff to adopt a preventative approach, which was successful in addressing pupil needs.

5.3. INTEGRATION OF FINDINGS WITH RELEVANT LITERATURE

This section will consider ways in which the findings of the thematic analysis link back to the two research questions. It will also integrate relevant literature in relation to these findings.

5.3.1. Research Question One

The first research question asked: How can nurture provision in a secondary school support socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition from primary to secondary school? The following six sections will answer this research
question from a variety of angles, firstly outlining the main findings in relation to this question, then considering the relevant transition literature in relation to the four main themes of Motivation, Provision, Facilitation and Impact. The section ends with an exploration of how the findings link into literature concerning nurture groups in secondary schools.

5.3.1.1. Findings in relation to Research Question One

The research aimed to address this question through a series of interviews with the nurture facilitator. The main interview explored the nurture provision in general, while three supplementary interviews explored how this worked in practice with three pupils who received different levels of nurture support. The findings suggest that there are many ways in which a school can use nurture provision to support socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school. In this school, provision began in Year 6 with pre-transition visits, which enabled pupils to become familiar with the new school and provide a forum in which pupils could make friends and address worries. A range of provision was available in Year 7, including a lunchtime club, therapeutic groups and a core nurture group. Adhering to principles such as early and effective identification and personalisation made the provision a success. In order to work, the provision needed to be embedded within a whole-school ethos and required strong support from the school’s senior management team. Central to the provision was the nurture facilitator, who invested heavily in the role and became a significant source of support for vulnerable pupils. Her role encompassed the following: modelling and teaching adaptive skills that supported social, emotional and cognitive development; fostering confidence and independence; and, most importantly, building positive and consistent relationships with the pupils she worked with. These relationships provided a sense of security for
pupils, enabling them to adapt to the new school environment at their own pace. The main aim of the core nurture provision was to assist social and emotional development until pupils were ready to engage appropriately in all mainstream lessons. Continued support was available for pupils as and when they needed it, particularly during the reintegration phase. The provision adopted a long-term approach, with the most vulnerable pupils receiving support in Year 6, throughout Year 7 and into Year 8.

5.3.1.2. Literature relating to ‘Motivation’

The school recognised that the transition from primary to secondary school was an important area for development and should be considered a priority, as reflected in Humphrey and Ainscow (2006). The school had identified pupils with social and emotional difficulties as being especially vulnerable in the transition and had prioritised the needs of these pupils by setting up the nurture provision. This corresponds to literature suggesting that pupils with social and emotional difficulties are particularly vulnerable in the transition and that transition support should address social and emotional needs first and foremost (Tobbell, 2003; Aikins et al., 2005; Ashton, 2008; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008; Bailey and Baines, 2012). The school hoped that, by addressing the transition needs of socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils, they would improve outcomes for this group of pupils. This is reflected in literature that considers the potential of successful transition as a learning opportunity that can facilitate development and enable pupils to develop resilience and a deeper sense of identity and self competence (Galton et al., 2003; Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008; Brewin and Statham, 2011; Crafter and Maunder, 2012). It is also reflected in literature suggesting that vulnerability factors can be mediated by effective and appropriate provision (Bailey and Baines, 2012).
5.3.1.3. Literature relating to ‘Provision’

The nurture provision encompassed pre-transition support and preparation in Year 6, a range of provision throughout Year 7 and further support in Year 8 for the most vulnerable pupils, reflecting West et al.’s (2010) principle that transition should be seen as a process rather than a distinct event. Much transition literature highlights the importance of effective preparation for successful transitions, for example Lyons and Woods (2012) suggest that pre-transition visits are effective in reducing pupil concerns, enabling them to become familiar with the school environment and providing opportunities for pupils to develop feelings of autonomy and mastery. In addition, Ashton (2008) believes that addressing pupil concerns, however trivial these may seem, helps to reduce pupil anxieties and releases cognitive capacity to enable more effective engagement in learning (Ashton, 2008). The nurture provision included a range of pre-transition visits that enabled pupils to become more familiar with the secondary school environment and provided an opportunity to discuss concerns with the nurture facilitator. The pupils seemed to appreciate this provision, citing it as one of the things that helped make the transition easier for them.

The school ensured that a range of provision was available to vulnerable pupils throughout Year 7, which links to Crafter and Maunder’s (2012) notion that support should reflect the complexity of transition by holistically addressing the psychological, emotional, social and cognitive aspects of the process. The provision facilitated a sense of belonging by helping pupils build relationships, navigate the building and adapt to new routines and expectations, an important aspect of successful transitions (Tobbell, 2003; Ashton, 2008). The nurture provision aimed to help pupils develop skills that have previously been identified in transition literature, including resilience, self esteem and social skills (Jindal-Snape and Miller,
2008; Choi, 2012; Lyons and Woods, 2012). These correspond closely with the aims of nurture provision, for example addressing social and emotional needs, promoting emotional health and wellbeing, and removing barriers to learning (Cooper and Tiknaz, 2005; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; Seth-Smith et al., 2010). Certain aspects of the nurture delivery are also reflected in transition literature, for example Lyons and Woods (2012) identified snack time as a valuable aspect of the Pyramid Club intervention, as this provided a safe opportunity for pupils to practice and develop the skills they had been learning, which seems to relate closely to the breakfast activity in the core nurture provision. Other examples include the benefits of creative approaches such as drama and role play for developing skills (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008); the benefits of giving pupils time and space to talk about difficulties, enabling them to set their own targets, and recognising and celebrating effort and any success, however small (Galton et al., 2003); and the importance of keeping the pupil central to the intervention by helping them find their own way, at their own pace, and helping them make sense of their experiences along the way (Crafter and Maunder, 2012).

An important aspect of the nurture provision seems to have been developing a sense of belonging for pupils, which has been identified as an important element of successful transitions (Ashton, 2008; Crafter and Maunder, 2012; Sancho and Cline, 2012). Authors such as Anderson et al. (2000) and Aikins et al., advocate the creation of ‘sub-communities’ within the secondary school that enable pupils to feel welcomed, valued and respected, providing them with a sense of identity and purpose. It seems that the nurture provision, and in particular the core nurture group, provided a sub-community specifically designed for socially and emotionally
vulnerable pupils, enabling them to experience a sense of belonging and thereby facilitating more successful transitions.

5.3.1.4. Literature relating to ‘Facilitation’

The nurture provision incorporated a number of approaches recommended in transition literature, including personalisation, flexibility and the importance of relationships. Crafter and Maunder (2012) advocate a personalised approach to transition support that accommodates individual differences and meets the needs of all pupils effectively. In addition, Lyons and Woods (2012) found that transition support was most effective when activities matched pupil needs and interests. The nurture facilitator strived to personalise the provision in order to meet the needs of individual pupils effectively, modifying her approach accordingly. With regards to the theme of flexibility, transition authors have advocated that schools tailor their provision to fit their setting and the particular needs of the pupil cohort (Ashton, 2008). The nurture provision was purposefully kept flexible to enable staff to meet the needs of individual pupils in an appropriate manner. Listening and responding to pupil views is also an important aspect of transition support (Ashton, 2008), which was demonstrated in the nurture facilitator interview.

The importance of relationships is evident in much of the transition literature, with several authors advocating the provision of a key member of staff who can support vulnerable pupils (Tobbell, 2003; Jindal-Snape and Foggie, 2008; Gulati and King, 2009; Smith, 2011). Smith identifies the qualities she believes this adult should possess, in particular that they should be empathic, emotionally available, sensitive to pupil needs and able to model and teach effective coping strategies. It seems that the nurture facilitator embodied these qualities and more, providing valuable and effective support to socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils. This is...
supported by Lyons and Woods (2012), who found that the adult’s skill base and the approach they adopted was central to intervention success.

5.3.1.5. Literature relating to ‘Impact’

The findings suggest positive outcomes for the pupils who received nurture support, including positive friendships, improved confidence and communication skills, and an ability to engage appropriately in learning situations. It seems that socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils took considerably longer than their peers to reach Evangelou et al.’s (2008) markers of a successful transition, with many requiring support in order to achieve these. It seems that the nurture provision helped vulnerable pupils to navigate the many changes that occur during transition, as outlined by Anderson et al. (2000) and Aikins et al. (2005), and to manage the complex demands of the transition process (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008; West et al., 2010).

5.3.1.6. Nurture groups in secondary schools

Having considered ways in which the findings relate to transition literature, this section will consider the findings in relation to literature regarding nurture support in secondary schools.

The main finding was that nurture provision can be an effective intervention for socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in a mainstream secondary school, which echoes the findings of Cooke et al. (2008), Colley (2009) and Garner and Thomas (2011). These authors consider nurture support to be an effective intervention for vulnerable pupils with a range of needs (Colley, 2009; Garner and Thomas, 2011), which corresponded closely with the needs identified in the current study. The aims of the nurture provision also linked closely to those included in the secondary nurture literature, for example to address delayed social and emotional
development and assist pupils to build relationships (Cooke et al., 2008), to build a sense of community and enable pupils to feel safe (Colley, 2009) and to develop pupil skills so they are better able to regulate emotions, adapt to changes and deal with difficult situations, eventually leading to ‘socio-emotional independence’ (Garner and Thomas, 2011). In keeping with previous studies, the current findings suggest that the role of the nurture facilitator is vital to the success of nurture provision, although support from the school’s senior management team is also required.

Garner and Thomas (2011) believe that adolescence is a difficult time for pupils, which can exacerbate social and emotional difficulties: the current study suggest that the transition to secondary school is one factor that makes this developmental period difficult. Cooke et al. (2008) draw upon a neurological perspective to suggest that adolescence represents a critical or sensitive period of development, which provides a ‘window of opportunity’ for interventions to address social and emotional difficulties. This seems to contradict Scott and Lee’s (2009) findings that nurture groups were more effective with younger children. However, while it may be the case that the classic nurture group model is more effective with younger pupils, the findings from the current study and previous secondary nurture articles suggest that nurture support can indeed be appropriate and effective for secondary aged pupils, although the delivery may need to differ significantly from the classic model.

The nurture provision was based upon a number of principles outlined in the secondary nurture literature, for example, the importance of understanding and responding to each child’s needs and working at a developmentally appropriate level and pace (Garner and Thomas, 2011). In particular, the findings can be grounded
firmly in psychological theories, which are implicated in both the transition and nurture literature. The key psychological theories that can be applied in this case are Bowlby’s (1969, 1973, 1980) attachment theory, Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs theory, Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural theory and Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory. These are reflected in the importance of relationships for learning and development, as defined by Bowlby and Vygotsky, and the importance of feeling safe and secure before learning can take place (Bowlby, Maslow).

Bronfenbrenner’s approach has been used to untangle some of the complexities of child development, giving weight to the argument that providing support in school can impact significantly upon a pupil’s development, even when vulnerability factors are present outside school. However, the nurture facilitator did raise an interesting point when she wondered about the amount of impact that school support can have when difficulties are still present at home. She suggested that the nurture provision had been beneficial to the pupil and had hopefully given them more skills and strategies to help them cope with difficult situations, but recognised that vulnerability factors outside school would continue to impact upon some pupils.

When using Bronfenbrenner’s model, school support only represents one element of the pupil’s context: while this can make a significant difference for vulnerable pupils, there are other factors that may also need to be targeted if a truly holistic approach is to be achieved.

The nurture provision was considered to adhere to the six principles of nurture (see Section 2.3.6. Types of nurture group), for example: understanding pupil needs developmentally; providing a secure base in school; developing self esteem; developing communication skills so pupils can express themselves appropriately; and recognising that behaviour is best understood as a form of communication.
Perhaps most extensively, the nurture provision addressed the sixth nurture principle, which recognises the importance of transitions for pupils. While this can refer to minimal changes such as transitioning between the home and school or from the nurture group to the mainstream class on a daily basis, it seems particularly appropriate to use a nurturing approach to address one of the most significant transitions that pupils experience: the transition from primary to secondary school.

Colley (2009) and Garner and Thomas (2011) both concluded that the primary nurture group model needs to be adapted in order for it to be relevant for secondary school settings. Colley claims that the phrase ‘nurture support’ may be more appropriate than ‘nurture group’, as this reflects the way in which secondary nurture provision is often broader than in the primary model. This is supported by Garner and Thomas, who identify a range of provision under the banner of secondary school nurture support, including lunchtime clubs, drop in sessions and therapeutic groups as well as more traditional nurture groups. This finding is reflected in the current study, where Year 7 nurture support encompassed a core nurture group, therapeutic groups and a lunch time club. Other aspects of secondary nurture provision identified in the literature are also relevant to the current study, for example Garner and Thomas suggest that activities need to be age appropriate and that relationships between pupils and staff need to be based upon equality and respect rather than the parent-toddler approach of the classic nurture model. They also found that nurture provision in secondary schools tended to focus solely on social and emotional skills, whereas primary groups included academic aspects. In line with both Colley (2009) and Garner and Thomas (2011), the current findings suggest that while secondary nurture provision needs to adhere to the core nurture
principles, it is necessary to adapt the primary school model and develop a more appropriate model of delivery in order to meet the needs of secondary school pupils.

The findings build upon the work of Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes (2008), Colley (2009) and Garner and Thomas (2011) by applying their principles and recommendations to a type of provision that they allude to but do not explore in great detail: nurture support for pupils in the transition from primary to secondary school. The findings suggest that this application of nurture support can be effective in meeting the needs of socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils.

In conclusion, it seems that adopting a nurturing approach to supporting vulnerable pupils in the transition can be beneficial to pupils with a range of social and emotional needs. In the current study, the nurture provision, and nurture facilitator in particular, provided a secure base for pupils within the secondary school by fostering a sense of belonging, enabling pupils to feel valued and supported and developing their social and emotional skills to a level where they were able to engage independently in lessons and within their peer group. The findings highlight the need for schools to explore modes of delivery that enable nurture provision to be effective in secondary schools.

5.3.2. Research Question Two

The second research question asked: How do pupils who have received nurture support perceive the transition to secondary school and the role of nurture provision within this? This section will outline the main findings that relate to this research question, and then integrate the literature that is deemed relevant.
5.3.2.1. *Findings in relation to Research Question Two*

The research sought to ascertain the views of three pupils who had received different forms of nurture provision. Each of these pupils found the transition difficult, citing concerns such as being bullied, getting lost, making friends and dealing with change. Two of the pupils found the transition so difficult that they no longer wanted to attend school. All three pupils spoke very highly of the nurture provision and the nurture facilitator in particular, citing this as the main thing that had helped them settle in to the secondary school environment. Pupils also appreciated the pre-transition support they were offered, as this addressed many of their concerns and therefore reduced the anxiety they felt prior to transition. Pupils seemed to greatly appreciate the nurture provision and the support of the nurture facilitator, recommending that more pupils in other schools had access to similar provision.

5.3.2.2. *Literature relating to transition*

The three pupil perspectives support the notion that the transition from primary to secondary school is both a significant and difficult process for pupils (Anderson *et al*., 2000; Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; Bailey and Baines, 2012). Pupils raised concerns in relation to bullying, older pupils, homework, being in a bigger building, remembering equipment and being able to do the work, which closely mirrors the concerns identified by Rice, Frederickson and Seymour (2011). They also raised concerns about getting lost and making friends, as found by Ashton (2008); and cited difficulties dealing with aspects of change, in line with Sirsch (2003). Pupils also identified positive aspects of the transition process, supporting the notion of dual experience purported by authors such as Lacey and Reay (2000), Tobbell (2003) and Ashton (2008).
Issues of attendance and school refusal were raised by two of the pupils, which links to Choi’s (2012) finding that attendance often drops in the first term at secondary school, particularly for vulnerable pupils. Interestingly, Choi found that attendance issues could be addressed by helping pupils develop effective coping strategies. This seems to have been the case in the current study, where pupils cited the nurture provision as being the thing that most helped them attend school.

The pupils expressed appreciation for the support they received prior to the transition, which adds weight to recommendations made by authors such as Akos and Martin (2003) and Aikins et al. (2005), who state that pre-transition visits offer an effective means of familiarising pupils with the new school environment, as well as improving their confidence and their ability to devise and implement coping strategies. This pre-transition support seemed particularly effective at reducing pupil concerns prior to the transition, as supported by Lyons and Woods (2012).

Relationships featured heavily in the pupil interviews. Pupils found it difficult to leave old friends and to make new friends, although they also appreciated the opportunity to meet new people at secondary school. Once established, friendships served as a significant source of comfort and support for pupils. These findings support the work of Tobbell (2003), Aikins et al. (2005), Weller (2007) and Grills-Taquechel (2010), who highlight the significance of peer relationships in the transition. Pupils spoke very positively about the nurture facilitator and the way in which she had supported them through the transition. It seems she provided a sense of security and reassurance, alleviated their concerns and helped them to deal with difficult situations. This role seems to fulfil the recommendations made by authors such as Tobbell (2003), Jindal-Snape and Foggie (2008), Gulati and King (2009) and Smith (2011), who advocate the provision of a key member of staff that is
emotionally available to pupils, is tuned into their needs and can offer support for the social and emotional aspects of transition.

5.3.2.3. Literature relating to secondary nurture provision

The pupil perspectives link closely with the literature on secondary nurture groups (Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes, 2008; Colley, 2009; Garner and Thomas, 2011), endorsing the notion that this can be an effective means of supporting socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils. The findings complement the secondary nurture literature by adding pupil views of nurture provision that supports pupils in the transition to secondary school. It seems that pupils appreciated the range of support that was on offer and felt that the provision was effective. They cited significant impacts of the provision, for example in building up their confidence, helping them make friends and getting them back into school when they did not want to attend. They appreciated specific aspects of the provision such as the regular breakfast and a range of fun activities. The relationship with the nurture facilitator acted as an anchor for these pupils in the difficulties they encountered during the transition process. These perspectives add a new dimension to the secondary nurture literature, confirming that the pupils themselves appreciated the provision and considered it to be effective.

5.4. INTEGRATED CASE DESCRIPTION

The thematic analysis has contributed valuable information to the case study by exploring the perspectives of four key people involved in the provision and examining this in light of relevant literature. By combining this with the contextual information, the researcher was able to formulate an integrated case description that incorporated all data alongside the propositions that came from the literature and the additional propositions that arose from the findings, as demonstrated below.
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*Figure 24. Table mapping the evidence for propositions in relation to data sources*
This table illustrates the ways in which the various data sources relate to each of the propositions. These findings suggest that pupils with social and emotional difficulties are vulnerable in the transition and require extra support, as evidenced by each data source and by literature relating to both transition and secondary nurture provision. This support is most appropriately delivered through positive and consistent relationships with key members of staff, again supported by each data source and both sets of literature.

Facilitating a sense of belonging appears to be important for enabling pupils to settle in to the new secondary school environment, as evidenced in the literature and discussions with staff and pupils. Both the transition and nurture literature suggest it is important to prioritise emotional health and wellbeing needs, as pupils will not be able to learn effectively until these needs are met: this view is supported by staff discussions and the school policy documents that state this explicitly. The pupils themselves valued opportunities for preparation afforded to them by the nurture provision: this was recognised by school staff, evidenced in their documentation and discussed in the transition literature.

The transition literature states that effective communication is important for developing and delivering provision to support vulnerable pupils: school documentation includes a range evidence of effective communication with parents, pupils, staff, external professionals and perhaps most importantly communication between primary schools and secondary schools regarding the needs of transferring pupils. The transition literature also places emphasis upon curriculum continuity, but this was not identified as an important factor in any of the data sources: it was mentioned by members of the senior management team but they did not consider this to be a significant factor for pupils who were socially and emotionally vulnerable as
they felt that emotional health and wellbeing needs were of greater importance for these pupils. In contrast, personalisation was considered to be a highly important factor, as evidenced in the majority of data sources: rather than adopting a ‘one-size-fits-all approach, the school were mindful of adapting their provision to meet the needs of individual pupils. This approach has been identified as important in both the transition and the secondary nurture literature.

All three pupils identified the nurture facilitator as the most important factor in helping them make a successful transition to secondary school. This was supported by discussions with members of staff, school documentation, observations and secondary nurture literature, which highlights the importance of this role in determining the success of the provision. In addition, the secondary nurture literature emphasises the importance of adhering to the six nurture principles, regardless of the way in which the provision is delivered. The researcher noted nurture principles being applied in the setting and also gathered evidence of the importance placed upon these by school staff and school documentation.

School staff were able to adapt their provision in response to identified needs, as evidenced in discussions, observations and school documentation: the pupils themselves also recognised this as a strength of the provision. Secondary nurture literature places emphasis on the role of psychology in defining the approach adopted by school staff: while this was addressed in discussions and the researcher observed psychological principles being applied in the setting, staff identified this as an area for development as they felt that psychology could contribute much more to their approach if they had more access to psychological support, for example from their school psychologist. Unfortunately, recent changes in service delivery meant
that educational psychologists were no longer able to be involved in projects such as this, which the school identified as a gap in their provision.

Three additional propositions arose from the data rather than from the literature: the importance of prompt and effective identification of needs; the value of having a designated member of staff to develop systems and protocols around transition; and the benefits of having a range of provision on offer to ensure pupil needs can be met appropriately within a graduated approach. The identification of needs was evidenced in school documentation, discussions with members of staff and discussions with pupils themselves. The document detailing pupil needs was recognised as an important tool for supporting vulnerable pupils in the transition, which was enhanced by dynamic identification of needs throughout Year 7. The identification of pupil needs could be so thorough because the school had appointed a designated member of staff to oversee the transition and to develop protocols and practices to support vulnerable pupils through the process. It was this member of staff who had instigated the nurture provision and who provided regular support to the nurture facilitator: without this transition manager, members of school staff felt that the provision would not have been able to develop in such an effective and comprehensive way. One of the strengths of the provision was that it offered different levels of support so pupils could be incorporated at a level appropriate to their needs. This strength was identified through school documentation, discussions with staff members and discussions with pupils themselves.

The majority of propositions were supported by several pieces of evidence, which adds strength to their validity. The only two propositions that were not well-supported by the data were Curriculum and Psychology: curriculum continuity, though considered to be important in the transition literature, appeared to be much
less of a priority for school staff. From staff discussions, it seems that curriculum continuity would have been of greater importance had the focus been upon the needs of the whole year group. Instead, the study was specifically looking at provision for socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils; for these pupils, there were far weightier concerns than the general curriculum. In terms of applying psychology to improve outcomes for vulnerable pupils, school staff considered psychology to have much to offer but identified difficulties accessing psychological support and advice in relation to this provision. This highlights a disparity between what is both recommended in the literature and desired by schools versus the support that is actually available to schools from psychological services in the locality.

This case description suggests that nurture provision can be an effective means of supporting socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school. However, it is of course important to consider rival explanations that could explain the findings in different ways. The main rival explanation is that the pupils made a successful transition due to factors other than the nurture provision. The researcher looked for evidence to support this view and found that there could have been various other explanations, for example there were several new members of staff for the academic year 2011-2012, the way in which support staff were deployed had been altered slightly and there was a change in the way pastoral support was organised, with the school adopting a vertical ‘house’ grouping system rather than horizontally grouping pupils by year group. These alternative explanations were discussed with school staff, in order to gauge the extent to which these factors may have supported vulnerable pupils in the transition: while these were considered beneficial in supporting pupils, school staff felt that the most vulnerable pupils required something additional and more intensive than these
measures. Indeed, they felt that these changes were merely part of the much broader nurturing approach that had been introduced for the academic year 2011-2012. It therefore seems that any rival explanations cannot adequately explain why the transition experiences of vulnerable pupils who received nurture support were so much more positive than their counterparts in previous years. The explanation that best fits the school documents, researcher observations, staff discussions, pupil perspectives and the literature relating to both primary-secondary transition and nurture provision in secondary schools is that nurture support can be an effective means of supporting socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school.

A number of core elements have arisen from this case description. These include:

- Relationships – incorporating propositions relating to relationships, belonging, communication, the nurture facilitator role and psychology
- Psychology – incorporating propositions relating to relationships, vulnerability, belonging, psychology and identification
- Continuum of provision – incorporating propositions relating to vulnerability, wellbeing, belonging, preparation, nurture facilitator, responsiveness, identification and range of provision
- Focus on social and emotional needs – incorporating propositions relating to vulnerability, wellbeing, belonging, curriculum, nurture facilitator, responsiveness, psychology, identification and range of provision
• Identification – incorporating propositions relating to vulnerability, communication, nurture facilitator, nurture principles, identification and transition manager

• Personalisation – incorporating propositions relating to personalisation, nurture facilitator, nurture principles, responsiveness, identification and range of provision

• Nurture principles – incorporating propositions relating to vulnerability, belonging, communication, nurture facilitator, nurture principles, psychology and identification

The implications of all the findings are discussed in the following section.

5.5. IMPLICATIONS

The findings suggest that nurture provision can be an effective means of supporting socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school. However, in line with previous research into nurture support for secondary school pupils, the delivery of this provision needs to be different to the model designed for primary school nurture groups. Transition literature has established that secondary school contexts are vastly different to primary school contexts (Anderson et al., 2000; Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006); it therefore seems appropriate that secondary school interventions should be tailored to meet the demands of this particular context. In addition, pupil needs are different at secondary school, as outlined in secondary nurture literature: for example, pupils are dealing with the challenges and pressures of adolescence (Garner and Thomas, 2011), which entails significant psychological, emotional, social and cognitive changes (Richards, 2011). Authors studying secondary school nurture provision have suggested that, while the
underlying principles of nurture are still very much relevant for secondary schools, the way in which these are delivered needs to be different to the way they are delivered in primary settings (Colley, 2009; Garner and Thomas, 2011). In summary, as long as nurture support is adhering to the six principles of nurture and is grounded in psychological theory, the exact out-workings of this in practice are likely to be different for each school as they develop provision to suit their setting and the needs of the pupils they seek to accommodate.

Garner and Thomas (2011) call for an adaptation of nurture group theory that enables the intervention to work in a secondary school setting. Through the process of integrating relevant literature with the findings of the current study, a tentative model of nurture delivery for pupils in the transition to secondary school has begun to emerge. This incorporates two core aspects of Identification and Personalisation: Identification refers to the need to identify pupil needs promptly and effectively, before, during and after the intervention; Personalisation refers to ways in which pupil needs are met, which requires flexibility and responsiveness. These two elements are informed by the six nurture principles, which state that: children's learning is understood developmentally; the classroom offers a safe base; nurture is important for the development of self esteem; language is understood as a vital means of communication; all behaviour is communication; and transitions are significant in the lives of children (the Nurture Group Network4). The model is grounded in psychological theory, in particular that positive and consistent relationships are vital for learning and development (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980; Vygotsky, 1978), that meeting social and emotional needs is a pre-requisite to learning (Maslow, 1970), and that child development is complex, but schools can

make a significant difference to pupils (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The proposed model is illustrated below.

![Diagram of a proposed model of secondary school nurture provision for vulnerable pupils in the transition from primary to secondary school](image)

*Figure 25. A proposed model of secondary school nurture provision for vulnerable pupils in the transition from primary to secondary school*

This model endorses secondary nurture groups as an approach grounded in psychological theory where schools offer a range of provision to address social and emotional needs through positive and respectful relationships. While schools should have flexibility to deliver this provision in ways that suit both the context and the cohort, it is important that three core elements are present: firstly, the provision should adhere to the six principles of nurture; secondly, there should be an emphasis...
on identifying needs promptly and accurately; and thirdly, the provision should be
personalised to meet the needs of each pupil effectively. In relation to the transition
from primary to secondary school, provision should begin in Year 6, continue
through Year 7 and expand into Year 8 if needs persist.

In practice, this model could be applied in a number of ways. In a more
formal example, school staff may complete the Boxall Profile for a group of pupils
(identification) and then provide a nurture group intervention to address the
identified areas of needs for each pupil (personalisation). At the other extreme,
Identification may involve staff observing the way in which a pupil interacts with
other pupils during a drop-in session, which prompts them to encourage that pupil to
join their peers in an activity they are interested in, representing an informal
approach to personalisation. The definitions of Identification and Personalisation are
therefore broad. In addition, the nurture principles could influence the model in a
number of different ways. For example, in relation to Identification, a member of
staff who was not adhering to nurture principles may see a pupil display challenging
behaviour and seek to address the behaviour through punishment, while a member of
staff who was mindful of the nurture principle that ‘all behaviour is communication’
would be more likely to look beyond the behaviour in an attempt to understand the
underlying causes in relation to social and emotional development. The approach of
this member of staff would therefore be more effectively tailored to the needs of the
child, meaning that they were applying the principle of Personalisation more
appropriately because their Identification more accurately represented the child’s
needs.

There are three further implications of this model. Firstly, the findings have
highlighted, in line with previous literature, the importance of nurture provision
being embedded within a whole school context as part of a continuum of provision with strong support from the school’s senior management team. Secondly, there is a recommendation for the Nurture Group Network to consider ways in which to support secondary schools in establishing and sustaining nurture provision, which is likely to require an exploration of different modes of delivery. Thirdly, it seems that there is an emerging role for educational psychologists in supporting schools with their nurture provision, in particular ensuring that their approach is firmly grounded in psychological theory, so school staff know what they are doing and why. This could be achieved in a number of ways, including staff training and consultation.

5.6. LIMITATIONS

The author recognises that there are a number of limitations to this study. Firstly, the sample size is small and only represents the views of a limited number of people involved in the nurture provision. This small sample size is due partly to difficulties gaining parental consent and partly to unforeseen circumstances which meant that the interview with the transition manager could not conducted. It should therefore not be assumed that the views presented in this thesis are representative of all pupils and staff involved in the nurture provision.

The data collected also has limitations, as it only provides qualitative interview data and contextual information. The researcher had considered including a quantitative measure, for example pre- and post-intervention Boxall Profile scores to enhance the pupil case examples, but this was not considered appropriate as each pupil had accessed the support at different levels and at different times, meaning that their Boxall Profile scores were either not available or did not yield meaningful data.

A number of other limitations arose from the way in which the study evolved, as much of the process did not unfold in a linear or coherent pattern. For
example, had the research process been more straight-forward, the interview schedules would have been designed to relate more closely to the final research questions. However, these limitations were unavoidable in the circumstances of the current research.

In a recent journal volume focusing specifically on the topic of transition, Dunsmuir and Stringer (2012) report that most of the studies were tentative and exploratory, but these were still considered to provide significant contributions to the developing knowledge base surrounding transition. Despite its limitations, the author considers the current research to add another small scale, exploratory study to this growing body of knowledge, while also contributing to the limited literature focusing upon nurture provision in secondary school settings.

5.7. FURTHER RESEARCH

This piece of research represented a small-scale exploratory study of nurture support in the transition to secondary school. While this did elicit some valuable findings, there is much further research that could expand on this. Firstly, some form of quantitative data would be useful to measure the progress of pupils. Prospective measures might include the Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998), the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 2001) and the School Concerns Questionnaire (Thomasson, Field, O’Donnell, and Woods, 2006), as these measures have each been used in relevant literature. The Boxall Profile is a measure commonly used in nurture research (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; Sanders, 2007; Cooke et al., 2008; Reynolds et al., 2009; Seth-Smith et al., 2010), which could provide valuable information about the effectiveness of the nurture provision and the areas of social and emotional development in which improvements are seen. The recent development of a secondary school version of the Boxall Profile (Colley,
would make this measure appropriate for secondary aged pupils. The SDQ could provide insights into the range of pupil needs within the provision, as well as progress data. The SDQ has been used by authors in both the nurture literature (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; Seth-Smith et al., 2010) and the transition literature (for example Bloyce and Frederickson, 2012; Lyons and Woods, 2012), suggesting that this would be an appropriate measure. A third measure that could provide useful information is the SCQ, as endorsed by Rice et al., (2011) and utilised by Bloyce and Frederickson (2012). This could provide useful information about pupil perspectives before and after the transition, with particular emphasis upon the extent to which nurture provision had allayed pupil anxieties. Each of these three measures could be used to gather pre-and post-intervention data, which would enable a more comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of the intervention.

In addition to adding a quantitative element to the design, the qualitative data could be significantly enhanced by exploring the views of a broader spectrum of participants. This may include the views of other pupils who have accessed the nurture provision, the parents of these pupils, the various members of staff involved in setting up and running the provision and other members of school staff to see how the provision is perceived across the school. Data gathering methods might involve focus groups, as utilised in both nurture research (Seth-Smith et al., 2010; Garner and Thomas, 2011) and transition research (Tobbell, 2003; Humphrey and Ainscow, 2006; Sutherland et al., 2010; Sancho and Cline, 2012), to enable a wide range of views to be represented. However, it may be beneficial to use more creative methods for exploring pupil views, as advocated by Ashton (2008).

The most comprehensive approach may be to employ a mixed methods design that incorporates elements of both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell
and Plano Clark, 2011). This would enable representation of a range of perspectives alongside standardised measures of needs and progress. If time and resources were available, a longitudinal study could provide valuable insight into the long-term impacts of nurture provision for vulnerable pupils in relation to emotional health and wellbeing, educational engagement, relationships and attainment.

A further area for development might be to explore whether secondary school models of nurture provision are also effective for older primary school pupils. This is linked to Scott and Lee’s (2009) finding that the classic nurture model was less effective for older Key Stage Two pupils. The findings of the current study, alongside previous literature concerning secondary school nurture, suggest that older pupils require a different approach. It may be that older primary school pupils, for example those in Year 5 and Year 6, would benefit from some of the principles of secondary school nurture provision, for example activities that engage the interests of older pupils and relationships based upon equality and respect rather than the parent-toddler model advocated in the classic nurture group approach. On the other hand, it may be that these approaches are only suited to the secondary school environment. Further research could explore this in more detail.

In a broader sense, further research could compare some of the different types of interventions that Cooper and Jacobs (2011) identified for supporting pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties, of which nurture support is only one. This could provide useful information about the effectiveness of different types of intervention and ways in which to deliver these in different settings.
5.8. FEEDBACK TO STAKEHOLDERS

The findings were presented to the transition manager, deputy head teacher and nurture facilitator in the autumn term of 2012. They were interested to know the findings and felt that it would help them to continue supporting vulnerable pupils in the transition. However, during the feedback stage, it emerged that the school was considering ways in which to make the provision more cost effective, for example to include a greater number of pupils. This was as a result of the current economic climate and consequent funding cuts, but the nurture facilitator expressed concerns that these revisions might compromise the nurture principles she had worked so hard to instate within the provision.

This highlights some of the difficulties with implementing interventions and sustaining them over time, as discussed by Durlak and DuPre (2008). It seems that certain vulnerabilities were present within the nurture provision, not least that its success rested upon one individual: the nurture facilitator. This member of staff was not a member of the senior management team, and therefore was not able to influence things at a systemic level. Decisions concerning the provision were largely outside of her control and it seems she sometimes felt powerless in her role. The nurture facilitator had not been able to attend the official four-day nurture training course, meaning that she was limited in the level of responsibility she was able to take on independently as she was reliant upon gaining knowledge second-hand from the nurture facilitator, who had attended the course. This suggests that the senior management team perhaps did not value or respect the nurture facilitator’s role as much as they might have done. Running an intervention with only one member of staff also represents a vulnerability factor, as there was little contingency if that member of staff were to become ill or move to a new post. The information gained
from school staff during the feedback phase has highlighted a number of issues regarding implementation and sustainability of nurture provision in secondary schools. Sadly these are beyond the scope of the current thesis, but could form an interesting basis for a subsequent study.

The findings were also discussed with members of the TaMHS stakeholder group. It was felt that the research had met the initial objectives of promoting emotional health and wellbeing in schools, because the nurture provision addressed the needs of socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils at a time when their needs were likely to come to the fore. They considered the most significant finding to be the importance of relationships in supporting the social and emotional development of vulnerable pupils, which could have significant implications for the way in which emotional health and wellbeing was supported in schools. They felt that nurture provision to support pupils in the transition to secondary school was a useful and viable intervention that could have significant benefits for pupils in the locality by improving wellbeing at a time when they are particularly vulnerable.

5.9. REFLECTIONS

Macfarlane (2009) describes the process of engaging in research as a “journey” (p. 49) that represents “an intellectual and an emotional challenge” (p. 60). This has certainly been the case in the current research project, as the researcher strived to build a study that was both intellectually sound and meaningful for practice, in amongst a series of challenges and setbacks. This process involved a journey of self-discovery, as the researcher plumbed depths of resilience they did not previously know they possessed. The researcher has learnt much about protecting their emotional health and wellbeing by drawing upon internal resources and external sources of support and by continually focusing upon the bigger picture in
order to keep difficulties in perspective. The research process has undeniably been difficult. However, it has served to hone the author’s research and problem-solving skills to a much finer degree, confirming in the author that they would very much like to continue engaging in research as part of their future role as an educational psychologist. In conclusion, the research process recounted within this thesis has not been an easy journey, but it has been a valuable one.

5.10. CONCLUSION

This piece of research has considered the role of nurture provision in supporting socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition from primary to secondary school. The findings suggest that the process of transition can be particularly difficult for these pupils, but that support based upon the principles of nurture can be effective in meeting their needs to ensure a successful integration into secondary school. However, schools need to give careful consideration to the implementation of provision in order to ensure effectiveness and sustainability. Support needs to be personalised in order to meet the identified needs of each individual pupil. Positive, consistent and respectful relationships are considered to be central to the success of the provision, as these can provide pupils with both a secure base and a means for developing adaptive social and emotional skills. The transition to secondary school is best viewed as a process rather than an event, with the most vulnerable pupils requiring support that spans Year 6, Year 7 and Year 8. While this support may seem intensive, it seems that effective provision at this critical period of development has the potential to improve outcomes for vulnerable pupils, particularly in terms of their emotional health and wellbeing and their future engagement in education.
REFERENCES


West, P., Sweeting, H. and Young, R. 2010. Transition matters: pupils’ experiences of the primary–secondary school transition in the West of Scotland and


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APPENDIX A

Literature search details: transition and nurture articles

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Garner and Thomas (2011) NG1

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<th>Identified by</th>
<th>Run by</th>
<th>Two rooms: one with food and drink facilities and a large table, the other with a work table, computers and sofas.</th>
<th>Taster sessions provided prior to transition. Pupils had one formal session each week</th>
<th>Circle time, games-led approach to literacy and numeracy, free choice play e.g. drawing.</th>
<th>Open access for drop in at any time Lunchtime provision (for Years 7-11).</th>
<th>Reintegration occurred when it was felt pupils were ready to return to mainstream lessons.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>primary school staff (pupils who were considered ‘vulnerable’ in the transition to secondary school) Boxall Profile used to assess pupil suitability.</td>
<td>Run by two TAs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Garner and Thomas (2011) NG2

| Year | Number of Pupils | Identified from pupils attending Year 7 transition support who continued to cause concern in relation to SEBD. These pupils were assessed using the Boxall Profile and discussed at a panel meeting. | Run by two TAs | One room, with kitchen, dining table, work table and sofas. | Pupils attended the NG for one lesson each day. Breakfast was provided most days, with hot chocolate after school on Fridays. | Differentiated subject work, plus support for social and emotional skills. Breakfast/hot chocolate | They could also access the provision at lunchtime and break. | Pupils left when they were deemed ready to return to mainstream lessons. |
| Garner and Thomas (2011) NG3 | 6 pupils Year 7 | Pupils selected from list of ‘vulnerable pupils’ in transition to secondary, then assessed during the first half term of Year 7. Allocation based on risk factors such as low socio-economic status and low cognitive ability. | Run by a teacher and a TA. | Three rooms: one similar to a primary classroom; a ‘time out’ room; and a small room with chairs and books. | Pupils attended 19 sessions each week and registered with the group twice a day. | Differentiated subject work, literacy skills and social and emotional skills | Staff could also be approached at other times. | The group ran for eighteen weeks, then pupils were back in lessons. |

NB. The article by Colley (2009) did not contain enough detail to justify inclusion in this table.
# APPENDIX D

## Research timeline

The following table illustrates a timeline of the research as it has evolved, culminating in the current study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time line</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 2010</td>
<td>Engagement with TaMHS stakeholder group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2011</td>
<td>Secondary school and pupil group identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May - July 2011</td>
<td>Liaison with deputy head teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2011</td>
<td>Received ethical approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October - December 2011</td>
<td>Seeking parental consent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2012</td>
<td>Data collection and analysis for previous research design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2012</td>
<td>Data collection: Pupil interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2012</td>
<td>Data analysis: Pupil interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2012</td>
<td>Revising research design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2012</td>
<td>Received additional ethical approval for revisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June - July 2012</td>
<td>Data collection: Staff interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data analysis: Staff interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff and pupil feedback interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data analysis: Final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August - October 2012</td>
<td>Write up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

Parental consent (pupil interview)

**RESEARCH INVITATION**

**Skills that Affect the Move from Primary to Secondary School**

**Phase Two Parent Information Sheet**

Thank you for agreeing that your child could be included in Phase One of this study. The teachers have now filled out the questionnaires and we will be using this information to look at ways to help children when they move from primary to secondary school.

**What next?** I would really like to find out more about children’s experiences of moving from primary to secondary school by interviewing some of the pupils: this would be Phase Two.

**Which pupils?** All pupils currently in Phase One of the research will be invited to take part.

**Who will do the interview?** Naomi Parsons, a trainee educational psychologist and doctorate student at the University of Manchester.

**When and where?** In school, during normal school lesson time.

**What?** A 1:1 interview, lasting around 30 minutes. The session will be audio-recorded. Later on I will meet with the pupils to let them know the findings and check I have understood what they said. I will also meet with school staff to discuss the findings.

**Privacy:** No names will be used when I write about the research. Some information will need to be kept for five years in case it needs to be checked: this will be stored securely at the University of Manchester. Information may be shared if someone might be at risk of harm.

**Your choice:** It is up to you whether or not your child is included. Please let me know if you change your mind. I will wait for two weeks before I start, just in case you do.

**Your child’s choice:** If you agree to your child taking part, I will meet with them in school. I will tell them about the research and ask if they would like to do the interview. It will then be up to your child whether or not they take part.

**Questions?** If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to call me on ***** or email me at ____________________________.

Please complete the attached form and post it back by Friday 10th February.

Thank you,

*Naomi*

Naomi Parsons | Trainee Educational Psychologist | School of Education
The University of Manchester | Oxford Road | Manchester | M13 9PL
CONSENT FORM
Skills that Affect the Move from Primary to Secondary School
Phase Two Parental Consent

Please read the following sentences and initial each box that you agree with. Then fill in the information at the bottom of the page.

☐ I have read the attached letter about the research. I have thought about it and been able to ask questions if I wanted to.

☐ I understand that it is my choice whether or not my child is included in the research. If I change my mind at any time, I know that I am free to withdraw without giving a reason.

☐ It is ok for the interview and feedback meeting to be audio-recorded.

☐ It is ok for quotes to be used, as long as names are not used.

☐ It is ok for the information that is collected to be passed on to other researchers.

☐ It is ok for the information that is collected to be published, without names, in academic books or journals.

Please tick:

☐ Yes, I am happy for my child to be included in Phase Two of the research.

☐ No, I do not want my child to be included in Phase Two of the research.

Child’s name: .................................................................

Your name: .................................................................

Signed: .................................................................

Date: .........................

Please post your completed consent form in the envelope provided by Friday 10th February

Thank you
APPENDIX F

Parental consent (staff discussion)

RESEARCH INVITATION

Nurture Support for Pupils in the Transition to Secondary School
(Previously: Skills that Affect the Move from Primary to Secondary School)

Phase Three Parent Information Sheet

Thank you for agreeing that your child could be included in this study. I enjoyed meeting with them and finding out their experiences of the move to secondary school.

New direction The research has changed a bit and I have been meeting with [nurture facilitator name] to find out more about her role and how the [nurture group name] can help students at school.

What next? As part of the revised study, I would like to have a discussion with [nurture facilitator name] about what school have done to support individual students. I am writing to ask if you would be happy for us to discuss your child and the support they have received.

Who will do the interview? Naomi Parsons, a trainee educational psychologist and doctorate student at the University of Manchester.

What? I would speak with [nurture facilitator name] for around 10 minutes to find out how school have supported your child. I would also have a feedback discussion with her to make sure I had understood correctly. Both of these discussions would be audio-recorded.

Privacy: No names will be used when I write about the research. Some information will need to be kept for five years in case it needs to be checked. This will be stored securely at the University of Manchester. Information may be shared if someone might be at risk of harm.

Your choice: It is up to you whether or not your child is included. Please let me know if you change your mind. I will wait for two weeks before I start, just in case you do.

Questions? If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to call me on ***** ***** or email me at __________________________.

Please complete the attached form and post it back by Friday 29 June.

Thank you,

Naomi Parsons | Trainee Educational Psychologist | School of Education
The University of Manchester | Oxford Road | Manchester | M13 9PL
CONSENT FORM

Nurture Support for Pupils in the Transition to Secondary School
(Previously: Skills that Affect the Move from Primary to Secondary School)
Phase Three Parental Consent

Please read the following sentences and initial each box that you agree with. Then fill in the information at the bottom of the page.

☐ I have read the attached letter about the research. I have thought about it and been able to ask questions if I wanted to.

☐ I understand that it is my choice whether or not my child is included in the research. If I change my mind at any time, I know that I am free to withdraw without giving a reason.

☐ It is ok for the interview and feedback meeting to be audio-recorded.

☐ It is ok for quotes to be used, as long as names are not used.

☐ It is ok for the information that is collected to be passed on to other researchers.

☐ It is ok for the information that is collected to be published, without names, in academic books or journals.

Please tick:

☐ Yes, I am happy for my child to be included in the discussion.

☐ No, I do not want my child to be included in the discussion.

Child’s name: ........................................................................

Your name: ...........................................................................

Signed: .............................................................................

Date: ............................

Please post your completed consent form in the envelope provided by

Friday 29th June

Thank you
APPENDIX G

Pupil interview format

Pupil Semi-Structured Interview Format

Introduction
Thank you for coming to meet with me. I’ll tell you a bit about what we will be doing and why, then you can decide if you would like to take part. My name is Naomi and I’m doing some research. I’m interested in finding out how young people find the move from primary to secondary school. I’d like to talk to you for half an hour about some of the things you found easy and some of the things you found more difficult about moving to secondary school. I hope this will help me to understand how young people find the move to secondary school and the things that make it easier. We would talk for most of it and I will record what we say with this audio recorder so I can remember what you have said. I will also talk with school staff and I will write it up for a project. No names will be used when I write this up or talk about it with other people.

Do you have any questions?

Assent

It’s up to you whether you take part. If you would prefer not to take part, that is fine.

Please fill in this form to let me know if you are happy to take part.

Interview Questions

Warm up questions

- How has your day been so far?
- How are you feeling about this interview?

Main content

- Tell me some good things about moving to secondary school.
- Tell me some bad things about moving to secondary school.
- How did you find the move to secondary school?
  - What was the first term like for you?
• What helped make the move easier?
  o How did it help?
• What made it difficult?
  o How was it difficult?

Prompts
• Tell me more about...
• What was that like for you?
• What were you thinking?
• What were you feeling?
• Paraphrasing what they have said in order to clarify understanding.

Closure
• Is there anything we haven’t covered?
• Please tell me anything else you’d like to add.

Debrief

Thank you for taking part in this research, it has been really useful to hear your views and I hope it will help us to understand more about the move to secondary school.

I will listen again to our interview and pick out what I think are the main themes. I would like to check this with you in a few weeks’ time to make sure I’ve understood everything correctly. Would that be ok?

Do you have any questions?
APPENDIX H

Pupil assent form

PUPIL ASSENT FORM

Nurture Support for Pupils in the Transition to Secondary School
(Previously: Skills that Affect the Move from Primary to Secondary School)

Please tick the box next to each sentence you agree with. Then fill in the information at the bottom of the page.

☐ I have been told about the research
☐ I know that it is my choice to take part
☐ I know that it is ok if I do not want to take part
☐ I know that if I change my mind I can ask the researcher to stop using my information
☐ I know that it is ok if I want to stop at any point
☐ It is ok for the interview to be audio recorded
☐ It is ok for quotes to be used, as long as names are not used
☐ It is ok for the information that is collected to be passed on to other people
☐ It is ok for the information that is collected to be published, without names, in academic books or journals

I am happy to take part in the research:

Please tick:  Yes  or  No

Name: ........................................................................................................

Date: ..............................................
APPENDIX I

Staff consent (general nurture provision)

RESEARCH INVITATION

Nurture Support for Pupils in the Transition to Secondary School
(Previously: Skills that Affect the Move from Primary to Secondary School)

Phase Two Staff Information Sheet

Thank you for showing an interest in this study.

Invitation I have been doing some research in your school, which has shifted to focus upon the primary-secondary transition process for socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils. I understand you have played a key role in developing provision for these pupils and I would like to interview you to find out more about this process.

Who will do the interview? Naomi Parsons, a trainee educational psychologist and doctorate student at the University of Manchester.

When and where? The interview will take place in school for approximately one hour at a mutually convenient time.

Recording The interview will be audio-recorded. Afterwards, it will be transcribed so that themes can be explored in more detail.

Feedback I would like to meet with you once I have analysed the interviews to check that I have accurately reflected the things we talked about.

Privacy No names will be used when I write about the research. Some information will need to be kept for five years in case it needs to be checked: this will be kept securely at the University of Manchester. Information may be shared if someone might be at risk of harm.

Your choice It is up to you whether or not you take part. If you do not want to take part, that is fine. If you decide to take part but then change your mind that is also fine. The interview will be at least two weeks after you have signed this letter to give a cooling-off period in case you change your mind.

Questions? If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to call me on ***** ***** or email me at ____________________________.

Please complete the attached form and return it in the envelope provided.

Thank you,

Naomi

Naomi Parsons | Trainee Educational Psychologist | School of Education
The University of Manchester | Oxford Road | Manchester | M13 9PL
CONSENT FORM
Nurture Support for Pupils in the Transition to Secondary School
(Previously: Skills that Affect the Move from Primary to Secondary School)
Phase Two Staff Consent

Please read the following sentences, initial the boxes for which you give consent and fill in the details at the bottom of the page.

☐ I have read the attached letter about the research. I have thought about it and been able to ask questions if I wanted to.

☐ I understand that it is my choice whether or not I take part in the research. If I change my mind at any time, I know that I am free to withdraw without giving a reason.

☐ It is ok for the interview and feedback meeting to be audio-recorded.

☐ It is ok for quotes to be used, as long as names are not used.

☐ It is ok for the information that is collected to be passed on to other researchers.

☐ It is ok for the information that is collected to be published, without names, in academic books or journals.

☐ Yes, I am happy to take part in Phase Two of the research.

☐ No, I do not want to take part in Phase Two of the research.

Your name: ...........................................................................................................

Signature: ............................................................................................................

Date: .........................

Please post your completed consent form in the envelope provided

Thank you
APPENDIX J

Staff consent (individual pupils)

RESEARCH INVITATION

Nurture Support for Pupils in the Transition to Secondary School
(Previously: Skills that Affect the Move from Primary to Secondary School)

Phase Three Staff Information Sheet

Thank you for taking part in Phase Two of this study.

What next? As a follow-up, I would like to interview you to find out how you have supported individual pupils in the transition. Parental consent has been gained for three pupils who I understand you have worked with, so I would like to discuss each of these pupils in turn.

Who will do the interview? Naomi Parsons, a trainee educational psychologist and doctorate student at the University of Manchester.

When and where? The interviews will take place in school at a mutually convenient time. Each interview will take around 10 minutes, so 30 minutes in total.

Recording The interviews will be audio-recorded. Afterwards, they will be transcribed so that themes can be explored in more detail.

Feedback I would like to meet with you once I have analysed the interviews to check that I have accurately reflected the things we talked about.

Privacy No names will be used when I write about the research. Some information will need to be kept for five years in case it needs to be checked: this will be kept securely at the University of Manchester. Information may be shared if someone might be at risk of harm.

Your choice It is up to you whether or not you take part. If you do not want to take part, that is fine. If you decide to take part but then change your mind that is also fine. The interview will be at least two weeks after you have signed this letter to give a cooling-off period in case you change your mind.

Questions? If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to call me on ***** ***** or email me at ____________________________.

Please complete the attached form and return it in the envelope provided.

Thank you

Naomi

Naomi Parsons | Trainee Educational Psychologist | School of Education
The University of Manchester | Oxford Road | Manchester | M13 9PL
CONSENT FORM
Nurture Support for Pupils in the Transition to Secondary School
(Previously: Skills that Affect the Move from Primary to Secondary School)
Phase Three Staff Consent

Please read the following sentences and then fill in the information at the bottom of the page.

☐ I have read the attached letter about the research. I have thought about it and been able to ask questions if I wanted to.

☐ I understand that it is my choice whether or not I take part in the research. If I change my mind at any time, I know that I am free to withdraw without giving a reason.

☐ It is ok for the interview and feedback meeting to be audio-recorded.

☐ It is ok for quotes to be used, as long as names are not used.

☐ It is ok for the information that is collected to be passed on to other researchers.

☐ It is ok for the information that is collected to be published, without names, in academic books or journals.

☐ Yes, I am happy to take part in Phase Three of the research.

☐ No, I do not want to take part in Phase Three of the research.

Your name: ............................................................

Signature: ..............................................................

Date: .............................

Please post your completed consent form in the envelope provided

Thank you
APPENDIX K

Staff interview format: nurture provision

Staff Semi-Structured Interview Format – Nurture Provision

Introduction
Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. I am interested in finding out more about the support available for socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school. As outlined in the letter, this session will be audio-recorded and will contribute towards my doctoral thesis.

Do you have any questions?
Are you happy to carry on?

Interview
Warm up
- How has your day been so far?
- How are you feeling about this interview?

Main content
Purpose: to explore your perspective of provision and support for socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils in the transition to secondary school, specifically over the last academic year.

Key questions
- What provision was available for socially and emotionally vulnerable pupils?
- How were pupils allocated to different types of support?
- How were pupils supported before, during and after the transition?
- What worked?
  - How did you know?
- What did not work?
  - How did you know?
- How does support continue or change as pupils settle in to Year 7 and beyond?
- How does the nurture provision fit into the whole school context?
Prompts

Further discussion to explore salient points that arise from these key questions and to clarify understanding.

- Tell me more about...
- What else?

Closure

- Is there anything we haven’t covered?
- Please tell me anything else you’d like to add.

Debrief

Thank you for your time. It has been really interesting to hear your views and I hope it will help us to understand more about the transition process for vulnerable pupils.

Once the interviews have been analysed I would like to meet with you to check that I have accurately reflected what you have said today. Would that be ok?

Do you have any questions?
APPENDIX L

Staff interview format: individual pupils

Staff Semi-Structured Interview Format - Individual Pupils

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. I am interested in finding out more about the transition process for [pupil’s name] and particularly the support they received from the nurture provision. As outlined in the letter, this session will be audio-recorded and will contribute towards my doctoral thesis.

Do you have any questions?

Are you happy to carry on?

Interview

Warm up

- How has your day been so far?
- How are you feeling about this interview?

Main content

Purpose: to explore how the provision has worked in practice for individual pupils.

Key questions:

- Tell me about [pupil’s name].
- What concerns were raised prior to the transition?
- Have these concerns been justified?
  - Why/why not?
- How have they settled into secondary school?
- What support have they received?
- What has helped them make the transition?
- What has made the transition difficult for them?
Prompts

Further discussion to explore salient points that arise from these key questions and to clarify how this fits within the school’s broader provision.

- Tell me more about...
- What else?

Closure

- Is there anything we haven’t covered?
- Please tell me anything else you’d like to add.

Debrief

Thank you for your time. It has been really interesting to hear your views and I hope it will help us to understand more about the transition process for vulnerable pupils.

Once the interviews have been analysed I would like to meet with you to check that I have accurately reflected what you have said today. Would that be ok?

Do you have any questions?
APPENDIX M

Email confirming ethical approval

From: Ethics Education
Sent: 14 October 2011 17:19
To: Caroline Bond; Naomi Parsons
Subject: Ethics Approval Application - CONFIRMATION for Medium Risk

Dear Naomi and Caroline,

Ref: PRI-7546474-A1

I am pleased to confirm that your ethics application has been approved by the School Research Integrity Committee (RIC) against a pre-approved UREC template.

If anything untoward happens during your research then please ensure you make your supervisor aware who can then raise it with the RIC on your behalf.

Regards

G.D.

PGT and Quality Assurance Administrator

School of Education

Tel: +44(0)161 275 3390

Working Week: Tues - Fri

http://www.education.manchester.ac.uk
APPENDIX N

Stages of data analysis

The five steps used during data analysis are illustrated below, with visual references to the interview with Pupil Three. These five stages are based upon Braun and Clarke’s (2006) model of thematic analysis. The pictures shown are of the original documents and workings, which are provided in order to illustrate the process undertaken by the researcher.

1. Familiarisation with the data

The researcher listened to the audio recording of the pupil interview, transcribed what was said and re-listened several times to ensure the transcript was an accurate representation of what had been said. This enabled the researcher to become familiar with the data and begin to consider appropriate codes.

2. Generating initial codes

After transcribing the interview, the researcher highlighted each section that was deemed to contain a salient piece of information. Initial codes were then devised and assigned to each section:
Some sections seemed to correspond to two or more codes.

Once the initial codes had been identified, the researcher cut up the transcript into slips of paper to enable them to be moved around more easily. Where two or more codes related to one section, the slip was copied so that each corresponded to the relevant code:

3. Searching for themes

The coded slips of paper were sorted into piles that corresponded to the initial codes:
Tentative themes began to emerge as the researcher studied the data and arranged the codes in various ways. Groups of codes that seemed to be linked began to take shape:

4. Reviewing the themes

As the groups became more defined, the researcher began to label these with yellow post-it notes. The researcher then checked that the themes were consistently relevant to each code and each chunk of data within the set. Revisions were made as required until the researcher felt that each code and each chunk of data was represented by an appropriate theme:
5. Defining and naming themes

As themes began to emerge, the researcher sought labels that accurately described the contents. Four broad themes had now emerged, within which the original themes had been subsumed.

Having ensured that each broad theme and each sub-theme accurately represented the codes that had formed the theme, the researcher felt able to represent the themes only with the post-it notes: